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I hereby would like to dedicate this Master Thesis to my family which has always been the most important pillar of my life and of my academic development. Also, I would like to express my gratitude to the professors and friends that I have met during these wonderful two years living abroad.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Michel Gobat in his influential study about the invention of Latin America concludes that the term itself is a historical and geopolitical construct forged in the crucible of political struggle¹. Latin American white elites constructed the term “Latin race” in opposition to the “Anglo-Saxon” racism and expansionism in the United States that started to be regarded as a potential threat after the Mexican-American war. Two powerful reasons help to explain why Spanish American white elites coined the term:

First, it allowed them to counter more effectively the U.S. expansionists’ claim that their Catholic-based societies were backward, since the concept highlighted links with France, which was widely regarded as a modern power. The term “Latin race” fit with the efforts of modernizing liberals to disassociate their societies from Spain, which they deemed hopelessly backward. Second, elites were aware that U.S. citizens tended to view them as belonging to a lower white race – the allegedly indolent and effeminate “Spanish” race – or even as being entirely non-white. They were perturbed because many themselves espoused racial hierarchies that held whites to be superior to non-whites. In all likelihood, then, Spanish American elites embraced the concept of a modern, stronger, and perhaps more masculine Latin race in order to better defend their whiteness against U.S. racism².

From this, one can see that Latin America as an ideological construct emerged in the framework of the political and geopolitical struggles of the post-independence period of the region. Nevertheless, the term changed over the years in tandem with the claims of different actors involved in efforts to contest both a foreign interventionism that could threaten the independence of the new Hispanic-American nations and the local unequal social structures dominated by white elites under which subaltern populations were exploited. From a historical perspective, to talk about Latin America is to recall a lost utopian dream that reflects the aspirations of intellectuals, politicians and others to unite highly diverse peoples and societies for a common anti-domination goal³.

¹ Gobat, "The invention of Latin America: a transnational history of anti-imperialism, democracy,

² Ibid.

³ Gros Espiell, *Estudios sobre derechos humanos*, 65-66.

It is clear that the origin of Latin America is political rather than epistemological; in fact, the meaning of the term is still imprecise if we think about which countries are part of this imagined regional space. Does Latin America include all the Caribbean islands? What about countries that have cultures and histories apart from the Spanish/Portuguese former colonies like Belize, Guyana, French Guyana or Surinam?

Regardless of the potential answers to this problem, they will depend on the political views of diverse actors. This ambiguity in both the epistemological origin and the modern conceptions of Latin America poses an important challenge to the study and understanding of this spatial unit. How can we explain this highly diverse region without succumbing to political fallacies?

Although the construct of Latin America has imposed an artificial unity on different societies and peoples, it is undeniable that this regional space in particular possesses a higher degree of homogeneity in comparison with other regions in the world. The shared connections and the similar way in which Latin American societies interact with global flows have led to common regional historical periods such as independence, the emergence of nation states, the Cold War dictatorial period or the post-Cold War democratic wave, among others.

It is evident that there is an epistemological vacuum that needs to be solved in order to comprehend the events that have shaped this space in a way that has established both similarity within it and difference if compared to other regions. For this reason, the purpose of this thesis will be to build a framework of historical analysis that can overcome the political limitations on which this term has been constructed and under which the commonalities of this regional imaginary can be explained.

To achieve this goal, we need to understand first that the history of Latin America cannot be written or analysed in a linear way because it ignores the particularities and specificities occurring in each society that deserve a singular and specialized study. In this sense, our understanding of Latin American history is the compilation of unique events or periods – critical junctures – when the region as a whole (or most of its countries) experienced synchronized and similar changes in their social structures and relations like the events mentioned in the previous paragraphs.

By focusing on the study of these unique, yet common historical developments what is pretended is to take the idea of Latin American unity out of its political realm of knowledge and understand it under the terms of shared transnational social flows and networks that provide commonality to the region in spite of its differences⁴. Through this conception we will avoid the problem of reviewing the broad and distinct political, economic, cultural and social evolutions of each society in the region and find a model of analysis that could respect the specific while unveiling the commonality that distinguishes Latin America from Africa, Asia or Europe⁵.

To reach this we must overcome the assumption of the nation state as the main unit of historical analysis. By surpassing the epistemological boundaries of the nation state we can open a new understanding of Latin America as a compound of interrelated societies sharing certain social structures that are common to the entire region and that make its different countries react in similar ways to global relationships.

To take our analysis beyond the nation state, we need to rethink space in terms of territoriality or spatial orders, that is to say *'a series of concepts for regulating human politics and economies', that emerged 'because multiple powers contest a finite global space, each seeking . . . some zone of monopoly or exclusive control of sovereignty'*⁶. As a result, people create territories or spaces under regimes that allow actors to control public or political life.

The nation state emerged in the early 19th century as the most efficient institution to exert this kind of power, however, the multiplicity of actors seeking the control of resources and human activities in limited spaces before and after it produced an interactive dynamic between coexisting territorialities. The results of this interaction determined the ways of social, political and economic organisation of different territories.

In Latin America, the colonial territoriality merged with the early nation state generating hybrid societies where modernity cohabited with colonial and feudal modes of life. Thus, we can assume that the nation state is a spatial unit constantly configured by the permanent negotiation and contestation processes

⁴ Middell and Naumann, "Global history and the spatial turn: from the impact of area studies to the study of critical junctures of globalization," 166.

⁵ Ibid., 165.

⁶ Ibid., 155.

among agents defending different types of spatial orders⁷. Following Charles Maier's line of thought, we must conceive the large-scale socio-political transformations underway since the 17th century as the emergence, enforcement, interaction and subsequent collapses of territorialities, in other words, a dialectic dynamic of de-territorialisation and re-territorialisation⁸.

Taking this into consideration, it is important to understand that although the nation state enjoyed certain hegemony on previous kinds of territorialities between 1860 and 1970, its emergence did not involve an abrupt end of other spatial orders, and that the interaction between territorialities has a transnational/regional scope broader than that of the nation⁹. *There is plenty of empirical evidence to suggest that different spatial levels were at play in the past as much as in the present*¹⁰.

This brings us to the second part of this thesis, which will be to create a framework of analysis that can show how the connections between these spatialities have played out historically in the region¹¹. For this purpose, the concept of critical junctures of globalisation will be useful.

*The critical junctures of globalisation are periods and arenas in which new spatial relationships are established as a reaction to the effects of globalisation. There is an astonishing degree of synchronicity at these junctures – moments when actors coordinate their efforts and when a sort of global order with regard to spatial patterns becomes widely accepted. Not all societies and social groups profit equally from the enforcement of the new spatial order; nevertheless, alternatives are marginalized thereafter*¹².

Although this idea refers to major worldwide events and globalisation processes, the notion of synchronicity in spatial patterns is also useful if we want to identify and describe the historical periods that compose our conception of Latin American history. In this sense, rather than changing the concept of critical junctures of globalisation, our purpose will be to add a corollary that could be used to explain non-global synchronisation processes that happen in smaller spaces such as regions or sub-regions. In this thesis we will refer to these events as *regional junctures of spatial synchronisation*.

⁷ Ibid., 150.

⁸ Ibid., 155-168.

⁹ Ibid., 164.

¹⁰ Ibid., 153.

¹¹ Ibid., 153.

¹² Ibid., 168-169.

The main differences between the main concept and the sub-concept is the geographical scope and the degree of social change. As it was mentioned before, the former involves the movement of a new particular spatiality into the centre of the interaction of spatial concepts in a global level such as the rise of the nation state. On the other hand, the latter, rather than searching for the emergence of new global hegemonic spatialities, focuses on two main themes: First, on how the global spatial order is shaped according to its interaction with previous local spatial orders; and second, on what exactly the landmark events were that have reframed the balance between these orders in Latin America.

In this sense, the regional junctures that this thesis is trying to unveil consist on unique periods of time when shock events have triggered transnational developments able to produce a synchronized change in the balance of the diverse interactions of spatial orders of Latin American societies. Because these synchronisation periods are both simultaneously unique and common to the region, they not only compose the skeleton of its history but also have given a particularity within diversity to all its country's politics, economies, societies and identities.

For this reason, the following thesis will be divided in two parts. The first part will focus on identifying the simultaneous spatial orders at play determining common Latin American social developments. The second will determine which were the junctures that have altered its interaction in a way that has joined Latin America into a spatial unit.

2. SPATIALITIES IN LATIN AMERICA

First of all, for the purposes of this study it is important to clarify that we will assume Latin America as the compound of countries and populations that speak a romance language in the Americas, with the clear exception of Quebec that has always being part of other historical unities and processes related to the United States and the British and French colonialism. In addition, we will not include in this analysis the Caribbean islands that do not speak romance languages due to the clear political and non-academic motivations that have integrated these countries into the current supranational projects of the region.

Secondly, it is important to mention that this part of the master thesis will emphasize the independence processes in Latin America due to its unique character as a critical juncture of globalization. As the first global juncture that

took place in the continent, its analysis will allow us to identify the different spatial levels that interact in the region and also by studying the spatial synchronization characteristics of this process we will be able to determine similar historical developments in a regional level.

2.1. The Colonial System and the Nation State

To understand common Latin American social dynamics it is important to study the different spatial organisations that have been interacting through time and determining the change in the region, especially since it started to integrate in global processes. The emergence of the nation state as the main form of spatial organisation in the continent (with the clear exception of the Brazilian Empire) involved an acceleration of exchanges among different societies in the region with global flows.

Christopher Bayly's idea of a world crisis between 1720 and 1820 where there was a breakthrough towards a regime of territorialisation in which the national ultimately prevailed over the regional and the local, started in 1808 and ended 1830 in all the Portuguese and Spanish domains in the Americas, except for Cuba and Puerto Rico¹³. *Many parts of the world reacted simultaneously to the same challenges both by increasing their contacts and the processes of mutual learning, on the one hand, and by competing over the most efficient forms of political, economic, and cultural order, on the other*¹⁴.

The end of the colonial rule in the region set societies free to interact with other European powers whose merchants, banks and militaries dominated the international trade while defining proto-globalisation processes that increased uniformity in spatial patterns at the global level. This turn to uniformity – represented in the ultimate hierarchisation of the nation state – involved also the growth of the internal complexity of societies that faced the transition from their previous regime of territorialisation to the modern one¹⁵.

In Latin America, conflicts arose when forces supporting colonial institutions, subaltern masses claiming rights, liberal factions and transnational actors clashed constantly to defend or change the regimes of territorialisation that protected at best their interests and ways of life. In the framework of this global

¹³ Middell and Naumann, "Global history and the spatial turn: from the impact of area studies to the study of critical junctures of globalization," 168.

¹⁴ Ibid., 168.

¹⁵ Ibid., 168.

transitional period, these conflicts between actors did not allow a total imposition of the nation state over the colonial regime that had been driving the social structures of the continent more than 300 years. In fact, rather than a new order, what emerged after the independence period in Latin America were hybrid systems and experiments in empires (Mexico, Haiti and Brazil), triumvirates, protectorates, and directorates that amalgamated the new principles of the nation state with the old colonial ones¹⁶.

The Spanish and Portuguese empires for centuries imposed in the whole continent rigid social corporatist arrangements and highly unequal social structures that were deeply assimilated in the social fabrics of societies, and that have persisted, in both obvious and veiled ways, into the present¹⁷. *Sergio Bagú argues that independence was less a political struggle for national sovereignty than a social upheaval on the part of a proto-bourgeoisie clamouring to break loose from the patrimonial and feudal structures of imperial control without achieving it*¹⁸.

The state as a new regime of territoriality was precisely built on the basis of these previous spatial organisations, such as the colonial territoriality was built on the basis of the administrative and labour costumes of the Aztec and Inca empires. *For María de Lourdes Viana Lyra, Brazilian secession came after several decades of imperial tinkering and efforts on the part of colonists and metropolitans alike to reimagine the colonial empire before rejecting it in favour of something else, like the nation state – or, to be more accurate, to reinvent the empire as a nation state*¹⁹.

In many ways, the nation state in Latin America (by coexisting with colonial-imperial institutions) became the continuation of other spatial frameworks that have changed through time due to a permanent dialectic of de-territorialisation and re-territorialisation²⁰. This particular interaction between the 18th and 19th century colonialism and the capitalistic nation state, provided Latin American nations a unique set of characteristics that differentiate them from those of other regions around the world.

The legacy of a common colonial past, such as the widespread use of Spanish and Portuguese, common legal systems and ways of communal

¹⁶ Adelman, "Independence in Latin America," 171.

¹⁷ Moya, *The Oxford Handbook of Latin American History*, 2.

¹⁸ Adelman, "Independence in Latin America," 159.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 168.

²⁰ Middell and Naumann, "Global history and the spatial turn: from the impact of area studies to the study of critical junctures of globalization," 168.

organisation and labour, etc., makes Latin America a more homogenized region of study in comparison to Europe, Africa or Asia.

Following this line of thought, it can easily be distinguished that colonialism, as a regime of territorialisation, is the first common and shared spatiality in the continent that goes beyond the nation state and that influences change in the entire region. The fact that Latin America was divided into nation states did not imply that the colonial institutions and their inherent social inequalities played a second role in the social dynamics of the new republics. Colonialism as a coexisting spatial organisation in the whole continent proved to be an important driver of change throughout history due to the constant contestation or support it produces in all Latin American societies.

This spatial organisation can be thought as a hidden territoriality linking the entire region and whose interactions with other common spatialities can drive simultaneous processes of change in all Latin American countries. In the framework of Bayly's world crisis (1720-1820), the dialectics between colonialism and the emergent global regime of territorialisation triggered a critical juncture of spatial synchronisation where actors coordinated their efforts in an independence wave as a reaction to the collapse of the previous territoriality²¹. In other words, the incapacity of the Spanish Empire to control and maintain the cohesion of societies already interacting with transnational forces and transitioning from mercantilism to capitalism motivated elites to align with the nation state as a new territoriality²². The revolutions in Spanish America accelerated the processes of global transformation towards modernity already happening in the old regime monarchies²³.

As stated before, a critical juncture of regional integration can be produced as a reaction to the effects of globalisation or the extreme imposition of a regime of a specific regional territorialisation. A mixture of both internal and external factors caused independence.

Many studies demonstrate that processes of nationalisation were deeply linked to transnationalisations, and that globalisation provokes localisation and regionalisation. There is plenty of empirical evidence to suggest that different spatial levels were at play in the past as much as in the present²⁴.

²¹ Due to the invasion of Napoleonic France to Spain.

²² Adelman, "Independence in Latin America," 161.

²³ Ibid., 170.

²⁴ Middell and Naumann, "Global history and the spatial turn: from the impact of area studies to the study of critical junctures of globalization," 153.

The widespread philosophy of the Enlightenment, the flows and exchanges creating a global market and the transition from a form of primitive accumulation to proto-capitalistic economic systems as external factors had the same important impact in the liberation ideal as the changes in the colonial control, structures and pacts originated by the 18th century Bourbon reforms.

These factors, common to most of Spanish and Portuguese America, made the independence effort a regional phenomenon – with less pronounced struggles in Brazil – and gave the region's historiography an element of thematic and temporal unity, since all its countries went through a similar process²⁵.

It is important to mention that this unity, rather than implying a homogenisation of the study of the region that ignores specificities, must be understood as a way to comprehend critical regional junctures; periods of time when a certain type of territorialisation moves into the centre of the spatial organisations and shapes beliefs throughout the region about what the efficient modes of organisation and models of emulation are²⁶.

In this sense, the next important regional spatialisation that we need to analyse to understand independence and further processes as critical junctures of spatial synchronization is the creation of states all over the continent. After the Independence Wars, most of Spanish America was balkanized into new republics and Brazil seceded from the Portuguese Empire, initiating a path to the consolidation of a nation²⁷.

The emergence of the state originated both a new common regional territorialisation – the state itself – and the division of Latin America into countries that created the conditions for the establishment of new societies and nationalities²⁸. After the end of the colonial rule of Spain, the state and the nation became the main sources of sovereignty and legitimacy to deal with the conflicts emerging from agents trying to impose rival visions of the post-colonial order²⁹.

²⁵ Moya, *The Oxford Handbook of Latin American History*, 10.

²⁶ Middell and Naumann, "Global history and the spatial turn: from the impact of area studies to the study of critical junctures of globalization," 166.

²⁷ De Lyra, *A utopia do poderoso império: Portugal e Brasil: Bastidores da política 1798-1822*, 17-23.

²⁸ Chiaramonte, *Fundamentos iusnaturalistas de los movimientos de la independencia*, 33-71.

²⁹ Adelman, "Independence in Latin America," 159.

In this sense, the state became the common arena for dealing with the remaining patrimonial and feudal structures of the colony as well as the efforts of creole elites to impose an agenda favouring modernity and an economic agrarian regime that affected the interests and ways of life of former colonial elites and ordinary people³⁰.

These internal conflicts made the integrative dynamics of spatial synchronisation processes subject to local forces. Although the nation state became a common regime of territorialisation, its consolidation, due to the struggle of local agents, fragmented the region, renewed differences and created unequal and decentred societies³¹.

The separation of Gran Colombia and the Federal Republic of Central America, and the creation of Bolivia, Paraguay and Uruguay were reactions of local elites to the centralized decision-making exerted by the main centres of power and wealth, the colonial ports and capitals. The social, economic and political disparities between these centres of territorial integration and the isolated rural inland communities still under colonial ways of social exploitation and organisation, divided Latin American societies into conservative and liberal factions whose clashes resulted in civil wars throughout the continent.

These centres of territorial integration advocated the prevalence of colonial privileges and a strong influence of the Church in the state. The rural, inland communities sought to implement a liberal agenda that fostered the expansion of crops for exports at the expense of indigenous and peasant lands³². The dialectic dynamic between these forces shaped different kind of nation states in the region. For instance, the separation of the Federal Republic of Central America has its roots, first, in the intention of the federal provinces to end the colonial monopoly of commerce exerted by the Guatemalan bourgeoisies in order to be free to trade with European powers, especially the British Empire. The second motivation for secession has its roots in the attempts of the Guatemalan conservative elites to limit the influence of the liberal provinces that were seen as a threat due to the moral aggression of their political agenda (divorce, civil marriage, etc.) as well as their aims to change the colonial land distribution to foster agro-exports³³.

³⁰ Ibid., 159.

³¹ Middell and Naumann, "Global history and the spatial turn: from the impact of area studies to the study of critical junctures of globalization," 153.

³² Solorzano, "Rafael Carrera ¿Reacción conservadora o revolución campesina? Guatemala 1837-1873," 12.

³³ Ibid., 10-21.

The Federal Republic of Central America disintegrated in 1839 after a period of civil wars that ended in 1851 with the defeat of the liberal Salvadorian army by the forces of the Guatemalan conservative Rafael Carrera. On the basis of an alliance with the Church and important groups of power like the Aycinena Clan, he inaugurated the most conservative regime in Latin America, delaying the integration of Guatemala into the global market³⁴.

In contrast to the Central American case, the disappearance of the United Provinces of Río de la Plata – a state that comprised the territories of the current Argentina, Bolivia, Paraguay and Uruguay – has its origins in the port interests of the Buenos Aires' ruling class. As one of the most important ports of the colonial Latin America, Buenos Aires regulated the custom tariffs and the internal and external trade of the Paraná and Río de la Plata rivers. Since the origins of the United Provinces, Buenos Aires sought to unite under its control the strategic territories of la Pampa necessary for the expansion of estates for cattle export, and the opening of the internal markets to British goods³⁵.

After independence was achieved, the internal provinces rose in arms defending autonomy in order to stop the influence of the port. These conflicts inaugurated a period of anarchy between 1819 and 1823 that divided the territory into provinces governed by military leaders while the country lacked a centralized government until 1852. In the framework of the Argentine civil wars, port political figures such as Bernardino Rivadavia prioritized the war aims to the strategic provinces and neglected the territories of Paraguay, the Banda Oriental (Uruguay) and the Alto Peru (Bolivia) that also resisted its influence, but were less economically attractive to invest resources for bringing them under control³⁶.

The strong resistance of Paraguay to Buenos Aires interests initiated a half-century trade blockade of the country, which came to be its *raison d'être*. As it was partially influenced by the agro-exporting interests of the liberals of the 19th century, Paraguay developed different forms of spatial organisation with more equal social structures than other Latin American states³⁷. Perhaps the only peasant movement in the 19th century that created a sustainable political program not following the post-colonial extractivist system of the region was the semi-autarchic regime set by Paraguay between 1814 and 1864. As it is known, that subaltern social experiment was violently interrupted in 1870 by the military intervention of

³⁴ Ibid., 26.

³⁵ Ramos, *Historia de la nación latinoamericana*, 173.

³⁶ Ibid., 173.

³⁷ Ibid., 173.

the three liberal governments of Argentina, Brazil and Uruguay, supported by the British Empire³⁸.

In the case of the Banda Oriental, as a territory bordering the Brazilian Empire and occupying the other extreme of the Río de la Plata with a port, it was subject to the power calculations of Buenos Aires, the British and Brazilian empires. In order to avoid further conflict with Brazil, focus on the civil war and weakening Artigas as an opposition leader to the centralized decision making of Buenos Aires, the Directory of the United Provinces renounced to its claims of the Banda Oriental and refused military help to the Uruguayan forces fighting for the territory. After the Brazilian forces were ousted from the Banda Oriental in 1825, the dissociation of Buenos Aires with the territory and the federalism that Artigas had initiated in the Provinces provoked the foundation of the Uruguay nation and state³⁹.

Regarding the Alto Peru and the northern provinces of the Viceroyalty of Río de la Plata, before becoming part of these colonial administrations, these areas had developed an internal and interdependent economy based on the supply and demand of industrial products from Tucuman, textiles from Cochabamba, cattle from Salta and Jujuy, mining inputs from Huancavélica and silver from Potosi⁴⁰.

The creation of the Viceroyalty of Río de la Plata, by opening the importation of European products, destroyed the economy of the inland provinces and of the Alto Peru causing a notorious impoverishment and turned these territories into consumer markets dependent on the commodities coming from Buenos Aires⁴¹. Initially, the weakness of the Spanish industry limited the harmful effects in the provinces; however, the emergence of the British trade dealt a deathblow to the economy, triggering the May Revolution of 1810⁴².

It was clear that the relationship with Buenos Aires did not offer advantages to the territories of the Alto Peru. In fact, the Alto Peruvian economy was more linked to Lima than to the Atlantic port due to their geographical proximity. The separatist idea comes from the opposition to Buenos Aires free trade and the creole mining interests as well as their desire to acquire an exit to the Pacific Ocean to

³⁸ Solorzano, "Rafael Carrera ¿Reacción conservadora o revolución campesina? Guatemala 1837-1873," 11.

³⁹ Ramos, *Historia de la nación latinoamericana*, 137.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 203.

⁴¹ Ibid., 202.

⁴² Ibid., 202.

trade their raw materials⁴³. The Alto Peruvian elites saw that creating a new state would be the best way to preserve their privileges of trade, class and caste⁴⁴. From the side of Buenos Aires, as it could barely handle the upheaval of the internal provinces, it was not in the government's interests to expand their problems. After the Battle of Ayacucho, the Congress of the United Provinces declared that the Alto Peru, despite belonging to Argentina, is free to decide its faith according to their interests and happiness⁴⁵.

Similar processes disintegrated the Gran Colombia. The main issues were, the absence of the powerful figure of Bolivar in the government, the disagreements between Santander's central government and the Department of Venezuela, the underrepresentation of the Department of Quito, the long distances among territories that hampered its administration and the control of internal conflict, a widespread economic crisis and the war effort against Peru⁴⁶. The separation of Ecuador from Gran Colombia was motivated mainly by the economic asymmetries between the Department of Quito and Cundinamarca. While Santander, the Vice-president of Gran Colombia, favoured an open market for the importation of British industrial products and the export of crops (coffee, cocoa, tobacco, cotton, etc.), the Southern Department experienced an important economic downturn caused by the dismantling of its textile economy by more competitive British products. As the government based in Bogotá disregarded the claims of Quito, separatism became imminent.

One can conclude from these examples that, first, the simultaneous formation of nation states in Latin America had unequal results due to the economic, cultural and political inequalities that were not only inherited by the previous colonial regime but also renewed in the course of crises and conflicts related to the integration of societies to a wider global process⁴⁷. *Any regime of territorialisation should be viewed as the result of a process of trial and error in various societies and in various places*⁴⁸.

Second, the state comes first and then the nation. Contrary to the common belief that a patriotic and nationalistic fever motivated independence, from the examples from Central America and the Provinces of the Río de la Plata, we can

⁴³ Ibid., 202.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 202.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 193.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 212.

⁴⁷ Middell and Naumann, "Global history and the spatial turn: from the impact of area studies to the study of critical junctures of globalization," 166.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 166.

infer that the nationalistic sentiment played a secondary role in comparison to the economic and power motivations. The notion of a sovereign geographical space developed from the efforts of societies to embrace or reject the emerging conditions for a capitalistic production⁴⁹. *The nation state has indeed proven its capacity to organize power, preserve sovereignty, to enlarge, and to maximize profit in an entangled world market*⁵⁰. In this sense, the consolidation of nationhood came due to the conditions the state itself created – directly or indirectly – within the societies under its control⁵¹.

Third, as the previous examples showed, the disintegration of the first big states or confederations also relies on the available material resources that former colonial capitals and ports had to integrate territories under their control. The failure of Gran Colombia and the Central American Federation and the separation of Paraguay, Uruguay and Bolivia from the United Provinces of Río de la Plata were caused by Bogotá, Buenos Aires and Guatemala's lack of a centralizing economic, political and military power to exercise their sovereignty in distant territories with asymmetrical conditions. The degree of accumulation of capital and power made these cities, as portals of globalisation, centres of attraction or division of territories and sovereignties⁵². While different territories were torn apart from the sphere of influence of the main urban centres due to weak interconnection and communication, secondary centres of attraction like Quito, Caracas, La Paz or Montevideo, managed to organize (not without conflict) new states that channelled elites' interests into the ways of social organisation⁵³.

Fourth, the struggle between conservatives and liberals triggered civil wars all over the continent⁵⁴. After independence, the consolidation of nation states, the territorial division and the disputes about the integration of these new countries into the world market inaugurated a 30 years period of civil wars and instability in Latin America⁵⁵. Although in some cases conservative forces seized the power in the new republics and imposed measures to hinder free trade and the liberal agenda, the state apparatus was not enough to stop the worldwide processes consolidating a global market, a global market in which Latin America contributed through its specialisation in the exports of raw materials and agricultural commodities. By the

⁴⁹ Ramos, *Historia de la nación latinoamericana*, 207.

⁵⁰ Middell and Naumann, "Global history and the spatial turn: from the impact of area studies to the study of critical junctures of globalization," 165.

⁵¹ Chiaramonte, *Fundamentos iusnaturalistas de los movimientos de la independencia*, 33-71.

⁵² Ramos, *Historia de la nación latinoamericana*, 212.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 139.

⁵⁴ Solorzano, "Rafael Carrera ¿Reacción conservadora o revolución campesina? Guatemala 1837-1873," 12.

⁵⁵ Gärtner, "Informal Empire."

end of the 19th century, Brazil specialized in the production of coffee, rubber, sugar and cattle; Argentina and Uruguay in cattle and wheat; Mexico in silver and oil production; Bolivia in tin; Chile and Peru in copper, guano and nitrates; Ecuador and Venezuela in cocoa; Colombia in coffee; and Central American countries in bananas, indigo and coffee among others⁵⁶.

The expansion of this economic spatialisation uncovers another flow that plays an important role in the common social dynamics of the continent: Capitalism that, in the case of Latin America, took the form of extractivism. The formation of a global market and the Industrial Revolution turned non-integrated and non-industrialized regions into consumers of industrialized goods and producers of raw materials and agricultural commodities. The expansion of this economic spatialisation occurred in tandem with the dialectic interaction among colonialism and the appearance of the nation state. We will review these entanglements in the next section.

2.2. Extractivism

Latin America since 1492 developed as a colonial economy and social complex based on the exploitation of indigenous labour in mines, haciendas, slave plantations, and estates. It contained the wealthiest colonies of the Spanish, Portuguese, British, Dutch and French empires, as well as rigid corporatist arrangements and highly unequal social structures that have persisted, in both obvious and veiled ways, into the present⁵⁷.

The flows of modern capitalism interacting beyond the colonial system and afterwards the nation state intensified the transformation of Latin America into an extractivist region whose economy and society were determined by the processes related to the removal of large quantities of non-processed, natural resources⁵⁸. Depending on the different geographic conditions, governments and economic specialisations of the region, extractivism manifested itself in many forms. In this way, we can speak of multiple extractivisms as Argentinian extractivism possesses particularities that cannot be found in Colombian or Chilean extractivisms⁵⁹.

However, besides the disparities of each territory, the balance of this economic spatialisation remains the same to all Latin American countries: the

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Moya, *The Oxford Handbook of Latin American History*, 2.

⁵⁸ Acosta, "Aporte al debate: El extractivismo como categoría de saqueo y devastación," 25.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 25.

creation of immovable modalities of primary-export capitalistic accumulation that shape social and spatial organisations in order to create favourable conditions for the exploitation and exportation of natural resources⁶⁰.

As the Industrial Revolution increased the demand for already existing and new commodities of the New World, it promoted urbanisation in Europe as fewer people grew their own food and industries required more raw materials⁶¹. This increasing demand required the acquisition and integration of new territories into the emerging capitalistic system, territories that, in the case of Latin America, were not only separated from the influence of cities as portals of globalisation, but also from the imperial control of Spain as non-conquered territories or places completely under the jurisdiction of the Republic of Indians or the Catholic Church⁶².

Three places especially exemplify such territories: Those belonging perpetually and inalienably to the Church under the Mortmain – Manos Muertas – regime, the Ejidos belonging to indigenous people which consisted on a square league located in the villages surroundings⁶³, and the trans-frontier territories which were not under the colonial control and that were occupied by different trans-frontier populations such as gauchos, vaqueros, llaneros, mapuches, etc⁶⁴.

After independence, mestizo heroes of the revolution joined creoles as landowning, and military elites whose interests were grounded in the expansion of their land in order to satisfy the European demand for raw materials and food crops⁶⁵. These elites, now with access to power, saw in these territories a “lebensraum” to be occupied for extractivist purposes. In this sense, through the state apparatus, every country in Latin America took steps to first, dispossess peasants from their land and favour the expansion of the latifundio – minifundio and second, to capture these peasants as cheap labour force for haciendas, farms, or mines, under new serfdom schemes⁶⁶.

Although Bolivar and other heroes of independence throughout the continent passed laws abolishing slavery, indigenous tribute, the mita, the

⁶⁰ Ibid., 25.

⁶¹ Moya, *The Oxford Handbook of Latin American History*, 3.

⁶² Solorzano, "Rafael Carrera ¿Reacción conservadora o revolución campesina? Guatemala 1837-1873," 10.

⁶³ Ibid., 12.

⁶⁴ Curtin, *The rise and fall of the plantation complex essays in atlantic history*, 94.

⁶⁵ Ramos, *Historia de la nación latinoamericana*, 268.

⁶⁶ Solorzano, "Rafael Carrera ¿Reacción conservadora o revolución campesina? Guatemala 1837-1873," 27.

repartimiento, the right of priests and corregidores to indigenous free work, among others⁶⁷, these measures had a limited effect protecting indigenous peoples and their land. By 1830, when most of the region was already divided into the states we know nowadays, every single country passed laws to prolong the servile status of subaltern populations and to monopolize land for agriculture and natural resources exploitation⁶⁸.

Through these measures, landowning elites acquired new spaces to increase their crops and also forced the displaced peasants to become semi agro-proletarians in a process named “accumulation by dispossession”. Peasants with no land and no means for their subsistence migrated to estates where they were subject to forced labour in exchange of a measly wages. In addition, as the displaced masses did not match the required labour for crops production, liberal governments decreed laws of truancy, forced rotation of indigenous labour and debt peonage⁶⁹.

For instance, in the case of the territory belonging to the former Viceroyalty of Río de la Plata, the landowning creoles saw in the Gauchos’ lands the necessary territories for the expansion of livestock farming. From 1820 to the end of the century Gauchos were slaughtered and forcibly expelled from their lands; the surviving people were forced into serfdom through a law declaring that every countryside man that did not possess land would be considered a servant⁷⁰. According to Adrián Moyano, the Republic of Argentina was founded through a genocide, not only of the Gaucho people, but also of the Mapuche and other indigenous peoples from Patagonia to El Chaco in order to favour the extractivist variant of capitalism⁷¹.

In this way, dispossession as an internal process in Latin America took form in: *the forced displacement of peasants and indigenous towns; the loss of common rights; the subservience of several property regimes to one private property; the subordination of alternative production and consumption practices; the progressive monetisation of life; slavery and its trade industry; debt, and finally the financial credit*⁷².

⁶⁷ Ramos, *Historia de la nación latinoamericana*, 187.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 187.

⁶⁹ Solorzano, "Rafael Carrera ¿Reacción conservadora o revolución campesina? Guatemala 1837-1873," 27.

⁷⁰ Galeano, *Las Venas Abiertas De América Latina*, 69.

⁷¹ Traeder, "Argentina se fundó sobre un genocidio contra los mapuches."

⁷² Harvey, "The “new Imperialism”: Accumulation by Dispossession," 74.

Eduardo Galeano sustains that independence was an ambush against the poor and indigenous sons of America⁷³. He was right. The fact that masses of indigenous peoples, farmers and peasants were removed violently from their lands distorted their social and economic structures, distributed income in a regressive manner and concentrated wealth in few hands⁷⁴.

This extractivist process led to a generalisation of poverty, has given rise to constant economic crises, at the same time that has consolidated rentier mindsets, patronage and patrimonialism. All of this has worsened the weak and scarce democratic institutionalism, encourages corruption, and de-structures societies and local communities ...⁷⁵.

The characteristic social gaps common to all Latin American societies have a foundation in the dispossession processes that took place since the creation of nation states. The land and rights theft by a military and landowning minority from the big masses of subaltern populations intensified the inequality that proved to be the breeding ground for revolutions and social change during the 20th century and today in Latin America. It is important to keep in mind this background in order to understand the following developments on Latin American history and especially the aforementioned critical junctures spatial synchronization.

The legacy of these dispossession processes, besides the social advances in throughout history, continues to be notorious in the present. In fact, Latin America is the region with the most unequal land distribution in the world: it possesses a land Gini index of 0.79 while Africa has 0.56, Europe 0.57 and Asia 0.55. If this index is applied only to South America it would reach 0.85⁷⁶. Furthermore, a 2017 OXFAM report shows that 1% of the estates occupy more than the half of the productive land of the region, which means that this 1% accounts for more land than the remaining 99% of the population⁷⁷. The relationship between socio-economic inequality and land distribution is clear if we consider that Latin America is also the most unequal region in the world. In 2014, the richest 10% of the Latin American population possessed the 71% of the regional wealth⁷⁸. As it was mentioned before, extractivism and dispossession do not only have effects on land

⁷³ Galeano, *La independencia es todavía una tarea por hacer: Galeano*.

⁷⁴ Acosta, "Extractivismo Y Neoextractivismo."

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Labatut, "América Latina y el Caribe es la región con la mayor desigualdad en la distribución de la tierra."

⁷⁷ Guereña, *Desterrados: Tierra, Poder Y Desigualdad En América Latina*, 9.

⁷⁸ Bárcena and Byanyima, "América Latina y el Caribe es la región más desigual del mundo ¿Cómo solucionarlo?"

distribution but also a much wider impact that impoverishes and de-structures societies.

The above-mentioned report also states that extractivism is linked to the state and how economic elites use their power to influence regulatory and political decisions that assure the distribution of profits in their favour⁷⁹. This is not a new phenomenon. Since the emergence of the nation state in Latin America, elites have been using its apparatus for the expansion of modern capitalism and the intensification of extractivism as the spatiality that benefited the most their privileged and landowning status.

*There is considerable evidence that the transition to capitalistic development was and continues to be vitally contingent upon the stance of the state. The developmental role of the state goes back a long way, keeping territorial and capitalistic logics of power always intertwined though not necessarily concordant*⁸⁰.

*The state, with its monopoly of violence and definitions of legality, played a crucial role in both backing and promoting dispossession processes*⁸¹. Each new state in Latin America, besides the power struggles between conservatives and liberals, sooner or later took steps to take over indigenous/peasant land and labor. Although the clear exceptions of Paraguay and Guatemala limited the liberal dispossession agenda through the state, by the end of the 19th century, national and transnational forces crushed these regimes, in 1870 and 1871 respectively, making the extractivist economic spatialisation total in the entire region⁸².

It is important to keep in mind though, that the shift to an extractivist economic organisation in Latin America, far from involving a sharp change from mercantilist colonialism to national capitalism, constituted also a prolongation of the previous ways of organisation and labour exploitation. The nation state and extractivism must not be assumed as a unique spatialisation but as different regimes of territorialisation whose simultaneous interactions with colonialism and other regimes defined and continue to define the capitalistic evolution of Latin American nations.

⁷⁹ Guereña, *Desterrados: Tierra, Poder Y Desigualdad En América Latina*, 9.

⁸⁰ Harvey, "Accumulation by Dispossession," 145.

⁸¹ Ibid., 145.

⁸² Solorzano, "Rafael Carrera ¿Reacción conservadora o revolución campesina? Guatemala 1837-1873," 27.

The contradiction between capitalistic accumulation and colonial/feudal ways of organizing labour hindered the transition of the region towards this new economic regime during the 20th century. Although capitalism and the nation state involved the modernisation of elites, cities and ports and the change of certain aspects of Latin American society and economy, its interaction with colonialism produced the intensification of the colonial relations that already set suitable conditions for natural resources exploitation, namely the subordinate relation between creoles and native peasants.

Sergio Bagú argues that Latin American elites transitioning from colonial to capitalistic ways of accumulation *were not mature bourgeoisies aiming to topple the ancien régime and supplant it with a full capitalist order accordingly. The weaknesses of local elites – their incomplete transformation into agents of capitalism – prevented them from installing a new capitalistic or developmental order. The penetration of British interests – that is, more robust capitalists – truncated whatever possible mutation creole elites might have made into agents of capitalist development. The result was highly uneven but nonetheless integrated model of modernity*⁸³.

The nation state, by being the most suitable way of organisation to deal with the struggles emerging from the global interconnectedness of the 19th century and the interests of local groups of power, conglomerated heterogeneous spaces where colonialism and capitalism existed and interacted simultaneously. Alberto Acosta states that *a characteristic feature common to all Latin American extractivist economies is the structural heterogeneity of productive activities; that is to say, the coexistence of economic systems of high productivity with others of subsistence and backwardness*⁸⁴. The latifundios and mines are the perfect example of this contradiction since both possessed sophisticated methods for extraction and exportation while colonial institutions still determined labour and life in these spaces.

Although the end of the colony implied to an extent the loosening of colonial social and racial stratifications, the political power, the land, and the resources were kept in the hands of few colonial elites. That is to say that the capital necessary for the economic development was locked in a small group of people closer to colonial privilege than to capitalism entrepreneurship. The prolongation of

⁸³ Bagú, *El plan económico del grupo rivadaviano, 1811-1827: su sentido y sus contradicciones, sus proyecciones sociales, sus enemigos*.

⁸⁴ Acosta, "Extractivismo Y Neoextractivismo."

the colonial vertical social structures into the new local capitalistic dynamics turned the Latin American economic system also into a closed circle characterized more by monopoly rather than free competition⁸⁵.

This delayed the formation of fully capitalistic societies due to the exclusion of the subaltern masses that hindered the creation of a farmer class that could have contributed more to the creation of wealth as free citizens rather than as servants.

Independence did very little to change the situation of subaltern people. To eliminate serfdom and the quasi-slavery regimes tormenting the Indians, it was necessary to destroy the creole/colonial landownership system that became the base for the agrarian extractivism that was expanded in the region by the nation states. Guaranteeing rights to Indigenous peoples and other subalterns was useless without the elimination of the colonial social structure (priests, landowners, miners and corregidores). When the revolutionary process finally succeeded, most of the landowners and encomenderos, while embracing the new nation, kept their peasants still in serfdom⁸⁶.

The state instead of changing the colonial regime played a catalysing role for the intensification of pre-existing exploitation forms that maximized profits for local elites in the framework of the integration of the new nations in the entangled world market⁸⁷. Extractivist and rent seeking activities became the most profitable businesses in Latin America due to the increasing European demand for raw materials and the low costs that were inherent to the colonial labour and serfdom regimes. Also, the penetration of European industrialized products was an important obstruction for the diversification of the economy because it discouraged the creation of new activities due to the low prices and duty-free policies that made the importation of, rather than the production of goods more convenient.

*The revolution in the British textile and metallurgic production provoked a tendency towards the international division of labour. For Latin American liberals, the development of tradable crops in the European markets was the natural way to participate from the wealth produced from this division*⁸⁸.

⁸⁵ Gärtner, "Informal Empire."

⁸⁶ Ramos, *Historia de la nación latinoamericana*, 187.

⁸⁷ Middell and Naumann, "Global history and the spatial turn: from the impact of area studies to the study of critical junctures of globalization," 165.

⁸⁸ Solorzano, "Rafael Carrera ¿Reacción conservadora o revolución campesina? Guatemala 1837-1873," 28.

As new territories became available for natural resources exploitation, economic activities in the region focused more and more in the export of few primary products; thus capturing the wealth in few hands, mainly in the form of landowners expanding their lands, foreign enterprises, or other agents with the capital and power to acquire land and venture in extractivist activities⁸⁹. These groups of economic elites benefiting from extractivism held the political power to extend its reach and privilege rather than to integrate people within a national or a regional project.

Latin American states, in this sense were conceived by the extractivist relations between local cities/ports and foreign markets; relations controlled by the state and thus by the previously mentioned power groups. There was no major interest in the creation of strong internal or regional markets, and for this reason, the new born Latin American nations and economies were tied more to Europe than to each other⁹⁰. Railways, for instance, are a clear measurement of this weak regional interconnection and external dependency. Except for Mexico, Argentina, Chile and Uruguay, there are no integrated national or regional railway networks in Latin America. Railways in the region consisted of just a few isolated lines running from some production areas to the ports⁹¹. As new governments could not pay for railroads, the state gave land to foreign companies in order to construct infrastructure, which was built according to favour extractivist activities⁹².

The post-colonial Latin America was shaped by extractivist economic linkages that organized production and distributed property in agriculture. Land patterns and modes of organizing labour on land varied according to the way the countries were historically integrated into the world economy. These patterns only changed when revolutions, modernizing forces and general political and economic trends of the 20th century started to push for reform⁹³.

To summarize, extractivism played an important role in the historical developments of Latin American societies, not only by determining a general economic modality in the region but also by playing an important role in the configuration of nation states according to the export relation between the new nations and the global market of the 19th century. Colonialism, the nation state and extractivism are the three main regimes of territorialisation whose interaction with

⁸⁹ Acosta, "Extractivismo Y Neoextractivismo."

⁹⁰ Ramos, *Historia de la nación latinoamericana*, 102-103.

⁹¹ Bignon, Esteves and Herranz-Loncán, "The Determinants of Railway Development in Latin America Before 1914," 2.

⁹² Gärtner, "Informal Empire."

⁹³ Eckstein, "The impact of revolution on social welfare in Latin America," 52.

the modernity imaginaries determines the historical developments of the region. That being said, modernity as a transnational force is a necessary concept that needs to be reviewed in order to understand and identify critical junctures of spatial synchronization.

2.3. Modernity

In today's academia, so much has been said about the concept of modernity that its many different understandings and analyses can cause more confusion than clarity⁹⁴. The central idea that modernity comes along with globalisation as a universalizing process emanating out of a few dominant centres is still prevalent, however. The root of this idea lies in a view of modernity as essentially a European phenomenon⁹⁵.

*Historically, modernity has identifiable temporal and spatial origins: Seventeenth century northern Europe, around the processes of Reformation, the Enlightenment, and the French Revolution. These processes crystallized at the end of the eighteenth century and became consolidated with the Industrial Revolution*⁹⁶.

*Sociologically, modernity is characterized by certain institutions, particularly the nation state, and by some basic features, such as self-reflexivity, the disembedding of social life from local context, and space/time distantiation, since relations between "absent others" become more important than face-to-face interaction*⁹⁷.

As we can see, modernity is a spatial level related to an ideological construct that came with the emergence of global capitalism and other forms of organisation such as the nation state which positioned certain beliefs around the world about the most efficient modes of organisation and models worthy of emulation⁹⁸. The interaction between different parts of the world with European imperialism brought conceptions of modernism and backwardness as differences in societies became rigid due to the reconfiguration in the organisation of power and

⁹⁴ Frederick, "Modernity," 113.

⁹⁵ Escobar, "Beyond the third world: imperial globality, global coloniality and anti-globalization social movements," 5.

⁹⁶ Ibid., 5.

⁹⁷ Ibid., 5.

⁹⁸ Middell and Naumann, "Global history and the spatial turn: from the impact of area studies to the study of critical junctures of globalization," 166.

allocation of resources that took place as an effect of the interaction and interconnectedness⁹⁹.

In itself, modernity has no content, it is colourless, odourless and tasteless; it is an ideological formation in terms of which societies valorise their own practices by contrast to the spectre of barbarism and other marks of negation¹⁰⁰. *Modernity, as an ideological formation, may have grown out of the history of European capitalism. But, like capitalism, it has not remained there. It has seeded itself, in various and complex ways across the globe. Here we have the “multiple” and “alternative” modernities*¹⁰¹.

As it was mentioned before, in the case of Latin America, the enlargement of the latifundio, haciendas, mines and other kinds of property regimes where capitalism and colonialism coexisted simultaneously, produced these multiple modernities in which elites and subaltern populations developed different cultural forms representing their own perspectives of progress¹⁰². For this reason, among all the notions of modernity, the concept of multiple or alternative modernities is the one that suits ideally the study of this thesis.

The prevalent idea of what is modern in Latin America is one that emulated the representation of Europe; during the colony it was linked to the status and privilege of the Spanish Crown, but afterwards it changed to the ideas of enlightenment coming from other parts of the European continent. Far from engaging in an eurocentric vision of modernity, we are now recognizing that the ideal of independence comes from a time when Europe was seen as being at the top of the hierarchy of world regions and the nation and the “West” were regarded as the best form with which modern globalisation could be grappled¹⁰³.

Although it has been argued previously that independence was not a product of national aspirations but mostly a reaction to the incapacity of the colonial system to deal with societies transitioning to something more than primitive accumulation, it is important as well to consider as an influential factor the ethos of the 19th century Latin America¹⁰⁴. This ethos was mainly influenced by the North American

⁹⁹ Frederick, "Modernity," 136.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 129.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 129.

¹⁰² Ibid., 114.

¹⁰³ Middell and Naumann, "Global history and the spatial turn: from the impact of area studies to the study of critical junctures of globalization," 153.

¹⁰⁴ Adelman, "Independence in Latin America," 161.

political thinking and by the fact of an independent United States, the French *encyclopédisme* of Rousseau and Montesquieu and the Spanish political theory¹⁰⁵.

Rather than getting into a moral debate about equality, it is important to focus on understanding the material conditions that gave way to the change in the perspectives of what Latin American agents considered as modern. Any good historical analysis of modernity must consider the version of the story that look to *the debate and struggle in shaping what reason, liberalism, equality, and rights can be claimed to mean*¹⁰⁶. By doing this we will overcome the traditional approaches to the study of modernity and give way to an actor-based narrative that unveils more effectively how the local and transnational conceptions of modernity can define the results of the interaction among regimes of territorialisation, and thus the historical developments of the region and the world.

Independence as a critical juncture of spatial synchronization created the unique material conditions for a momentary and unprecedented change in the previous mentioned concepts about modernity and liberalism in Latin America; a modernity claiming equality for all men and not only for white men as the Enlightenment thought conceived. Unlike North America and Europe, the vast subaltern and non-white population of Hispanic America composed the majority of the inhabitants of the region, and for this reason, any libertarian ideology or campaign would have never been successful without the inclusion of non-white people in it.

Although Latin American elites have always identified with whiteness – despite being non-white – the conditions of the independence processes made them embrace a hybrid western national ideal related with the 19th century conception of a republic dominated by whites but that granted greater rights to non-white masses than “western” societies¹⁰⁷.

Initially, the alignment of creoles with white supremacy and their reluctance to give subalterns liberty of class prolonged the Independence Wars and put at risk the process of independence itself. In fact, Indians, mestizos, slaves and other subjugated populations distrusted landowning creoles’ objectives and initially found in the Spanish colonial system more protection from elite abuses than in any national project. From 1810 to 1817, the failure of the libertarian armies during the

¹⁰⁵ Gros Espiell, *Estudios sobre derechos humanos*, 70.

¹⁰⁶ Frederick, "Modernity," 148.

¹⁰⁷ Gobat, "The invention of Latin America: a transnational history of anti-imperialism, democracy, and race."

Venezuelan civil war was due to the lack of support from actors such as slaves, llaneros, mestizos and Indians who fought on the Spanish side¹⁰⁸. Subalterns had more incentives to fight in the tangible liberty of class offered in exchange of service in the Spanish army than in the intangible national liberty offered by the independence campaign.

*The intensity of colonial conflicts, uncertainties about colonial policies disagreements between those who wanted to save souls and those who wanted to exploit bodies, and competing visions of national missions and national interests provided fissures that colonized subjects, along with known and unknown union organizers, peasant rebels and other agents were able to pry open*¹⁰⁹.

The motivation for common people to embrace the libertarian and national ideal and reject the colonial regime came from two main factors. First, the return of Ferdinand VII to the Spanish throne that involved the violent suppression of the attempts for American autonomy; and second, the establishment of the abolishment of slavery and the end of colonial indigenous exploitation regimes as objectives of the Independence Wars¹¹⁰.

In the case of Bolívar, the ideological tools that attracted the critical mass of people needed for his campaign came from the agreement with Alexandre Pétion during his exile in Haiti. This pact established the liberation of slaves as a war aim in exchange of soldiers, supplies and ships for his return to Venezuela¹¹¹. In June 2, 1816, Bolívar fulfilled his promise and included into his independence ideal the liberty of all subjugated people in South America. After he materialized the incorporation of these subaltern masses to his army in 1817, the period of the greatest military victories against Spain began¹¹². The same case can be seen in Mexico where, after a long caste civil war, the Plan de Iguala of 1821 finally consolidated an alliance between creoles and subalterns that materialized independence.

Similar paths were taken by the libertarian campaign in the south. Between 1811 and 1813 the United Provinces of Río de la Plata, proclaimed the abolition of indigenous tribute, mita, encomienda, yanaconazgo and serfdom¹¹³. This proclamation of liberty for indigenous peoples guaranteed the support of local

¹⁰⁸ Ramos, *Historia de la nación latinoamericana*, 147-148.

¹⁰⁹ Frederick, "Modernity," 149.

¹¹⁰ Ramos, *Historia de la nación latinoamericana*, 151.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, 151.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, 154.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, 210.

communities to Belgrano and San Martín's campaigns in the Alto Peru (especially in the Vilcapugio campaign) and importantly of the Gauchos that in many occasions stopped the Spanish advances to the south¹¹⁴.

From these examples we can distinguish how different notions – against or in favour of – modernity ideals can be shaped to mobilize agency and to determine the result of the interaction between different regimes of territorialisation (in this case, colonialism, the nation state and extractivism). Modernity as a de-territorialized ideological formation was shaped by national forces in order to undermine the colonial system and make it less attractive for key sectors of society. In this sense, it involves cross boundary struggles over the conceptual and moral bases of political and social organisation¹¹⁵.

*The asymmetry of conceptual power, the ability to make claims, to stick and to alter definitions of what is a debatable issue and what is not, is all the more reason to keep one's focus on how such concepts were used in historical situations*¹¹⁶. This will help us to explain why after independence, struggles and constraints reconfigured the modern ideological formation of liberation, giving way to multiple kinds of cross-border modernities according to local forces and the type of extractivism they defended¹¹⁷.

There has been no unidirectional trend toward political inclusiveness, toward enhancing people's choice of modes of livelihood, or toward representing their collective or individualistic aspirations¹¹⁸. Independence as a critical juncture of spatial synchronization must be considered an exceptional period when a certain type of belief came into the centre of attention in the region momentarily¹¹⁹. As the integrative dynamic of these unique junctures interact with local forces, the asymmetries among societies renew differences and create unequal results, even in places where the same regime of territorialisation or a conception about modernity has been dominant.

After Bolívar and other heroes of independence lost their control of the newborn states, their ideal of a united Hispanic America and the ideology of liberation for all peoples faded with them. The emerging extractivist spatialisation

¹¹⁴ Ibid., 174.

¹¹⁵ Escobar, "Beyond the third world: imperial globality, global coloniality and anti-globalization social movements," 5.

¹¹⁶ Frederick, "Modernity," 149.

¹¹⁷ Ibid., 149.

¹¹⁸ Ibid., 149.

¹¹⁹ Middell and Naumann, "Global history and the spatial turn: from the impact of area studies to the study of critical junctures of globalization," 153.

gave incentives to new elites to seize land and property, to exploit subaltern labour and to trade with Europe, for these reasons, new notions of modernity and civilisation were shaped favouring directly and indirectly this process¹²⁰.

The dominant modernity that took place in the post-independent Latin America retook the European representations of whiteness and positioned concepts that undermined the advances reached by the libertarian process. This time however, elites assumed a position towards modernity in which they reacted according to the geopolitical situation by rejecting North American and European imperialism that threatened the sovereignty and even the existence of the new born nations¹²¹.

Also, an important factor defining the elitist Latin American modern ideological formation was their own struggle to reaffirm themselves as whites considering that they were seen by North American and British Anglo-Saxons as belonging either to a lower white race – the allegedly indolent and effeminate Spanish race – or even as being entirely non-white¹²². Spanish American elites embraced the concept of a modern, stronger, and perhaps more masculine Latin race related with France – which was widely regarded as a modern power – in order to better defend their whiteness against U.S. and British racism and also to counter the stubborn belief that other societies were incapable of becoming fully civilized on their own¹²³. *In sum, fear of imperial expansion alone did not push elites to embrace the identity of a Latin race. They were also driven by their own fragile sense of whiteness*¹²⁴.

The efforts of elites to legitimize themselves with whiteness led to the creation of ideological frameworks institutionalised in political systems all over the continent to exclude, persecute, dispossess, and often kill the “racially inferior” native or mixed bloods populations. These processes aimed to whiten Latin American societies culminated in genocidal campaigns against peasants and natives or their exclusion and discrimination in the new national societies¹²⁵. The Conquest of the Desert in Argentina and the Pacification of the Araucania are the clearest examples of how elitist concerns with whiteness synced with the extractivist agenda

¹²⁰ Frederick, "Modernity," 149.

¹²¹ Escobar, "Beyond the third world: imperial globality, global coloniality and anti-globalization social movements," 5.

¹²² Gobat, "The invention of Latin America: a transnational history of anti-imperialism, democracy, and race."

¹²³ Ibid.

¹²⁴ Ibid.

¹²⁵ Ibid.

of dispossession. This concern with whiteness would shape the way Latin America was initially defined¹²⁶.

Nearly all countries sought to strengthen their young nations in terms of whiteness. Each society favoured the massive influx of white migrants to civilize the nation; for instance, all the 19th century Latin American liberal regimes fostered the entrance of European colonisation companies in order to, first, whiten their societies and second, to introduce foreign planters that would help to spread modern agricultural techniques among the backward peasants¹²⁷.

Latin American nations were born and continue to be marked by the tension between inclusion and exclusion of peasants and subaltern populations¹²⁸. In this sense, Dipesh Chakrabaty is right when arguing that *the most deadly manifestation of backwardness-ethnic chauvinism and intolerance is itself part of the modernizing project for its impetus to classify and enumerate the population*¹²⁹.

The excluding heritage and the social inequalities inherent to Latin American extractivism and modernism are key features in mobilizing the agency of actors that define the unfolding of events in the region. The struggles involving the interaction among colonialism, the nation state and extractivism and the diverging views of modernism towards these flows are the main features that we need to understand in order to complete the conception of Latin American spatial synchronization proposed in this thesis. In the next sections we will analyse the different actors that determine Latin American social dynamics and critical junctures of spatial synchronization while unveiling the model for their understanding.

2.4. Interaction among spatial levels

The processes of consolidation of nation states were characterized by internal conflicts between liberals and conservatives over the control and the allocation of resources, as well as over the imposition of modern or colonial ways of organisation and life. The asymmetrical results of these conflicts in the newborn societies now influenced by the nation state determined the different paths that each country took after the period of synchronisation, that is to say independence. Both synchronisation and difference can be understood in the terms of the previously

¹²⁶ Ibid.

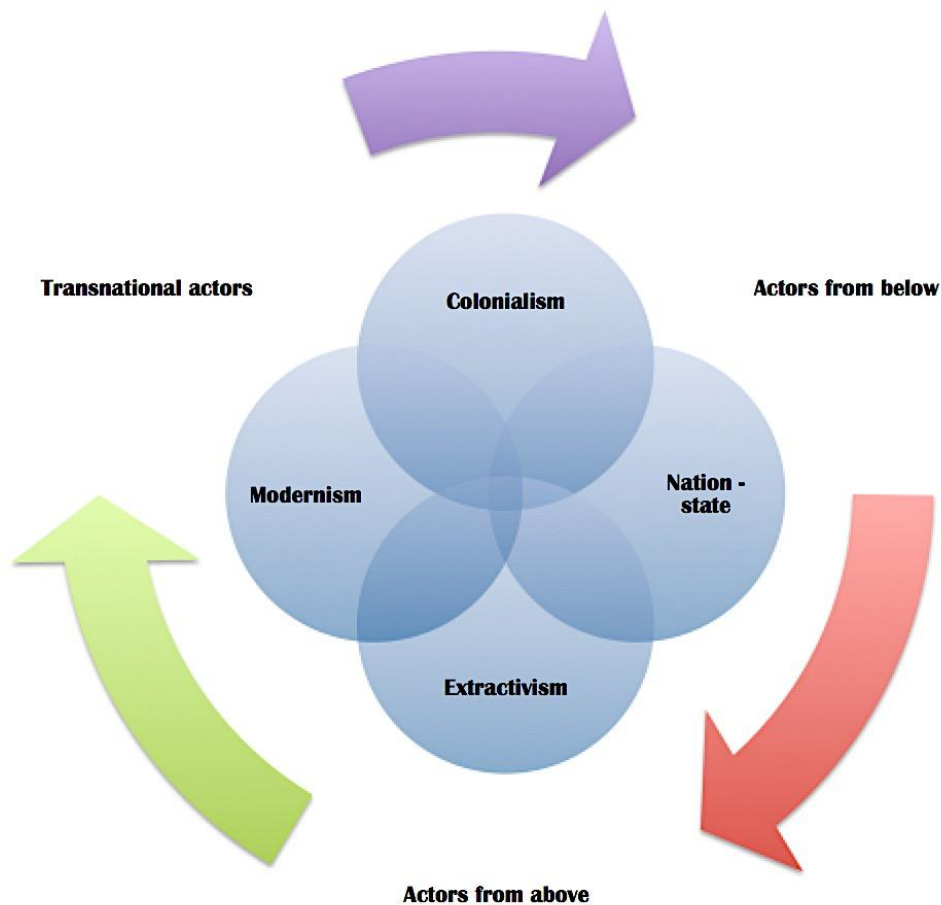
¹²⁷ Solorzano, "Rafael Carrera ¿Reacción conservadora o revolución campesina? Guatemala 1837-1873," 10.

¹²⁸ Gobat, "The invention of Latin America: a transnational history of anti-imperialism, democracy, and race."

¹²⁹ Frederick, "Modernity," 136.

explained dialectics among the spatial levels of colonialism, the nation state, extractivism and modernism. The following figure will help us to have a picture about the connections/interactions among spatialities that have acted and still act out to define Latin American historical developments and social realities:

Figure 1
Spatial levels dialectics in Latin America



We can state that in Latin America these are the spatial levels that have defined the most important developments of the region. In this sense, this framework of interaction in both difference and synchronisation has determined the dynamics of the region. In difference, every Latin American country possesses a particular combination of spatial levels that has been shaped by internal conflicts, economic specialisations and the agency of national and transnational actors. In contrast, times of synchronisation or regional critical junctures occur when exceptional events reposition one or more spatialities similarly in every country, changing the overall regional way of interaction.

The dichotomy between difference and similarity in Latin America does not mean that they are mutually exclusive in this scheme of interaction. In fact, this model is a tool to understand the permanent dialectics of “difference – synchronisation – difference” in Latin America. The post-independence period is a perfect example to test it. The revolutions against the Spanish Empire and the establishment of nations involved great expenditures and a period of economic downturns in every new country due to the destruction caused by this period of crisis.

The new born nations managed to finance the Independence Wars with British loans, which turned out to be unpayable due to the economic disorder produced by the conflict. In April 1826, Peru suspended the payment of their external debt and few months later the Republic of Gran Colombia followed the same path. By mid 1828, every country of Latin America, except Brazil, suspended their foreign payments¹³⁰. With no means to generate enough wealth to pay for loans, to keep internal order and to preserve independence, Latin American nations, through unfavourable trade agreements, opened their markets to the British Empire which in that time was seen as the best strategic partner to stave off any European attempt of re-conquest.

Importantly, the fragility of the young Latin American states, the attempts of the ruling classes to keep their national projects alive internally and externally, and the geographical conditions and resources of each territory influenced the creation of difference after the synchronisation, especially terms of economic development. The wealth gap between the centres of colonial power and the regions with softened colonial structures started to switch after the emergence of the nation state. Places like the United States, Canada, Argentina, Chile and Uruguay, that were the least developed before 1800, by being less attractive for the colonial enterprise, enjoyed relatively unencumbered colonial institutions in comparison with other highly profitable territories such as Peru, Bolivia or Mexico.

These territories, by having less vertical social structures, a diminished church power and less commercial monopolies were able to implement a more liberal/capitalist agenda favourable to international trade due to a weaker conservative opposition. These characteristics and the increasing demand for staple American products during the Industrial Revolution turned the semi-empty grasslands of the north and the south of the Americas into the biggest producers of

¹³⁰ Palou, *Episodio 1: Las paralelas que se cruzan*.

pastoral wealth the world had ever seen¹³¹. *One can say that these areas within the nation state were born modern as opposed to early modern*¹³².

The late development of true colonies in the above mentioned countries proved to be a blessing in the long-term. By the early 20th century, they became not only the richest in the hemisphere but also the most egalitarian in terms of the distribution of material, political, and cultural resources. In fact, per capita GDP in the United States, Canada, Argentina, Uruguay, and Chile was two to six times higher than the average elsewhere in the hemisphere.

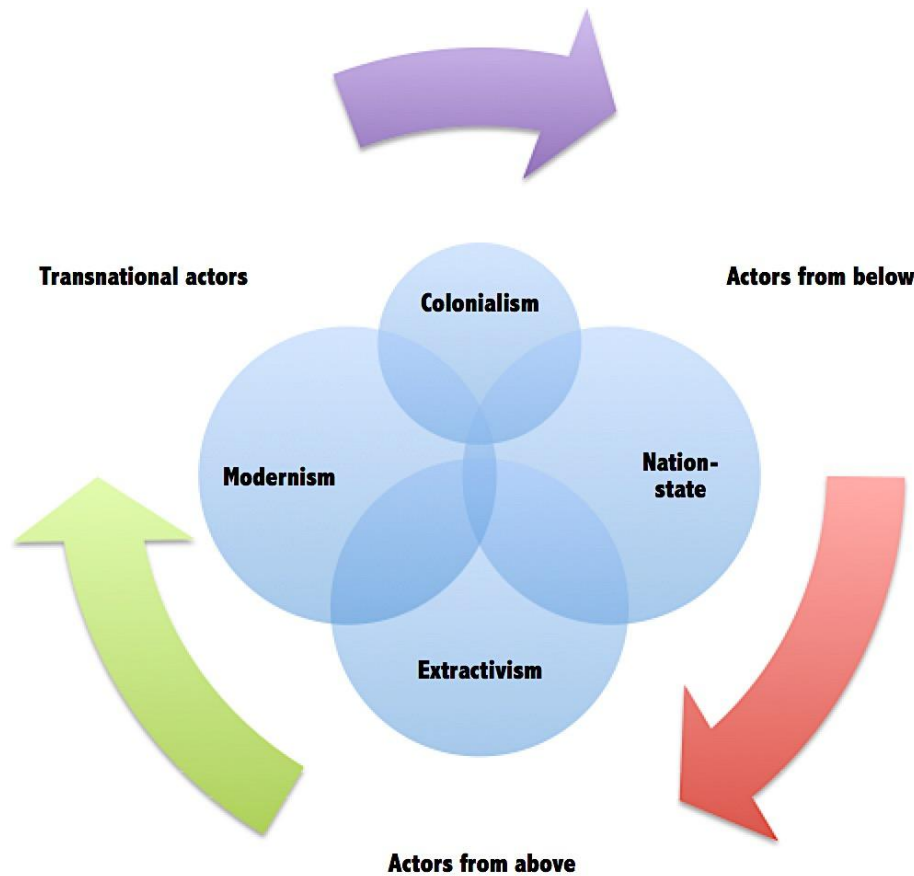
If we could represent visually, in similar fashion as Figure 1, the particular spatial dynamics of one these countries after independence, colonialism would constitute a smaller circle than other spatialisations due to the fact that the synchronized conceptions and relation among the nation state, modernism and extractivism clearly reduced in a bigger extent its role in shaping the national society. Figure 2 can give us a picture about this relation.

It is important to mention that the role of each spatialisation is defined by the characteristics of each nation's territories and societies. In this way, the limited or the broader influence of spatialities in historical developments of the post-colonial Latin America do not only apply to colonialism but to all the interacting regimes of territorialisations. There could be countries like Bolivia where the relation between extractivism and colonialism is intense and the nation state plays an important role prolonging it, while other places like Argentina where extractivism and modernism are the most important spatialisations shaping societies and thus the nation state. The amalgam of these interactions in times of difference has countless possibilities.

¹³¹ Moya, *The Oxford Handbook of Latin American History*, 3.

¹³² *Ibid.*, 3.

Figure 2
Spatial levels dialectics in regions with softened colonial institutions



O

wever, besides the asymmetries and differences in Latin American countries, from a macro perspective, each of them share still the main four common spatialisations determined in this thesis. Unity comes from the shared experience of colonial rule, liberalism, capitalism and the nation state formation during the 19th century, and this is why historical developments in the region share similar content and timing¹³³. For this reason, we can state that Latin American societies have more propensities to have shared historical cycles in certain periods of time than other ideological constructs like Asia or Africa whose invention seems to be more artificial than that of Latin America¹³⁴.

This model is also helpful to comprehend why Latin America as a territory with several commonalities can have critical junctures of spatial synchronisation mainly influenced by regional dynamics rather than by global processes. The concept of critical junctures of globalisation by referring to the synchronisation of

¹³³ Ibid., 12.

¹³⁴ Middell and Naumann, "Global history and the spatial turn: from the impact of area studies to the study of critical junctures of globalization," 158.

worldwide spatialisations involves broad processes that occur after long periods of time.

At a certain degree, this theoretical framework, by focusing mostly on global spatialities, can be limited if our aim is to explain events that have involved the synchronisations in the interaction of spatialities that have only occurred in the region. To overcome this barrier and to expand the application of the concept, it is necessary – as this model has done – to identify the global and regional spatialities interacting in the historical developments of the region. Through this method it is finally possible to understand why, despite the fact that the histories of each country in the region are different, they also constantly link, match and coincide over and over again¹³⁵.

The similar content and timing of these cycles explains the unity that a shared experience of colonial rule and of liberalism and nation state formation during the 19th century impart to Latin American political history¹³⁶.

2.5. Actors

As it can be noticed from the previous sections, the agency of elites and as well as subalterns has been decisive for shaping the diverse balances of interaction among regimes of territorialisation in each Latin American society. For this reason, it is crucial for this study to analyse the role that different actors or agents have played historically in times when internal cohesion and efficient international entanglement are decided¹³⁷.

In our model devised in Figures 1 and 2, we have represented three different kinds of actors in an arrow-circled frame in order to symbolize a cycle of interaction. What is meant through this representation is to show how actors or agents can back or align with any of the interacting regimes of territorialisation in order to defend a particular combination that suits the best their interests and collective ways of life.

In this sense, the purpose of the cycle is to overcome the epistemological limits of class dialectics – bourgeoisie / proletariat – and imply the possibilities of cooperation among different sectors of society for a common purpose in the

¹³⁵ Palou, *Episodio 1: Las paralelas que se cruzan*.

¹³⁶ Moya, *The Oxford Handbook of Latin American History*, 12.

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*, 169.

framework of spatial interactions. Similarly, this representation is helpful to show that elites as actors, though prone to be conservative players, can also switch positions and initiate or play a crucial role in social change.

Rather than engaging in the particularities of each case of social revolution or change, what this theoretical model attempts to explain, when referring to actors, is that the results of any interaction among regimes of territorialisation are determined by structural relations internal to national societies and by their international contexts¹³⁸. Thus, the explanatory model presented here seeks to link macro analysis at a trans-national level with external variables¹³⁹.

Following this line of thought, after having reviewed extensively the creation of Latin American nations, we can state that they were shaped by the conflicts arising among local colonial structures, their integration into the world economy and their different conceptions about modernity. The result of this crisis phase and of these interactions was the creation of highly unequal societies ruled by proto-bourgeoisies and agro-exporting elites vulnerable to the calculations of stronger European and North American capitalists.

In particular, the prolonged castes and class inequality of the colony coupled with the land dispossession processes became the main catalysts for constant revolution and social change due to the unfair social and economic conditions suffered by the big masses of farmers¹⁴⁰. As it had been mentioned before, the social and economic gaps in the region are the most unequal in the world.

In this sense, the classification of transnational actors, actors from above and actors from below responds to, first, the internal inequality between peasants or popular groups (below) and national elites (above), and second the relation between these two sectors of society and transnational actors regarding their integration to global capitalism.

The alignment and cooperation among actors does not depend on their class status but on wider issues at play when defining the paths of national economies and politics. For instance, during independence, there was initially a strong alliance between Spanish forces and natives against national creoles supported by British money. Change came when the national project offered more advantages to

¹³⁸ Trimberger, *Revolution from above: military bureaucrats and development in Japan, Turkey, Egypt and Peru*, 2.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, 2.

¹⁴⁰ Arruda, "La reforma agraria en América Latina."

subaltern masses by offering equality and “liberation” from colonial regimes of exploitation; to national elites by assuring their access to power and by setting them free to trade with Europe; and to international capitalistic actors by opening new markets and integrating them to European controlled systems like the financial one.

The alignment of actors and resources in a time when the Spanish Empire was crumbling both in Europe and the Americas displaced the colonial system. However, differences among former allies emerged once the national system was imposed due to the new internal and external conditions. There are clear differences among liberal and conservative elites over land distribution and the elimination of colonial privileges. In certain cases, such as Guatemala, there have been alliances between conservatives and natives defending certain colonial institutions in order to stop the new partition of power and land backed by liberals and British interests.

There were also trends towards nationalism resulting from the rejection of foreign interference that united actors from above and below against the threat of European imperialism geopolitical interests and of the United States efforts to consolidate the western hemisphere as its sphere of influence. In the same way, the struggles between the European empires’ interests and those of the United States produced many reactions and alignments among different actors ranging from support, contestation or reaffirmation of national sovereignty.

Among all these struggles, the actors that managed to impose a dominant regime of territorialisation in the centre of spatial concepts were the export-oligarchies allied with international actors – namely European and North American companies and governments – to protect the primary exporting system that benefited both sides; the former group by having access to political power imposed an agenda that enabled them to enlarge their privileges, properties and foreign trade-share; the latter by dominating these elites through economic ties, national debts and soft power (namely the obsession of Latin American elites to identify with European whiteness and wealth)¹⁴¹. In doing so, they established an informal empire, that is to say, a way to exert indirect control of territories¹⁴².

Even though the cooperation between these actors dominated the national social dynamics of the region, the rampant inequalities that this system produced in societies became the main catalysts for armed revolutions of peasants and

¹⁴¹ Gobat, "The invention of Latin America: a transnational history of anti-imperialism, democracy, and race."

¹⁴² Gärtner, "Informal Empire."

nationalist movements aimed to change the status quo in the continent. The efforts to keep or challenge the dominant spatial organisation and to defeat or support the revolutionary movements both internally and externally defined the periods of spatial synchronisation we are looking for in this work.

3. REGIONAL JUNCTURES OF SPATIAL SYNCHRONISATION

After independence, Latin America passed through a 30 years period of civil wars and political instability due to the processes of consolidation of nation states¹⁴³. The internal negotiation and contestation processes that took place renewed differences among actors and determined the different paths that each country went down in the following years. From the creation of national societies until the end of the 19th century, governments throughout the region took various forms like empires (Brazil until 1889), military regimes, dictatorships, democracies, etc.; each of them dealing in their own ways with the interaction of regional common spatialities. For this reason, there was not a Latin American spatial synchronisation until the early 20th century.

As social and economic inequalities are the main driver of revolution and thus social change, this chapter will aim to identify periods of generalized conflict in order to reveal the historical junctures the region has experienced throughout history. By doing this, we will test the theoretical model created in the previous chapter in a way that unveils how spatialisations interact beyond the nation state and synchronize constantly in the region giving way to transnational shared historical processes.

3.1. Latin America before the Great Depression

Between the end of the 19th century and the Great Depression, the oligarchic rural sector and the multinational corporations consolidated their dominant status using the state to impose an unequal social and economic system favourable to them yet unjust to the majority of the population of the region¹⁴⁴. During these decades, American and British companies – especially those focused on fruits, mining and afterwards oil – got involved in a competition for concessions to exploit Latin American natural resources, plunging the new born countries in the geopolitical calculations of the world powers¹⁴⁵.

¹⁴³ Ibid.

¹⁴⁴ Mahon, "Was Latin America too rich to prosper? Structural and Political Obstacles to Export-Led Industrial Growth," 249.

¹⁴⁵ Santana, "La revolución mexicana y su repercusión en América Latina," 107.

By the early 20th century the balance of power between the United States and Great Britain shifted in favour of the Americans who successfully prevented the expansion of European economic domination in the region and consolidated the Western Hemisphere as its exclusive sphere of influence through the use of force and the establishment of governments favourable to its trade and security interests.

During this period, US forces occupied Veracruz (Mexico) and Haiti in 1914, the Dominican Republic in 1916, Nicaragua from 1912 to 1925 and from 1926 to 1933, and Cuba in 1906, 1912 and 1917. Furthermore, in 1903 Panama successfully seceded from Colombia due to US interests in the construction of the Panama Canal¹⁴⁶.

Even though discontent against foreign intervention and social injustice was constant and widespread immediately after the consolidation of nation states in the continent, the first insurgency that had an important large-scale impact was not until the Mexican revolution of 1910. Although the impact of this revolt is questionable in terms of land distribution and socio-economic equality, it constitutes a landmark event in Latin American history due to its character as the first movement that decried both liberal and conservative elites and placed autochthonous and indigenous perspectives into the centre of national politics¹⁴⁷.

By doing this, the revolution created an ideological space where intellectuals, students, the middle class and popular sectors from Mexico to Argentina, first, rejected the traditional links of elites with European prestige and power, second, embraced the ideal of Latin American nationalism as the driver of the nation's future, and third, opposed to the expansionism of the United States and Europe in the Western Hemisphere¹⁴⁸. The recovery of the land and resources possessed by foreign companies was a central point of the revolutionary agenda¹⁴⁹.

Although there were no spatial synchronisations after the Mexican revolution, the ideals of a national revolutionary state fighting the unfair extractivist spatialisation imposed by foreign powers remained influential in future events that triggered conflict in the entire continent. Such examples being, the Sandinist

¹⁴⁶ Ibid., 115.

¹⁴⁷ Adelman, "Independence in Latin America," 157.

¹⁴⁸ Katz, "Reseña de la revolución mexicana en América Latina. Interés políticos, itinerarios intelectuales" De Pablo Yankelevich," 653.

¹⁴⁹ Santana, "La revolución mexicana y su repercusión en América Latina," 107.

Revolution in Nicaragua (1926-1933), the reformist government of Arbenz in Guatemala (1944-1954) and finally the Cuban Revolution (1944-1959)¹⁵⁰.

The example of a national state vindicating unjust social structures became the starting point for the emergence of populist regimes in Latin America. During the first decade of the 20th century, the governments of Mexico, Peru and Argentina were pioneers in the creation of legislation that recognized social and labour rights¹⁵¹. It is inevitable to find commonalities between the reforms taken by populist regimes in Latin America and the political movements that established the bases for social welfare systems in Europe and the United States, especially the reforms initiated by Theodore Roosevelt in the early 20th century. The North American and European thought on human and labour rights, as a new conception of modernity – a modernity that included the recognition of rights to popular groups – influenced importantly Latin American masses that found in populism the only way to include their social demands into the national political agendas dominated by the traditional oligarchies.

From 1930 on, populism in Latin America emerged as an important reformist political movement in many countries, and came in the form of caudillist presidents or as relevant pressure groups in national politics. At the same time, local elites and transnational companies threatened by this reformist wave (and backed by the United States government) started to position dictatorships favourable to their geopolitical and commercial interests in the region, especially in Central America and the Caribbean¹⁵².

In this way, as American backed regimes stopped the implementation of populist regimes seeking for social justice, armed resistance and national movements made difficult to landowning elites to obtain its objectives¹⁵³. The result of this struggle will be conditioned by the external shock of the Great Depression started in 1929¹⁵⁴.

3.2. The Great Depression

There is a broad consensus among historians that the Great Depression was a watershed for Latin America. The direct economic impact of the slump varied

¹⁵⁰ Ibid., 112.

¹⁵¹ Pigna, *Episodio 1: Las paralelas que se cruzan*.

¹⁵² Santana, "La revolución mexicana y su repercusión en América Latina," 115.

¹⁵³ Gärtner, "Informal Empire."

¹⁵⁴ Santana, "La revolución mexicana y su repercusión en América Latina," 115.

from country to country, however, from a regional perspective we can consider this as a juncture of spatial synchronisation that weakened the export-oligarchic order and opened up the state and the societies to a more national and popular-centred ways of organisation¹⁵⁵.

In his survey of the global impact of the Depression, for example, Dietmar Rothermund views populism as the main political consequence of the slump in the region. This is a view repeated in Robert Findlay and Kevin O' Rourke's recent survey of the world economy: the result across much of Latin America was populism, with urban workers and capitalists combining to seize power from the traditionally outward oriented landowning elites. The Great Depression certainly had a decisive impact on economic thought in Latin America, and the structuralism pioneered in the 1940's by Raúl Prebisch was a direct product of how he and others interpreted the slump¹⁵⁶.

Rather than a claim to generalisation, it is important to note the common process that the Great Depression triggered in the region by breaking the status quo and shaping the nation states and their relations with internal societies in previous unconceivable ways. *In structural terms, the slump accelerated the processes of social and political change, such as industrialisation, urbanisation, internal migration, the expansion of the state, and its role in both the economy and society, which had broader consequences for the political configuration of much of the region¹⁵⁷.*

The Great Depression showed that the foundations upon which the old order had been built were profoundly shaky and that the moment was ripe for major change or even outright revolution¹⁵⁸. During this period, the crisis weakened the dominant land-based oligarchies and their foreign allies and reduced its capacity to oppose social policies and land/income redistribution policies. In addition, the Depression served as a catalyst for change because, to varying degrees, it weakened the established elites and forced societies to manufacture the industrialized goods they previously imported from Europe and the United States¹⁵⁹. *There might be little resistance to reforms implemented when there is a world depression and when*

¹⁵⁵ Drinot and Knight, *The Great Depression in Latin America*, 5.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 5.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 15.

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 6.

¹⁵⁹ Mahon, "Was Latin America too rich to prosper? Structural and Political Obstacles to Export-Led Industrial Growth," 256.

*industry becomes an emergent sector (especially if landowners have diversified into industry)*¹⁶⁰.

The catastrophe of the Great Depression pushed Latin American countries to undertake import substitution processes driven mainly by local industrial support, the creation of mixed enterprises, the imposition of tariff barriers and depreciations that made all imports expensive¹⁶¹. Despite all the adopted measures, the slump did not bring about a major shift in the region's economic orientation from export-led growth to import substitution industrialisation. Industrialisation was delayed and difficult to achieve politically because the traditional groups that commanded the majority of the productive base, the consumption share, and the political apparatus – that is to say the primary export sector – were still strong to pose fierce political resistance¹⁶².

The local power and influence of the land-based oligarchies allied with transnational forces became the main factor that determined the diverse results of the social, political and economic processes that took place after the Depression. In fact, industrialisation took place partially in places with big cities and strong middle classes where traditional oligarchies were weaker, namely Brazil, Chile, Mexico, Colombia, Argentina and Uruguay; at the same time, it failed in countries with bigger social gaps and stronger elites, such as those in Central America and the Caribbean¹⁶³.

*In Colombia, the export sector growth during the late 1930s was overshadowed by a remarkable rise of the manufacturing sector, particularly in the textile production. In Argentina, the export sector – meat, wheat – stagnated in real terms, but recovery was made possible thanks to the performance of the non-export sector, notably industry, transport and construction. Mexico benefited from major reforms in land tenure as well as from an expanding nationalized oil industry. Though Brazil recorded an important export recovery towards the end of the 1930s, its economy began to shift in favour of industry.... In the rest of the countries, though in a comparatively less pronounced way, the expansion of land and labour permitted a significant diversification in agriculture*¹⁶⁴.

¹⁶⁰ Eckstein, "The impact of revolution on social welfare in Latin America," 52.

¹⁶¹ Mahon, "Was Latin America too rich to prosper? Structural and Political Obstacles to Export-Led Industrial Growth," 258.

¹⁶² Ibid., 256.

¹⁶³ Martinez, "Latin America and the Great Depression."

¹⁶⁴ Ibid.

As it can be noticed, Latin American countries addressed the economic downturn at different speeds, in different ways and with different sectors of the economy playing different roles in the recovery of each country¹⁶⁵. Nevertheless, the commonality among these diverse results was the weakening of landowning elites due to the relative changes in the structure of the economies of the region. Although landowning and transnational actors were still powerful and influential, the effects of the crisis debilitated their power sufficiently enough for them not to be able to prevent certain reforms.

The Depression ousted liberal and conservative governments alike and replaced them with regimes of the opposite persuasion, and this forced the upcoming governments – whether aligned with land-based elites or not – to implement reforms responding to social demands to prevent the radicalisation of societies and in some cases civil wars. Every government change whether initiated by actors from above or actors from below had to invent new strategies for industrialisation adapted to idiosyncrasies and national social structures¹⁶⁶.

Even though governments throughout the region varied considerably from dictatorships to democracies and the reactions to the crisis were distinct according to local dynamics, in terms of regimes of territorialisation, the crisis of 1929 can be considered as a single and momentous process – a regional juncture of spatial synchronisation – because it accelerated economic, social and cultural transformation in the entire continent¹⁶⁷. By weakening the economic and social power of the traditional land-based elites and transnational actors, it opened the political space to new actors seeking a change in the kind of extractivist spatialisation that shaped Latin American societies. Following this thought, we can understand the crisis as a process that produced the expansion of the state at the expense of the extractivist spatialisation in order to meet the demands of new actors for economic, social and agrarian reforms in the framework of the world crisis.

The emergence of economically stronger and ideologically more assertive industrial bourgeoisies and middle classes – due to processes of industrialisation, migration and urbanisation – shifted the centre of national politics from export-led growth to inward-looking development¹⁶⁸. The crisis provoked a chain reaction that softened the extractivist spatialisation and the hierarchical social structures through

¹⁶⁵ Drinot and Knight, *The Great Depression in Latin America*, 3.

¹⁶⁶ Trimberger, *Revolution from above: military bureaucrats and development in Japan, Turkey, Egypt and Peru*, 10.

¹⁶⁷ Drinot and Knight, *The Great Depression in Latin America*, 15.

¹⁶⁸ Mahon, "Was Latin America too rich to prosper? Structural and Political Obstacles to Export-Led Industrial Growth," 258.

the action of the state. *Indeed, historians tend to agree that one of the key consequences of the Great Depression was a strengthening of the state*¹⁶⁹.

Also, an important element contributing to the state strengthening was the progressive wave taking over the liberal political thought in the United States and Europe. The transnational progressive ideology as a new conception of modern politics was embraced by Latin American popular masses as a manifestation against the economic injustices of the regional order and as the ideological tool for claiming long unsatisfied needs, mainly labour rights and agrarian reforms¹⁷⁰.

*Several post-Depression governments in Latin America ... implemented economic and social policies that however halting and inadequate, nevertheless signalled a new departure in terms not only of economic policy but more generally of nation-building and state formation*¹⁷¹. However, as this shock forced a reassessment of the assumptions and hierarchies that had underpinned the privilege of land-based elites, this also caused differing reactions from actors from above who orchestrated with its transnational allies contestations that varied from the establishment of authoritarian regimes (Argentina, Peru, Brazil and Cuba) to the furthering strengthening of military rule (as in much of Central America)¹⁷². Certainly, the slump created a political and ideological context favourable to change, although the direction of change varied from country to country¹⁷³.

Be as it may, the struggle between the attempts of reform and the attempts to keep the status quo gave way to mixed regimes that combined repression and social reform¹⁷⁴. *The social politics of the 1930s, which consisted primarily of social programs and social legislation that attempted to alleviate the impact of the crisis on working peoples, constituted one element, along with outright repression, that elites drew on to contain popular discontent and undermine the appeal of Communist and other radical movements throughout the region*¹⁷⁵.

A new emphasis on state action emerged equally in countries that were governed by the Right and by the Left and included policies developed by progressive governments such as those of Lázaro Cárdenas in Mexico, Arturo Alessandri in Chile, Juan Domingo Perón in Argentina and by conservative

¹⁶⁹ Drinot and Knight, *The Great Depression in Latin America*, 6.

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 6.

¹⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 6.

¹⁷² *Ibid.*, 6.

¹⁷³ *Ibid.*, 5.

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 6.

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 7.

*governments such as those of Getulio Vargas in Brazil and Oscar Benavides in Peru*¹⁷⁶.

Despite the differences among governments, the asymmetries of economic development and other factors, the Great Depression constitutes a unique period of spatial synchronisation. The simultaneous change in the regional interaction of regimes of territorialisation involved a widespread strengthening of the state, the weakening of traditional elites defending the extractivist regime, the reaction from above towards the political action of actors from below and other new elites, the generalized adoption of social policies, urbanisation and migration to cities. These, as effects that go beyond the nation state, unveil the spatial connections that define and unite in Latin America in global historical processes. In fact, if we tend to over-emphasise the study of the nation state of this period, the diversity among governments will hinder the comprehension of the scope of the Depression in the continent. For this reason, an approach that embraces the analysis of interaction among regimes of territorialisation is useful to understand this juncture in a bigger picture.

As it was mentioned before, the asymmetries in which external processes affect societies and the local dynamics to which they are subject determine the unequal results that emerge after a period of synchronisation. The Great Depression as a historical juncture in Latin America encompasses the phase between 1929 when national populist movements started to emerge and 1950 when most of them had already taken over power, became important movements in national politics, or were overthrown by other local and transnational political actors.

After 1950, many of the populist regimes and political movements that emerged in Latin America were ousted, disappeared without trace – such as the Ibañism in Chile –, disengaged from its revolutionary ideals embracing a limited reform character or consolidated alliances with the United States, as in the case of Acción Democrática in Venezuela¹⁷⁷. In Mexico, the revolution that reached its zenith with the populist Lázaro Cárdenas (1934-1940) ended the hegemony of the farming economy of the “hacienda” and positioned a new national bourgeoisie in power¹⁷⁸. Once the reform took place, the new elites disengaged from the ideals of the revolution and engaged in pacts with other elites and transnational interests¹⁷⁹.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid., 6.

¹⁷⁷ Ramos, *Historia de la nación latinoamericana*, 391.

¹⁷⁸ Santana, "La revolución mexicana y su repercusión en América Latina," 116.

¹⁷⁹ Ramos, *Historia de la nación latinoamericana*, 391.

By the end of the Second World War, the period of national security dictatorships starts in Latin America due to the failure of populist movements, the signs of a new economic crisis and, most importantly, to the Cold War geopolitics that produced a wave of American interventionism in the region.

3.3. Military regimes and agrarian reforms

After the emergence and limited success of the populist regimes in Latin America, another spatial synchronisation took place in the continent by 1960 and 1980. This time, the Cold War context pushed the United States government to take diplomatic and military actions in order to prevent the expansion of communism in the Western Hemisphere and guarantee their national security.

Through the U.S. Army School of the Americas (SOA), the United States trained military officials of Latin American nations in order to fight communism in the entire hemisphere. Most of its graduates became prominent military and political figures in their own countries not only because of their bloody anti-communist counter-insurgency, but also because some of them like Jorge Rafael Videla (Argentina), Hugo Bánzer Suárez (Bolivia), Guillermo Rodríguez Lara (Ecuador), José Ríos Montt (Guatemala), Manuel Noriega (Panama), Juan Velasco Alvarado (Peru), became repressive dictators or heads of state¹⁸⁰.

The SOA played key roles in civil wars and destabilisation attempts against democratically elected or reformist governments in the entire region. The interventionism of the United States during the Cold War period reinforced the monopoly of violence in Latin American states, protected the traditional landowning elites and the extractivist character of national economies, and also provoked the emergence of armed resistance from subalterns, mainly in the form of guerrillas¹⁸¹.

The emergence of guerrillas in Latin America during the 60s is linked to the simultaneous emergence of military governments in almost every country in the region. Between 1962 and 1963 there were six military coups: Argentina and Peru in 1962; Guatemala, Ecuador, Dominican Republic and Honduras in 1963. In 1964 a coup took place in Brazil and Argentina and Peru were destabilized in 1966 and 1968 respectively¹⁸².

¹⁸⁰ Pigna, *Episodio 1: Las paralelas que se cruzan*.

¹⁸¹ Gärtner, "The Guatemalan Revolution."

¹⁸² Palou, *Episodio 1: Las paralelas que se cruzan*.

*During the 1960s and early 1970s, most of the Latin American countries fell in hands of military dictatorships. With the exception of Costa Rica, Colombia, Mexico and Venezuela, military governments supported by the US ruled the whole continent. At the same time, revolutionary left guerrillas appeared in Argentina, Bolivia, Colombia, Costa Rica, Chile, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Paraguay, Peru, Republica Dominicana, Uruguay and Venezuela*¹⁸³.

The first encounter between Latin American revolutions and the American Cold War interventionism took place in Guatemala during the decline of populist regimes in the region. This first experience determined the future action of both revolutionary and counter-revolutionary national and transnational movements in the period of national security dictatorships. In fact, historians have described the way in which the United States government and the United Fruit Company dealt with the Guatemalan Revolution as a critical turning point in the American domination in Latin America; for this reason, this is the perfect example to unveil the diverse actors, interests and forces that determined the regional dynamics during this period¹⁸⁴.

The ten years of the Guatemalan revolution (1944-1954) positioned the Colonel Jacobo Árbenz as the major figure of national politics. Once he was democratically elected as president from 1951 to 1954, he started in 1952 a landmark program of agrarian reform that became greatly influential across the region. In a country where the 0.3 per cent of all farms contained more than half of the nation's farmland, he expropriated the 40 per cent of the land possessed by the United Fruit Company (mostly uncultivated land), the largest landowner and employer¹⁸⁵ whose annual profits accounted for twice the revenue of the Guatemalan government¹⁸⁶.

Rather than a communist regime, the nature of Arbenz's government was a democratic reformative one, a national project seeking the development of the country through the assertion of social rights of peasants and the breakup of the United Fruit Company (UFCo) monopoly and power in the country which was

¹⁸³ Bucheli, "Good dictator, bad dictator: United Fruit Company and economic nationalism in Central America in the twentieth century."

¹⁸⁴ Forster, *The Time of Freedom : Campesino Workers in Guatemala's October Revolution*, 118.

¹⁸⁵ Schlesinger and Kinzer, "Bitter Fruit," 40.

¹⁸⁶ Immerman, *The CIA in Guatemala: the foreign policy of intervention*, 73-76.

considered as an obstacle. An American historian observed the Guatemalan situation in the following terms:

For many Guatemalans the United Fruit Company was the United States. ... In the past, UFCo and its sister companies had bribed politicians, pressured governments and intimidated opponents to gain extremely favourable concessions. To the Guatemalans it appeared that their country was being mercilessly exploited by foreign interests which took huge profits without making any significant contributions to the nation's welfare. In the eyes of many Guatemalans, the foreign corporations had to pay for their past crimes and for the years in which they had operated hand-in-hand with the Estrada Cabrera and Ubico dictatorships to exploit the Guatemalan people. ... It is not difficult to see how [Guatemalans could believe] that their country was economically a captive of the United States corporations¹⁸⁷.

In order for the government to achieve its national purposes it needed to undertake extremes measures considering the also extreme and unfair extractivist system embodied in the company and other large landowners. For this reason, the agrarian reform and the new labour and tax codes produced the political radicalisation of the most powerful sectors of society including those linked with the banana and coffee exportation and obviously the UFCo. Although the terms of the reforms were fair¹⁸⁸, the reaction of the company was disproportionate¹⁸⁹.

The UFCo responded with an intensive lobbying campaign against Arbenz in the Congress and through the Secretary of State John Foster Dulles who had close ties to the company¹⁹⁰. Also, by referring to the measures taken against it as deliberate government political actions to harass the company, it fuelled fake communist fears in the heart of American politics¹⁹¹. *The company hired a corps of influential lobbyists and talented publicists to create a public and private climate in the United States favourable to Arbenz's overthrow. Working behind the scenes beginning in 1950, these men influenced and reshaped the attitudes of the American public toward Guatemala¹⁹².*

¹⁸⁷ Schlesinger and Kinzer, "Bitter Fruit," 72.

¹⁸⁸ The amount of compensation offered by Guatemala for the expropriated land averaged about \$2.99 per acre. The company had paid \$1.48 per acre when it bought the land nearly twenty years earlier.

¹⁸⁹ Ibid., 76.

¹⁹⁰ Ibid., 76.

¹⁹¹ Ibid., 72.

¹⁹² Ibid., 76.

Although Eisenhower did not want to break the Good Neighbour Policy, the communist paranoia provoked by the UFCo and the developments of the Cold War pushed him to approve the coup in 1953¹⁹³. In fact, the CIA considered the country to be infiltrated by communists despite the ban of the communist party in Guatemala between 1945 and 1951¹⁹⁴. Also, the concern that the success of the revolution in tandem with the democratic reformist character of Arbenz government would inspire similar movements that could destabilize the neighbour Central American allied dictatorships, contributed importantly to the final decision¹⁹⁵.

In 1954 Arbenz resigned, giving way to the dictatorship of Carlos Castillo Armas who reverted the agrarian reform – returning land to large landowners. After Castillo, Guatemala was ruled only by dictatorships or military regimes until 1996. The main conclusions that can be drawn from the Guatemalan revolution to explain the dynamics of the region during the Cold War and the dictatorship period are the following:

1. The United States main strategic concern in Latin America was the stability of the region but under its control in order to avoid the spread of communism in the continent. In this sense, the United States government would intervene in any Latin American legitimate democratic government if the reforms undertaken radicalized society, or affected their geopolitical interests. The most suitable option during the Cold War was to back-up stable dictatorships that could enforce stability and prevent labour unrest, unionism and the growth of communism.
2. In most of the cases, the economic interests of multinational corporations synced with the geopolitical ones of the United States government through many channels. A critical force binding these two was the communist paranoia taking over American public and national Latin American elites. Even though in many countries communist militants were largely overestimated and there was no a significant threat to American national security, fear drove the over-reaction of American foreign policy. This fear was fuelled and profited by corporations defending extractivist and labour exploitation regimes. For these reasons, any kind of reform aimed to tackle the power and influence of multinational corporations in favour of social and economic rights was labeled as communism. It is important to notice though that if the situation in Latin American countries

¹⁹³ Gärtner, "The Guatemalan Revolution."

¹⁹⁴ Gaddis, *We Now Know: Rethinking Cold War History*, 177.

¹⁹⁵ Streeter, *Managing the counterrevolution: The United States and Guatemala, 1954-1961*, 4.

affected multinational corporations but was positive in geopolitical terms, the United States government would act according to the latter.

3. The United States failed in its objective to implement stable dictatorships. The extent of violent repression from the state, the multinational corporations and the American forces against peasants, unions, workers, etc., radicalized the revolutionary forces. They found in communism and armed resistance the only and natural way out of foreign domination, dependency and underdevelopment¹⁹⁶. The Guatemalan, and afterwards the Cuban, revolutions reinforced the view that the highly unequal social systems in Latin America could actually be defeated with a revolutionary army that could defend agrarian reforms¹⁹⁷. Ernesto Guevara who witnessed the successes and failures of the revolution during his time in Guatemala brought this perspective to Cuba.

The success of the Cuban Revolution in 1959 created a political space among students as well as working and middle class Latin Americans by demonstrating that American interventionism and the power of multinational corporations could be stopped in favour of national social and economic claims. This triumph reformulated both the revolutionary militancy and strategies against interventionism and also the counter-revolutionary reaction from multinational companies and the United States¹⁹⁸.

It is important to mention that the Cuban revolution initially did not have a radical inclination towards communism. In fact, the 26th of July Movement led by Fidel Castro was a conglomeration of different guerrillas fighting for the same agrarian reforms sought since the end of the Spanish colonial rule in Cuba. In this sense, the final revolution of 1959 was the culmination of the reformist revolts that at first triggered the Cuban independence process, and later evolved against American imperialism, which kept the same highly unequal spatialisations of the colony¹⁹⁹.

Once Castro started to implement the agrarian reform, he expropriated large lands and assets from American companies, especially those focused on sugar. This, as in the case of Guatemala, provoked the reaction of the United States government and US-based companies to start to plot the Bay of Pigs invasion. The over-reaction of the United States government posed a threat to Cuban

¹⁹⁶ Sánchez, *Episodio 1: Las paralelas que se cruzan*.

¹⁹⁷ Gärtner, "The Guatemalan Revolution."

¹⁹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid.

independence and played a decisive role in the radicalisation of the Cuban revolution and the open embrace of the communist ideal²⁰⁰.

Castro declared for the first time the communist character of the revolution in 1961, right after the Bay of Pigs invasion. Although it is not possible to deny that he could have had an ideological motivation, it is also undeniable that the geopolitical situation was another decisive factor for him to take this position. The political sanctions, such as the embargo, the material invasion of American forces and the possibility of another military offensive, posed a serious threat to the survival of Castro's regime. The United States, by cornering the Cuban revolution, left Castro with no other option than to consolidate an alliance with the Soviet Union.

The persistence and survival of the Cuban revolution, now with a clear and public orientation towards communism, and the missile crisis of 1962, influenced two main things: the determination of the United States to avoid the spread of the Cuban example in Latin America by any means and the conviction that armed resistance was the only way to fight the social injustice and the backward extractivism common in the entire region.

Also, the Cuban revolution caused confusion in American politics for being the first case in which the United States had totally failed in both imposing its anti-communist agenda and in defending its economic interests in Latin America. Most of the political, diplomatic and military authorities had different approaches on how to deal with the situation in the region. For this reason, the reaction of the United States from the 60s to the 80s was ambivalent in the sense that it varied in contradictory ways: namely from violent repression like in the case of Nicaragua to the tolerance to reforms and economic aid like in the case of Peru and Ecuador²⁰¹.

Aware that poverty made communism attractive to lower classes, the US government encouraged and endorsed agrarian reform programs in the region through the recently created Alliance for Progress. At the same time, it supported anti-insurgency policies and military coups from actors (especially multinational companies) whose interests were against agrarian reforms and whose power, monopolies, labour practices and land ownership prolonged social inequality²⁰².

²⁰⁰ Ibid.

²⁰¹ Bucheli, "Good dictator, bad dictator: United Fruit Company and economic nationalism in Central America in the twentieth century", 26.

²⁰² Ibid., 28.

Although the United States established dictatorships or allied military regimes in every Latin American country, the effects of the previous period of synchronisation (namely populism) along with the emergence of a stronger middle class and a small industrial bourgeoisie changed the dynamics of the region. In fact, the new wave of dictators from the 60s to the 80s differed from those of the early 20th century that defended the oligarchic agrarian order or that interrupted the expansion of civil rights in many countries after the populist decline in Latin America. These dictators, although repressive and still loyal to American interests, were open and prone to transform politically and economically the countries in which they had emerged due to having experienced the changes of the 30s.

This was certainly the case of Brazil, Chile, Uruguay and Argentina that benefited the most from the industrialisation of the post-depression period and whose labour unions and middle classes were stronger and thus more able to exert an important political pressure against dominant economic and political actors, in comparison with other Latin American countries²⁰³. In the case of Central America, although it had also experienced certain economic diversification and its middle class relatively increased during the 30s, these new actors were not powerful enough to break the alliance between the government and large national and international monopolies, and consequently the state/society relationship in this region were extremely violent.

Despite these differences in the region, during the 60s all Latin American countries were swept by strong winds of nationalist aspirations in which the key issue was the materialisation of agrarian reforms²⁰⁴. Whether South or Central America, reforms took place all over the continent due to, first, the United States concern that communism could be reinforced as repression in Latin America increased, and second, the oil crisis.

*The United States in order to control the revolutionary tide encouraged Latin American governments to follow some social reforms benefiting the working class, something that translated in new labour codes and the creation of agrarian reform legislation in most countries*²⁰⁵. As tension in Central America started to grow due to poverty, foreign exploitation and authoritarian repression from dictators, by the 1970s, major civil wars and pro-communist revolutions erupted in the sub-region. In particular, the United States feared that victory by communist

²⁰³ Ibid., 28.

²⁰⁴ Ibid., 28.

²⁰⁵ Ibid., 28.

forces would threaten the Panama Canal stability and would separate politically South America and the United States due to the domino effect.

Also, the oil crisis of the 1970s forced the right-wing rulers to weaken their traditional alliance with multinational companies. Local governments imposed higher taxes and demanded a better participation in the extractivist activities. The crisis generated a new type of alliance between the right-wing dictators, democratically elected presidents, local landowners, labour unions, and left-wing politicians, especially in Central America where the United States and corporate control of societies was stronger²⁰⁶. In this sub-region there was a particular campaign against multinational banana corporations which were weakened by the crises and which did not get the support of the United States government due to the more important geopolitical context of the Cold War²⁰⁷.

*The oil crisis that started in 1973 had a terrible effect in Central America. All the countries imported oil (whose price increased 400 per cent in a few months), their economies were still highly dependent on banana and coffee exports (representing around 80 per cent of the region's exports), and the area was still the poorest in Latin America. This crisis forced the local governments to realign their alliances and follow protectionist policies*²⁰⁸.

The agenda of multinational corporations coincided with that of the United States government until the 70s because their alliance with local generals and landowners was a source of grass roots control. The oil crisis changed the world's social and economic dynamics too rapidly, and in Latin America it created the conditions for a more intensified local turmoil that threatened the existence of different military regimes. In this context, different rulers in the region were willing to break their alliance with the multinational corporations and approach the labour and people's demands²⁰⁹.

The alliance of multinational corporations and the autocratic right lasted as long as the multinational's operations provided a constant flow of income and economic stability. Under those circumstances, an alliance between the government, the elite, and the company against the labour movement made sense.

²⁰⁶ Ibid., 28.

²⁰⁷ Ibid., 28.

²⁰⁸ Ibid., 28.

²⁰⁹ Ibid., 29.

*However, this alliance collapsed when the governments and the elite needed extra rents in times of economic crisis*²¹⁰.

If the demands of governments were not satisfied by corporations and reforms to mitigate the effects of the crisis were resisted by them, *the anti-labour union government were even willing to ally themselves with the labour movement in order to increase the country's rents and decrease the possibility of political turmoil*²¹¹. *These initiatives were not a result of changes in the rulers' ideology but strategies of realpolitik. In fact, it is worth remembering that these military remained as strong allies of the US in the war against communism. The previous alliances were created by external factors (arrival of FDI) but also collapsed by external factors (oil crisis)*²¹².

The cases of Colonel Omar Torrijos in Panama and General Oswaldo López Arrellano in Honduras are clear examples of the shift in alliances during the crucial years of the early 1970s. Both captured power during the 60s through US backed military coups targeted against democratically elected presidents who tried to implement agrarian reforms that were opposed by the Army and landowning elites²¹³. Pressured by the oil crisis in 1974, the governments of Costa Rica, Guatemala, Honduras, Panama and Colombia created a banana export cartel called the UPEB, claiming that the producing countries were getting an unfair share of banana exports profits. *In fact, Central American countries were getting 11 per cent of the income generated in the banana market, while the multinationals received 37 per cent and the retailers in the consumer countries earned 19 per cent*²¹⁴.

For this reason, the UPEB main goals were to impose export taxes and find a way to break the concessions previously granted to multinational companies in their countries which commonly varied between 58 and 99 years and sometimes they had an indefinite deadline. *In order to impose a tax on bananas that could reach 55 dollars per ton, the governments of Costa Rica, Honduras and Panama passed laws that nullified the previous contracts between the governments and the multinationals in 1947, 1975 and 1976, respectively. While a democratically elected government in Costa Rica took these measures, they were also passed by*

²¹⁰ Ibid., 30.

²¹¹ Ibid., 30.

²¹² Ibid., 30.

²¹³ Ibid., 32.

²¹⁴ Ibid., 32.

*the US backed military regimes of López Arellano and Torrijos in Honduras and Panama*²¹⁵.

These laws not only increased taxes but also eliminated many of the generous concessions the foreign corporations had enjoyed before the crisis. Through this example we can unveil how external flows, as well as the similar ways Latin American countries are connected to the world economy, can affect the interaction of regimes of territorialisation and, importantly, increase or decrease the scope of each of them – in this case extractivism – in the region.

The multinational corporations did not remain passive towards these changes. Both the United Brands and the Standard Fruit protested by interrupting their shipments and by threatening the countries with export strikes, layoffs and coups conspiracies²¹⁶. However, this time the foreign companies did not get aid from the US when conflicting with Central American governments. In fact, the producing countries even got loans for reform programs from the Inter-American Development Bank and the International Monetary Fund. The United States government, by dealing with the Cold War and an oil crisis, was not willing to fight over bananas and could not afford to lose allied and stable dictatorships²¹⁷.

Torrijos who fought the United Fruit Company in Panama through a nationalist and sovereign discourse became a popular politician in Latin America after he materialized expropriation and labour codes. For the United States the reforms taken at the expense of its international companies were a small price for keeping the critical Panama Canal Zone stable. In the case of López Arellano in Honduras, although he came to power with American support, after breaking the monopoly of the banana multinational corporations, he distributed the lands expropriated to Standard Fruit Company to 44.700 families and created 900 peasants cooperatives²¹⁸.

This was not only a tendency in Central America. In fact, agrarian reforms started to materialize in the entire region due to the transnational and local conditions of these years that precipitated a wave of change. The American acquiescence of reform and the reduced support to multinational companies gave way to agrarian reforms that could be labelled in different categories depending on the power and influence of the actors supporting the agro-extractivist regime. As it

²¹⁵ Ibid., 30.

²¹⁶ Ibid., 32.

²¹⁷ Ibid., 30.

²¹⁸ Ibid., 32.

was mentioned before, this regime was deeply rooted in small nations and economies – namely Central America, if compared to bigger and more liberal countries like Mexico, Brazil or Argentina.

García distinguishes the Latin American different agrarian reforms as structural, conventional and marginal. The structural reforms emerged from violent and revolutionary processes that produced changes in property structures giving way to new forms of social organisation²¹⁹. The reforms undertaken during the Mexican Revolution of 1910, the Bolivian Revolution of 1952, the failed reform of the Guatemalan Revolution of 1952 and the Cuban Revolution of 1959, were the only ones of a structural character because the scope of the conflict forced the permanent redefinition the society-state relations of each nation. These reforms became the model to follow for other countries by inaugurating and inspiring a new nationalism and revolutionary wave in the region²²⁰.

The conventional reforms were the result of processes conditioned by the interrelation of forces between institutionalized political parties. The consensual character of these processes produced moderate reforms that modified the monopoly over land without affecting other aspects of traditional society as was true in the case of structural reforms. Most of the reforms that took place in Latin America were consensual or conventional and they represented a compromise that pretended to decrease the rural conflict and pressure in different countries²²¹. These are the cases of Venezuela in 1960, Colombia in 1968, Peru in 1969 and Paraguay in 1965²²².

These reforms represented an important transfer of land from landowners to peasants. Although the scope of each reform was limited to the local political situation and in some cases, namely Guatemala and Chile, the new military governments started counter-reform policies; land was still distributed to peasants. In many of these countries latifundist agriculture became an intermediate sub-sector between the modern commercial agricultural sector– hegemonized by the agrobusiness – and the traditional peasant sector dedicated to a subsistence production and the sale of surpluses in the national market²²³.

²¹⁹ Allegrét, "La evolución y tendencias de las reformas agrarias en América Latina", 15.

²²⁰ De Arruda Sampaio, "La reforma agraria en América Latina : Una Revolución Frustrada", 20.

²²¹ Allegrét, "La evolución y tendencias de las reformas agrarias en América Latina.", 15.

²²² Ibid.

²²³ De Arruda Sampaio, "La reforma agraria en América Latina : Una Revolución Frustrada.", 22.

Finally, the marginal reforms were those only aimed to decrease social pressure, to moderate the latifundist system without eliminating it, and replace private colonisation activities with infrastructures and services²²⁴. This was the case of most of the countries in the region where the state could not alter significantly the indexes of concentration of land property. Most of the reform programs undertaken in Ecuador, Brazil, Honduras, or Dominican Republic were sponsored by the Alliance of Progress during the 60s with the objective of creating a middle farmer class between the traditional peasant mass and the great agricultural property. The evident concern of the United States and of Latin American governments was to prevent the Cuban revolution virus in the continent.

As we can appreciate in the Table 1, the results of these pseudo-reforms were poor²²⁵, in fact, the reforms with the biggest impact were those few of a revolutionary or consensual character while the marginal reforms common to the majority of the countries of the region were superficial.

Table 1
Land distributed and families benefited by agrarian reform programs

Country	Period	Families benefited	Surface in ha.
Argentina	-	-	-
Bolivia	1953 – 1965	171.932	6'198,232.83
Brazil	1967	2.519	37,296.00
Brazil	1985	115.000	4'700,000.00
Colombia	1961 – 1966	36.389	1'415,173.00
Costa Rica	1962 – 1965	3.571	83,655.00
Cuba	1959 – 1966	200.000	7'200,000.00 ²²⁶
Chile	1964 – 1967	4.827	428,000.00
Ecuador	1964 – 1966	23.180	570,965.00
El Salvador	1950 – 1965	6.200	32,500.00
Guatemala	1955 – 1963	25.174	158,377.00
Honduras	1962 – 1965	2.588	42,293.00
Mexico	1961 – 1965	169,577	11'801,650.00
Nicaragua	1963 – 1966	1.312	28,434.00
Panama	1963 – 1965	811	9,237.00
Paraguay	1954 – 1965	44.750	1'393,098.00
Peru	1963 – 1966	26.000	920,000.00
Dominican Republic	1962 – 1965	3.348	2,358.00
Uruguay	1815	-	-
Venezuela	1959 – 1966	131.250	3'400,000.00

Green: Structural reforms

Yellow: Conventional reforms

Source: Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations. Special Committee on Agrarian Reform²²⁷.

²²⁴ Allegrét, "La evolución y tendencias de las reformas agrarias en América Latina", 14.

²²⁵ De Arruda Sampaio, "La reforma agraria en América Latina : Una Revolución Frustrada", 20.

²²⁶ Furtado, *La economía latinoamericana: formación histórica y problemas contemporáneos*, 334.

²²⁷ Torres, "La reforma agraria en América Latina," 8.

In most of the countries with a marginal reform the natural resources exploitations and agriculture requiring large surfaces were relegated to frontier zones with few or virtually no population. In contrast, the populated zones targeted by the reforms experienced a modernisation process of the traditional agriculture. In these places, the commercial agriculture of small and middle farmers surged at the expense of colonial enterprises and big landowners. However, due to the lack of access to factors of production, know-how and the national and international markets, the beneficiaries of these reforms were not capable of using the land they had received adequately²²⁸.

In fact, the land and agrarian problem in Latin America was far from solved, even in the countries where structural reforms took place. Economically speaking, every Latin American country despite experiencing limited industrialisations and agrarian reforms, still had to deal with masses of landless farmers and underemployed people – mainly with indigenous roots – affected by discrimination and poverty. The structural inequality linking poverty, agriculture and race is common to the entire region, and it is also the main driver of social conflict and historical developments. This inequality coming from the colonial times and over which national societies were founded, also provides a commonality that is the way in which social actors react to external shocks such as the Great Depression, the Oil Crisis or the Cold War.

As a conclusion of this chapter, we can state that Latin America, during its dictatorship period (1960-1980) experienced an acceleration of social conflicts due to external shocks that fostered agency and opened new spaces for actors seeking to weaken the still dominant landowning regimes. This was achieved through revolutionary movements that could materialize agrarian reforms. The agrarian reform in this sense became the embodiment of social and national claims not only for the marginalized sectors of the society but also for certain actors from above who saw the old-fashioned agrarian regime controlled by big landowners and multinational companies as an obstruction for development²²⁹.

The risk of revolution in the framework of the Cold War threatened the national security and business interests of transnational actors. Although the United States government sought stability in the region and American multinational corporations wanted to keep the landowning agrarian economic and social structures of Latin American countries, initially, both actors synchronized they

²²⁸ Allegrét, "La evolución y tendencias de las reformas agrarias en América Latina", 20.

²²⁹ Ibid.

reaction towards any attempts of social reform by intensifying the violent character of the state in order to keep societies under control and prevent the spread of communism.

Nevertheless, as repression from the state towards its population intensified and the oil crisis affected the region economically, and revolutionary/national movements became more aggressive to the extent of threatening the US imposed dictatorships and the foreign aimed stability. The social pressure from below that revolutionary movements exerted all around the continent forced a change in the Cold War approach in the United States government that allowed social and agrarian reforms at the expense of multinational corporations interests.

In this sense, this synchronisation period in Latin America consisted by both the imposition of dictatorships or regimes allied to American geopolitical interests and the materialisation of agrarian reforms. Also, although social inequalities were not changed in a relevant way, it is clear that there is again a weakening in the extractivist spatialisation due to the action of the state which was influenced by a new wave of revolutionary nationalism in the social imaginary of subaltern populations in the entire region. Consequently, the Latin American dictatorships or repressive governments of the 60s and the 80s differed from other previous regimes because this new nationalism became a dominant issue on which regimes had to base their legitimacy and power. For this reason, in order to secure their position in power political leaders could no longer ignore national demands and favour only traditional elites allied with transnational actors.

Zimelman states that a particular characteristic of the military regimes in Latin America during this period was the transformation of the armed forces into a political class that organized the state apparatus in a new different way, a way that followed a clear long-term political, ideological and structural projects and that according to the particularities of each country could adopt different institutional modalities²³⁰. In this way, the emergence of new political actors in this period changed the relations between the state and the society in that the dominant landowning political elite was weakened to favour middle economic actors still related with the extractivist regime²³¹.

²³⁰ Zemelman, "Los regímenes militares en América Latina? Problema coyuntural? (Notas para una discusión sobre la hegemonía burguesa)," 849.

²³¹ Ibid., 849.

3.4. Democracy, the debt crisis and neoliberalism

The 80s mark a turning point in the political and economic situation of the region. During this decade, Latin America experienced the longest and deepest wave of democratisation in its history, with broader implications than previous episodes of democratic and authoritarian alternations²³². The origins and consequences of this process inaugurated a new historical phase in the region in which broad electoral participation and respect for oppositional rights became widespread and relatively durable features of the political landscape²³³.

Modernisation processes during the 60s, the 70s and the 80s significantly broadened the base for democratic institutions and participation in political affairs. The commercialisation of agriculture, the relative weakening of the previous ruling landowning elite, urbanisation, increased literacy, access to mass communications, and other sets of related changes (although not directly promoting the shift to democracy), meant that previous established democratic institutions in the 80s became more inclusionary and participatory than in the past²³⁴.

The most important origins of this process of transformation are to be found in the interaction between domestic and international forces. *At the international level, the key events were the oil shocks of the 1970s, the related expansion of international lending, and the subsequent debt crisis. The speed and extent to which these changes were translated into democratisation were conditioned by the political alignments of the private sector and structural fragilities of authoritarianism at the national level. The persistence of the democratisation trend through time reflects the importance of other factors, including global political change, the receding threat of the revolutionary left, the internationalisation of capital markets, constraints on domestic policy choice, and political learning, which have converged at the domestic level to reduce the incentives and opportunities for authoritarian reversals*²³⁵.

With the rapid development of industrialisation and the awakening consciousness of the working class, party politics started to move to the central state of the Latin American society²³⁶. Also, the discrediting of the extreme left and right forces along with their international sponsors disoriented, divided and

²³² Remmer, "The process of democratization in Latin America," 3.

²³³ Ibid., 20.

²³⁴ Ibid., 18.

²³⁵ Ibid., 3.

²³⁶ Shixue, "Latin American politics after the third wave of democratization and its future prospects," 6767.

otherwise helped to undercut extremism from both sides of the spectrum, reducing challenges to democratic stability and altering the pre-existing political dynamic in favour of moderation, pragmatism, and the construction of political consensus²³⁷.

*A pattern of broadening external linkages between Latin America and the rest of the world has buttressed these changes. During the 1980s, social groups within Latin America began to reach out to build transnational coalitions around such concerns as human rights and the environment. European governments, political parties, and other actors also began to play a more active role in hemispheric affairs during the 1980s, creating conditions for democratic development in Latin America that are increasingly analogous to those existing in Southern Europe during the 1970s*²³⁸.

Although the rise of Ronald Reagan in American politics represented an obstacle to the process of transformation in Latin America, the previously mentioned external and internal factors were already shaping the political shift to being more favourable to democratic development in the region²³⁹. The first transition to competitive rule took place in Ecuador where economic crisis provoked by the slump in the oil prices of 1975 coalesced the business groups in opposition to the military rule of Guillermo Rodriguez Lara²⁴⁰. By 1976, the military government was ousted, thus paving the way for a phased military retreat from power that culminated in the inauguration of the democratically elected President Jaime Roldos in mid-1979²⁴¹. It is important to mention that popular mobilisation in Ecuador did not play a significant role in the democratic transition of the country. In fact, what triggered the shift was the inability of a military regime to attract a political base of support with which it could confront solid private sector opposition²⁴².

As Catherine Conaghan states: The irony of the return of democracy in Ecuador is that it reflected not the strength and pervasive demands of popular class organisations and political parties, but was contingent on their weakness²⁴³.

In a similar way, the breakdown of Peruvian authoritarianism began in 1975 when the reformist government of General Juan Velasco Alvarado was ousted from

²³⁷ Remmer, "The process of democratization in Latin America," 17.

²³⁸ Ibid., 17.

²³⁹ Ibid., 17.

²⁴⁰ Ibid., 13.

²⁴¹ Ibid., 11.

²⁴² Ibid., 13.

²⁴³ Conaghan, *Restructuring domination: industrialists and the state in Ecuador*, 141.

power due to progressively deepening economic difficulties. Although Peruvian economic interests mobilized slowly (in comparison with Ecuador), the economic crisis of the mid-70s united the private sector in order to alter the pre-existing correlation of forces in favour of the restoration of the civilian rule²⁴⁴. In 1978, the military rule in the country convened a constituent assembly that transferred the power to an elected civilian successor in 1980²⁴⁵.

In the case of Bolivia, after several changes from democratic to military governments since 1978, the formal process of democratisation was completed in 1982 when the national economy was verging on collapse²⁴⁶. In that same year, the military government of Argentina was defeated by Great Britain in the Malvinas War, deepening the country's on-going political and economic difficulties. The situation raised discontent in the public opinion and forced the military government to hand over its power back to the civilian politicians²⁴⁷.

In the case of these Andean countries (and at some degree Argentina), due to the lack of centralized control, these regimes were unusually susceptible to internal breakdown. The absence of centralized control capable of imposing military unity created political divisions within the state, undercutting the cohesion of the regimes²⁴⁸.

*In this sense, the timing, pace, and impact of the breakdown of authoritarianism in Latin America have varied not only with the magnitude of the adjustments demanded by external shifts, but also with the social foundations and institutional structures of military rule. Particularly important is the nature of the relationship that developed between the government and the business community, whose growing opposition to authoritarianism played a key role in the process of political change throughout the region*²⁴⁹.

Outside the Andean region, military rule was exclusionary and built around the support of the private sector. For this reason, it required far deeper economic crises to rupture the relationship between the military and the business elites. In the Southern Cone and Central America, it was not until most of the private sector was facing the prospect of bankruptcy that business groups joined other sectors of

²⁴⁴ Remmer, "The process of democratization in Latin America," 13.

²⁴⁵ Ibid., 11.

²⁴⁶ Whitehead, "Bolivia's failed democratization, 1977-1980," 49-71.

²⁴⁷ Shixue, "Latin American politics after the third wave of democratization and its future prospects," 6765.

²⁴⁸ Remmer, "The process of democratization in Latin America," 14.

²⁴⁹ Ibid., 12.

society in criticizing military rule and pressuring for a transition to political democracy²⁵⁰. In this sense, the process of political transformation in Latin America began with the less cohesive regimes and as the regional economic crisis deepened, gradually encompassed the other sub-regions²⁵¹.

Economic reversals were not the only motive. After the outbreak of revolution in Central America, the perpetuation of military rule came to be seen elsewhere in Latin America less as a guarantor of capitalism than as a potential source of instability, particularly in countries such as Chile where left had reoriented its political strategy in favour of revolutionary violence²⁵². The same happened in Nicaragua, where bourgeois cooperation with the Somoza regime ended in the mid-1970s in response to a variety of threats to established interests, including mounting social unrest and the expansion of Somoza family's business domain in the wake of the 1972 earthquake²⁵³.

In this framework, the process of political transformation continued without reversal for more than a decade. Among the South American nations, only Paraguay failed to undergo a democratic transition, and even there significant political liberalisation occurred as a result of the fall of the long-standing Stroessner dictatorship²⁵⁴. In 1985 the shift to democracy occurred in Brazil and in 1989 Pinochet stepped aside from power after his defeat in a national referendum²⁵⁵.

The process of authoritarian breakdown also began in Central America during the 1980s in response to shifts in the world economy. The acceleration of world inflation, rapid increases in oil prices, and the collapse of the Central American common market interacted to produce a variety of destabilizing results for the relatively open economies of the region. These included declining growth, rising inflation, falling real wages, balance of payments problems, fiscal imbalances, the concentration of industrial production in larger units, and increased landlessness. These changes contributed to growing peasant and worker unrest and helped to undermine authoritarian rule throughout the region²⁵⁶.

Although in some countries the transition from military to civilian rule was more nominal than real, in the mid-1980s, for the first time in history, all five of

²⁵⁰ Ibid., 12.

²⁵¹ Ibid., 14.

²⁵² Ibid., 14.

²⁵³ Ibid., 14.

²⁵⁴ Ibid., 4.

²⁵⁵ Puddington, "Latin America shows that democratization is possible anywhere."

²⁵⁶ Remmer, "The process of democratization in Latin America," 11.

*Central American republics were headed simultaneously by an elected civilian president. Even Mexico, long renowned for the resilience of its one-party regime, was seen to be moving in the direction of greater political competitiveness. The Caribbean basin experienced a diluted version of the same process*²⁵⁷.

Between 1978 and 1991 every Latin American country, except Cuba, adopted democratically elected governments, this time with a relatively durable, inclusionary and consensually based set of competitive institutions²⁵⁸. There are several reasons why this new democratic period has remained stable. First, the transfer of presidencies has been carried out regularly in a fairly democratic framework with a set of fair and free rules of the game guiding competition among parties. In some countries, although there have been disputes surrounding the results of the election, they have eventually been settled down peacefully²⁵⁹.

Second, the military has never succeeded in intervening in politics again and has adopted a political stabilizer role. The most remarkable cases have been Haiti in 1990 and Venezuela in 2002 where democratically elected governments were overthrown by the military, but democracy was restored within three years in the case of Haiti, and within 48 hours in the case of Venezuela²⁶⁰.

*Third, in a globalized world, political democracy is proceeding smoothly in other regions and this external factor has been quite positive in promoting Latin American democracy*²⁶¹. Finally, with the end of the Cold War, the United States loosened its diplomatic muscle and resorted to softer means of political control in the region, such as non-violent conspiracies, debt, foreign aid, multinational corporations, among others²⁶².

Despite the advancements, it must be said that Latin American democracies are far from being fully consolidated. *Since the 1980s, there have been fourteen presidents who could not fulfil their constitutional duties due to uncontrolled popular demonstrations protesting against governmental policies, corruption and other things*²⁶³.

²⁵⁷ Ibid., 4.

²⁵⁸ Ramos, "Democracia de la tercera ola en América Latina y el papel de la OEA," 74; Remmer, "The process of democratization in Latin America," 11.

²⁵⁹ Shixue, "Latin American politics after the third wave of democratization and its future prospects," 6764.

²⁶⁰ Ibid., 6764.

²⁶¹ Ibid., 6765.

²⁶² Ibid., 6765.

²⁶³ Ibid., 6765.

The external economic shock of 1973 that evolved in the Latin American debt crisis of 1982 had a broader impact in the region than that of accelerating the social conditions for the transition from military to civil rule. This crisis was the most serious in Latin American history and inaugurated a period known as the “lost decade” as well as displaced the Keynesian economic paradigms from the centre of the worldwide macro-economic policy. The internationalisation of capital markets²⁶⁴ and the extreme indebtedness of Latin American countries (from 1975 to 1982 the region tripled its external debt²⁶⁵) restricted the options of policy makers and forced the abandonment of pre-existing patterns of state-led import substitution industrialisation²⁶⁶.

From the 1940s to the 1970s countries in the region adopted inward-oriented economic development policies based on ISI. Motivated by political goals, politicians used high tariffs and subsidies to foster large domestic industries and an expansive state sector without concern for economic criteria. Market distortions associated with ISI helped to generate severe balances of trade and payment deficits and capital scarcities. To compensate for capital shortage, Latin American countries borrowed heavily from international financial organisations and commercial banks in the 1970s, causing extreme financial dislocation in the 1980s²⁶⁷.

Latin America during the 80s and 90s experienced a spatial synchronisation in both aspects: the emergence of democratic states and the implementation of new economic liberalisation policies that replaced the ISI as a model for development. The lost decade – the worst economic crisis Latin America has ever experienced – affected every country in the region, including Colombia, which despite not having a debt crisis, experimented a strong disequilibrium in its balance of payments and a bank crisis of intermediate level²⁶⁸.

²⁶⁴ The OPEC countries due to the increase in oil prices saved their surpluses in international banks. Latin American countries were borrowing money to pay for oil from the OPEC nations to fuel its economy and to implement Import Substitution Industrialization plans. The international banks had to pay interest on the oil countries deposits, so they encouraged Latin American countries to borrow more money. The inflation caused in 1979 by the oil prices motivated the United States and European governments to increase interest rates, which in turn hardened the conditions of repayment and funding to Latin American countries. As the world trade contracted in 1981, commodity prices fell producing a liquidity crunch in Latin America that could not pay any longer their obligations to foreign banks. The threat of non-payment destabilized important international banks that demanded important political reforms to Latin American governments in order to guarantee the payment of their loans.

²⁶⁵ Bárcena, "Introduction," 14.

²⁶⁶ Remmer, "The process of democratization in Latin America," 17.

²⁶⁷ Biglaiser and DeRouen Jr, "The expansion of neoliberal economic reforms in Latin America," 563.

²⁶⁸ Ocampo and others, *La crisis latinoamericana de la deuda desde la perspectiva histórica*, 22.

As the Table number 2 shows, between 1982 and 1984 the region's GDP stagnated and between 1985 and 1990 its growth was only 2%²⁶⁹.

Table 2
GDP growth in Latin America between 1978 and 1995
(Inter-annual variations in percentages)

Country	1978-1981	1982-1984	1985-1990	1991-1995
Argentina	0.1	0.8	-0.9	7.6
Bolivia	0.4	-3.2	1.7	3.7
Brazil	4.1	1.0	2.8	2.3
Chile	7.2	-3.4	5.6	6.8
Colombia	4.9	2.2	4.7	4.0
Costa Rica	2.2	0.9	3.8	4.9
Ecuador	5.3	0.7	2.1	3.7
El Salvador	-4.1	-1.0	1.4	2.5
Guatemala	3.6	-2.0	2.3	4.0
Haiti	4.1	-0.8	0.2	-8.3
Honduras	5.1	0.5	3.2	3.3
Mexico	9.2	-0.5	1.6	2.6
Nicaragua	-7.3	0.7	-3.4	0.8
Panama	8.2	1.5	-0.4	6.9
Paraguay	10.5	-0.2	4.0	2.9
Peru	3.9	-2.6	-1.4	4.7
Dominican Republic	4.5	2.6	2.1	3.5
Uruguay	4.8	-5.5	3.3	4.7
Venezuela	-1.2	-2.7	2.4	3.0
Latin America	4.2	0.0	2.0	3.6

Source: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean – ECLAC–. *The Economic Experience of the Last 15 Years 1980-1995*. (Santiago de Chile, Chile: ECLAC, 1999)

International banks and institutions like the IMF and the World Bank forced Latin American countries during this decade to adopt the Washington Consensus policies in order to first, guarantee the payment of its foreign debt and second, to solve the economic crisis in which the region was plunged through aid and more loans. The reform packages mainly consisted of fiscal discipline, privatisation, trade liberalisation, deregulation, reduction of the role and size of the state in the economy, and, in general, increased reliance upon market mechanics²⁷⁰.

It is necessary to mention that neoliberalism was the main doctrine dominating economic policy in the region by the 90s. This meant that national and transnational actors defining the economic policies of the different countries of the region were truly convinced about the adequacy of these measures to solve the economic problems. In this sense, it is hard to tell if the intentions of these reforms and doctrine were conceived to protect international interests at the expense of Latin American economies.

²⁶⁹ Ibid., 19.

²⁷⁰ Remmer, "The process of democratization in Latin America," 17.

The perceived alternatives to this agenda have been few, given the limited bargaining position of Latin American nations, the high-conditionality lending programs the International Monetary Fund and World Bank, and the important role played by these multilateral institutions in regulating international financial flows. Also relevant, as emphasized by Miles Kahler, is the absence of competing intellectual models. The economic collapse of the Eastern bloc, the related loss of alternative founts of economic advice, education and financial support, the success of the Asian NICs, the perceived failures of the past and the disastrous results of efforts to formulate autochthonous responses to the international economic crisis have all contributed to the sense that Latin American nations have little choice but to pursue these policies²⁷¹.

By situating neoliberalism as the new modern ideological option to solve the economic crisis of this period, politicians around the world adopted a new agenda for economic development. In the case of Latin America, as military regimes started to step back, the new democratic governments had to rely on pacts, coalitions, and other modes of elite consensus to reduce the risks and create a political support base to implement drastic reforms²⁷². The implementation of the neoliberal agenda was also facilitated due to the weakness of opposition forces and actors that have been affected by the prolonged economic crisis and the past political repression of the Cold War²⁷³.

In this sense, the democratic regimes emerging in Latin America were the façade of a new bourgeois elite whose consensus carefully limited the political participation of popular groups in order to close the policy-making processes to a couple of political parties allied with the international banking community that in the framework of the debt crisis gained an enormous influence over domestic policy choices²⁷⁴.

For this reason, Latin American countries could not consolidate strong democracies after the demise of military regimes. The political pacts on which the formation of new states were based again positioned oligarchic structures of government that fostered corruption and patrimonialism, except this time in favour of the international financial system and industrial multinational corporations.

²⁷¹ Ibid., 17.

²⁷² Ibid., 17.

²⁷³ Ibid., 17.

²⁷⁴ Ibid., 17.

By 1990, as democracy was dominant in the continent, most of Latin American countries adopted neoliberal reforms (except for Chile which began its neoliberal project in the mid 1970s²⁷⁵). *However, after more than 15 years of market-oriented reforms in the region, strong economic recovery is more the exception than the rule*²⁷⁶.

Even though neoliberalism was implemented in different manners depending on the economic and political context of each Latin American country, and despite the fact that the results of the implemented policies varied enormously within the region, the most striking fact was the resilience of high inequality. As table 3 shows, the 70s saw a tendency for mild reductions of inequality, and the 80s a more marked tendency for increased inequality in the context of macro economic difficulties. The 90s had a mixed picture: more countries experienced increases opposed to declines in inequality, but there is no overall pattern²⁷⁷.

Table 3
Changes in inequality in Latin America and the Caribbean in the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s

Country	1970	1980	1990
Argentina	+	+	+
Bahamas	-	+	N/A
Bolivia	N/A	+	+
Brazil	=	+	-
Chile	+	+	=
Colombia	-	=	=
Costa Rica	=	=	=
Dominican Republic	=	+	N/A
Ecuador	N/A	N/A	=
El Salvador			+
Guatemala	=	+	N/A
Honduras	=	=	+
Jamaica	=	-	-
Mexico	-	+	=
Nicaragua	N/A	+	=
Panama	-	+	=
Peru	-	=	+
Uruguay	=	-	=
Venezuela	-	+	+

Source: Walton Michael. *Neoliberalism in Latin America: Good, bad or incomplete?*. Latin American Research Review. 2004.

NOTE: + denotes an increase in inequality, - a decrease in inequality and = no relevant change in inequality.

²⁷⁵ Kelly, "Neoliberalism in Latin America."

²⁷⁶ Biglaiser and DeRouen Jr, "The expansion of neoliberal economic reforms in Latin America," 561.

²⁷⁷ Walton, "Neoliberalism in Latin America: Good, Bad, or Incomplete?" 171.

By the early 90s, economic recovery and growth started to be tangible in the entire region due to neoliberal policies, however as inequality and poverty were not overcome (and in some cases both increased), the market-oriented reforms did not have an important influence in the broader sense of development²⁷⁸.

Interestingly, market-oriented reforms have not produced the economic miracles professed by its supporters. In fact, the success of neoliberal policies for addressing high inflation is tempered by low growth in per capita gross domestic product, high urban unemployment and increasing wealth disparities. Economic problems tied to the "Tequila Effect", Mexico's devaluation of the peso in the mid-1990s, caused severe economic dislocation and declining welfare. Even Chile, considered one of the most successful developing countries, experienced nearly 10% urban unemployment, unstable growth rates, and enduring income inequality at the turn of the century. Despite worsening economic prospects, Latin American policy makers deepened these reforms²⁷⁹.

As a complementary thought on the Chilean experience, it is important to remark that after the democratic transition in 1990, the new governments started to implement important social reforms, this time with a human face, which had an important impact in its overall socio-economic development and has transformed the country in one of the most competitive economies in the region²⁸⁰. *Martinez and Diaz (1996) argue that it is the combination of these profound institutional reforms with market-oriented neoliberal policies that have allowed Chile to develop a competitive economy and society within a globalizing and more competitive world²⁸¹.*

The assessment of the democratic neoliberal period in Latin America is that despite the differences in the development of new democratic states and the diverse reactions to the debt crisis, these critical junctures produced a regional spatial synchronisation in terms of the retreatment of the state – whether democratic or military repressive – to favour the liberalisation of internal economies as a new paradigm of economic development, this time oriented to the international markets.

3.5. Socialism of the 21st century

²⁷⁸ Ibid., 171.

²⁷⁹ Biglaiser and DeRouen Jr, "The expansion of neoliberal economic reforms in Latin America," 564.

²⁸⁰ Gwynne, *Neoliberalism and regional development in Latin America*, 2.

²⁸¹ Ibid., 2.

By the end of the 20th century, neoliberal reforms were applied in the entire region by governments of similar political orientation, namely, Salinas de Gortari in Mexico, Fernando Collor de Mello in Brasil, Carlos Menem in Argentina, Alberto Fujimori in Peru, or Carlos Andres Pérez, among others. These measures sought to exert fiscal discipline, keep competitive exchange rates, liberate interest rates and privatize state enterprises and strategic sectors of the economies. However, they were poorly implemented, and in many cases mired in corruption scandals, especially the privatisations and the regulations to the financial system²⁸².

The first areas being privatized were the telecommunications, electrical power, airlines, post office, road, air and port infrastructures, non-renewable natural resources and banks. In 1999, foreign banks controlled the 25% of the financial assets of Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Mexico, Peru and Venezuela²⁸³. Enrique Krauze states that neoliberal policies were necessary to some extent due to the debt crisis and the stagnation that produced the ISI model, but these were orchestrated without order and--above all--without transparency. This provoked not only the discredit of the word 'privatisation', but also the exhaustion of the democratic systems in many Latin American countries²⁸⁴.

As it was mentioned before, after a period of synchronisation, the different internal forces struggling to shape the new spatial order caused dispersion and renewed the differences between societies. In this sense, although many countries adopted similar policies, the local dynamics determined the extent of the reforms. For instance, it is incorrect to generalize that neoliberalism dismantled the institutionalism of the state in every country; the Brazilian and Mexican examples demonstrate that despite implementing market-oriented reforms, some countries kept certain policies of industrialisation that, although not being sponsored by the government, had certain involvement of the state on them.

Be as it may, during the 1990s and the early 2000s, the neoliberal structural adjustment programs increased the dissatisfaction of the societies due to the corruption of its implementation, its failure to solve the poor socioeconomic conditions of the region and the incapacity of the state to deliver basic social welfare services to popular classes. In fact, the economic growth experienced during these years mainly benefited international banks and corporations and the new national bourgeois elites²⁸⁵.

²⁸² Pigna, *Episodio 1: Las paralelas que se cruzan*.

²⁸³ Ibid.

²⁸⁴ Krauze, *Episodio 1: Las paralelas que se cruzan*.

²⁸⁵ Gulliver, "Is the 'Pink Tide' Turning in Latin America? ."

The rampant inequality of the low and middle classes relative to the upper class and the unwillingness or incapability of the governments to improve this situation produced instability in many countries, especially in those with political parties non-responsive to social demands. It is important to consider the re-emergence of indigenous and anti-globalisation movements as important political actors that could no longer be ignored by their governments. The most important among these were the Zapatist Army of National Liberation in Mexico that achieved partial horizontal autonomy and indigenous leadership for the state of Chiapas; also, the CONAIE in Ecuador that has become a decisive political party with which many Presidents have formed alliances to win elections; and the MAS-IPSP in Bolivia which has positioned its indigenous leader, Evo Morales in the Presidency of the country for more than 10 years.

This widespread dissatisfaction with the quality and vehicles of democratic representation²⁸⁶, plus the economic downturn that affected the region from 1998 to 2003²⁸⁷ produced a crisis of representation that increased the polarisation of the societies, fragmented the political parties and favoured the emergence of left-wing and progressive politicians. In the entire continent these new actors became the *alternative to face the challenge of delivering a genuine social transformation, combining growth with equity but also a political project to transform democracy and citizenship*²⁸⁸.

Under these circumstances, these political outsiders of the traditional, excluded left (from Cold War period) capitalized on the collective disenchantment with traditional politics, and gave the right wing a political setback by positioning governments with high levels of popularity in most of the Latin American countries during the first decades of the 21st century²⁸⁹.

These so-called “pink tide” started to take over the region with the appointment of Hugo Chávez in Venezuela in 1999, and reached its zenith between 2009 and 2010 with left governments in Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, Paraguay and Uruguay. As Table 4 demonstrates, although since 2011 the number of left or centre-left politicians in power in Latin America has been decreasing, this

²⁸⁶ Mainwaring, "The crisis of representation in the Andes," 14-25.

²⁸⁷ Ocampo and others, *La crisis latinoamericana de la deuda desde la perspectiva histórica*, 19.

²⁸⁸ HUNT, "Rethinking the politics of the shift to the left in Latin America: Towards a relational approach," 5-6.

²⁸⁹ Moraña, "Negotiating the Local: The Latin American “Pink Tide” or What's Left for the Left?" 33.

wave of new politics continues to be a trend until 2017. Considering this table we can state that the period of synchronisation occurred between 2003 and 2015.

Table 3
Presidents of the Pink Tide

Country/Year	99	00	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	08	09	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	
Argentina					Néstor Kirchner				Cristina Fernández de Kirchner											
Bolivia										Evo Morales										
Brazil					Luis Ignacio Lula da Silva								Dilma Rousseff							
Chile		Ricardo Lagos					Michelle Bachelet								Michelle Bachelet					
Costa Rica																Luis Guillermo Solís				
Dominican Republic						Leonel Fernández								Danilo Medina						
Ecuador										Rafael Correa										
El Salvador											Mauricio Funes							Salvador Sánchez		
Guatemala										Alvaro Colom										
Honduras									Manuel Zelaya											
Nicaragua									Daniel Ortega											
Paraguay										Fernando Lugo										
Peru													Ollanta Humala							
Uruguay							Tabaré Vázquez						José Mujica					Tabaré Vázquez		
Venezuela		Hugo Chávez												Nicolás Maduro						

Source: Compilation based on the data about Latin American Presidents available in Wikipedia Commons.

Although it is true that most of the “pink tide” governments share certain features of their emergence and their policies, they must not be studied as a homogenizing project in the region with a common development and a common fate²⁹⁰. In fact, it is important to differentiate between the radical left in Venezuela, Bolivia, Nicaragua and Ecuador and the progressive or moderate left in Argentina, Brazil or Chile.

There are two major differences within the left in Latin America. One is the attitude towards the role of the state, and the other is the relation with the United States. Venezuelan President Chávez, Bolivian President Morales and Ecuadorian President Correa believe that the state should play a more important role in the economy. Therefore, they have implemented nationalisation policies so as to control their natural resources. In contrast, other left leaders continue to follow the so-called neoliberal policies. They even argue that nationalisation policy is against the tendency of globalisation²⁹¹.

Alberto Acosta sustains that during the “pink tide” decade, no leftist agenda was implemented in the continent. In fact, capitalism was intensified but now with the active participation of the state in the revenues of big extractivist activities,

²⁹⁰ Ellner, "The Distinguishing Features of Latin America's New Left in Power the Chávez, Morales, and Correa Governments."

²⁹¹ Shixue, "Latin American politics after the third wave of democratization and its future prospects," 6766.

which are common and dominant in Latin American economies. The worldwide increase in commodity prices provided these governments, now with a more active role in the economy, important surpluses to increase the size of the state in order to deliver the social services and welfare systems that the neoliberal governments had dismantled. For these reason it is important not to label the Pink Tide governments as “leftist” but rather as “progressive”²⁹².

The most important difference between this period and the neoliberal one is that the combination of economic growth and the redistributive policies implemented by these governments achieved important advances in inequality and poverty reduction²⁹³. In fact, from 2000 to 2015, poverty in Latin America decreased from 45% to 25%²⁹⁴. Also, from 2003 to 2013, 70 million of Latin Americans overcame poverty while 93 million reached the middle class²⁹⁵.

There is lively debate about the factors that determined this big socioeconomic step. Opponents to the Pink Tide sustain that the external bonanza of the commodity prices was the main cause for the reduction of poverty during this period while supporters attribute this to the political processes that positioned nationalist leaders who broke the corrupt relation between the international and national elites of the neoliberal period.

Alberto Acosta believes that in some countries like Peru or Chile, the market had a more important role in the economic development of the population, while in countries like Bolivia and Ecuador, the role of the state in the economy was the main driver of the progress. Either way, the combination of both was the responsible for the economic progress. However, it is important to remark that without the social policies and reforms adopted by these governments, the same economic development would not have been reached. Even in the cases of Colombia, Chile or Peru that have a clear orientation to the free market, the state played an important role. Indeed, *by 2010, state income transfers were making up to 20 per cent of the total household income of the poorest 20 per cent of Latin Americans, having almost tripled from 7 per cent in 2000*²⁹⁶.

We must understand the emergence of left progressive politics as the contestation to years of neoliberalism and unresponsive politics in the continent.

²⁹² Acosta, "La década desperdiciada del progresismo."

²⁹³ Gulliver, "Is the 'Pink Tide' Turning in Latin America? ."

²⁹⁴ CAF, "6 datos clave sobre pobreza en América Latina."

²⁹⁵ "Más de 70 millones de latinoamericanos salieron de la pobreza entre 2003 y 2013."

²⁹⁶ Muir, "Learning the lessons of the left's long run in Latin America," 235.

What is particularly interesting from this new period in Latin America – in comparison with other cases of synchronisation – is that this juncture rather than being accelerated by extreme external shocks like the Great Depression or the debt crisis, emerged influenced mostly by internal processes of rejection to the dominant neoliberal spatialisation, characterized by the privatisation of extractivist sectors of economies, corrupt politics, crises of representation and the feeling of American domination.

In spatial terms, what changed with the emergence of progressive politics in Latin America was the role of the state in the economy. Before, foreign companies and capitals owned key sectors of national economies, such as finances, oil, copper and telecommunications, among others. Rather than a wave of nationalisation, the new political actors, through the expansion of the state, changed its relation with transnational forces and got more participation in the revenue of the most important activities of the national economies. In a broader sense, the left-wing governments created a state-sponsored extractivism/capitalism in which all the major economic relations and projects had to be mediated through the state itself. This is why Alberto Acosta does not venture to label these governments as leftists, because they have fostered the expansion of capitalism in Latin America while diminishing the participation and control of resources that international actors possessed during the 90s.

The same conclusions are reached by Eduardo Gudynas who summarizes the characteristics of the 21st century state extractivism in the following table:

Table 4
Summary of the characteristics of the new-extractivism of Latin American countries

1.-	The relevance of the extractivist sectors in Latin American economies and development is still overwhelming.
2.-	The Latin American progressivism created a new type of extractivism due to the new characteristics and also for the combination of old and new features.
3.-	The role of the state in extractivist activities is more active in both direct and indirect actions.
4.-	The new extractivism has not overcome the subordinate insertion of Latin America in commercial and financial globalisation.
5.-	The social and environmental impacts of the extractivist sectors keep being the same as in past decades.
6.-	The State collects (or tries to collect) a bigger portion of the revenues generated by the extractivist sectors. Most of these resources fund social programs that increase the popularity and legitimation of progressive politicians.
7.-	Latin American States foster the fallacy believe in societies that extractivism is indispensable to fight poverty and to promote development.

8.-	The new-extractivism is part of a contemporary version of development in Latin America, where the myth of the foundation of a new society better than the previous one is the way to progress.
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Source: Compilation based on the conclusions of the paper: Diez tesis urgentes sobre el nuevo extractivismo²⁹⁷.

It is important to mention though, that the degree of national reform vis-à-vis multinational companies and neoliberal policies depended on the strength of local and international interest in each country. However, we can appreciate that in the region, the trend is that the conditions and relations between the state and transnational actors for natural resources exploitation, other key economic activities and for political domination had shifted to favour the nation.

In social terms, we can also appreciate a more active participation of the state in the local economy due the delivery of this new wealth through social services, and it can be stated that the state was the driver of the spill over effect that could not have been achieved during the neoliberal period. Also, as the middle class started to grow and inequality to diminish, political forces started to consider the middle class as their base for political support. So, it is evident that the politics and democracy of most of the Latin American countries have matured in comparison with the political environment of the 90s.

Finally, one of the most important developments in the region is the emergence and the creation of a Latin American integration space. Although during the 40s many politicians fostered the idea of a united Latin America, the only agent that had the political power and other means to join all the countries in a comprehensive international system had been the United States through the American Conferences and later, the Organisation of American States. The sometimes anti-American and the nationalist discourses on which Pink Tide politicians emerged fostered the improvement of regional relations among and independence from the United States. Although in the 20th century institutions like ALADI, SELA, the Andean Community and MERCOSUR already existed, during the 21st century, the integration effort caused a boom of international organisations. So for the first time in history, the materialisation of a continental international organisation – the CELAC – encompassed all the countries of the Americas except the United States and Canada.

Although the reach of the new alliances like UNASUR and CELAC is very limited due to the huge differences and interests among countries, what is

²⁹⁷ Gudynas, "Diez tesis urgentes sobre el nuevo extractivismo," 221.

remarkable is the sense of regional unity that has emerged from the progressive wave and also the clear questioning of the United States role in the region, especially through the Organisation of American States.

After, almost fifteen years of the establishment of the “pink tide” in Latin America, the progressive governments have also experienced democratic exhaustion due to corruption scandals, economic crises, poorly-implemented protectionist economic policies, unsustainable spending and authoritarian behaviour.

The changes in the electorate preferences in Argentina, Peru, Brazil have also started speculations – from a particular sector of the academy and the media – about the end of the “pink tide” and the emergence of a new wave of right-wing governments in the region as an unavoidable and desirable outcome of the mismanagement of the leftist regimes. Nevertheless, *without ruling out the possibility that Latin American politics are taking a sharp turn to the right, the notion that the Pink Tide is over is sensationalism at best, and an international campaign to dull Latin American and international resistance to the Washington Consensus at worst*²⁹⁸.

As this historical analysis has showed us about Latin America, an immediate and sweeping shift to the right is unlikely to happen because after a period of synchronisation, differences are renewed in every society producing a variety of results and reactions to the previous historical processes. Also, it is important to notice that in every case we have analysed in this thesis, spatial synchronisation periods happen mainly due to external shocks whose consequences have had a deep impact in socio economic conditions accelerating social conflicts.

By now, the closest to an external shock Latin America is experimenting is the fall in the international prices of commodities. This has caused the region to slow down its economic growth and it is putting the achievements reached during the boom period at risk. If the situation worsens, the economic crisis that some countries have experienced could become a regional shock that could trigger process of change in the power and spatial relations of the continent.

4. CONCLUSION

²⁹⁸ Mitchell, "The pink tide recedes: end of an era?? – COHA."

Even though Latin America is composed of 20 different countries with countless cultures and socioeconomic particularities, through this thesis we have found an alternative way to explain how the region is united despite its disparities. The approach of transnational spaces or regimes of territorialisation that go beyond the nation state and that are common and exclusive to the entire region, proved to be a useful avenue to examine why most of the countries have passed through the same historical events in short periods of time.

Also, the focus on only critical junctures made the work of this thesis easier at the time of explaining dispersion periods in the history of the region, such as the post-independence one. The model that shows the balance between regimes of territorialisation is definitely a good way to explain historical developments in both times of synchronisation and difference. For the former, we can conclude that a regional critical juncture consists on a general rebalance in the interaction of regimes of territorialisation due to internal or external shocks. These shocks, like broad economic, geopolitical or social crises, make the terms of the rebalance similar to the entire region by reshaping the previous beliefs of ways of organisation in a supra-national way. For instance, although each territory had particular ways of social, political and economic organisation, after the independence processes, the result of this juncture was that every country after this had to deal with its different problems in the framework of a new spatialisation: the nation state.

For the latter, we can state that periods of dispersion, in which countries take different socioeconomic and political paths, happen due to the interaction and reaction of local forces and actors to transnational events after a period of spatial synchronisation. After a regional juncture had reshaped the balance of regimes of territorialisation in a specific way, local forces could shape this balance again according to the new local dynamics; particularly, the strength of actors defending the new equilibrium or the previous one.

Another important conclusion is that the emergence or hegemony of one spatialisation over others does not mean the extinction of previous institutions and regimes of territorialisation. On the contrary, through subtle adaptations, previous modes of life, organisation and thought continue to be just as valid as the new spatial order. The case of colonialism in Latin America is the living proof this: *the independence movement did terminate the colonial rule over the continent but it did not destroy the socio economic institutions established by the feudal colonial empire of Spain.... Although there existed struggles between liberal parties and*

*conservative parties during a fairly long period of time after independence, the political arena was mainly occupied by the privileged classes formed in the colonial days and military caudillos who emerged in the independence war. The interests of the privileged feudal class and the tradition of colonial politics, culture, and religion were all preserved*²⁹⁹.

In this sense, we must understand historical developments and change as the result of the dialectic interaction between previous and new regimes of territorialisation. In Latin America, the colonial spatialisation was slowly weakened by the expansion of modernizing forces that brought a relative industrialisation and new bourgeois actors capable of establishing more democratic political institutions. *We can say that the period since most Latin American countries won their independence over two centuries ago has been one of slow capitalist growth in gradually overcoming strong feudal elements*³⁰⁰.

Taking this into consideration, it was correct to conclude that the second period of spatial synchronisation in the continent was the emergence of populism after the Great Depression between 1930 and 1950. The external shock that relatively industrialized Latin American economies and that weakened the traditional colonial elites, allied with external forces, broke the previous ruling social pacts and opened the national political spaces to new actors that changed importantly the highly social unequal structures coming from the feudal character of the colonial rule of Spain. During this unique period, economic, social and cultural transformations were accelerated for the first time after independence due to localized capitalist growth and other modernisation forces. By considering flows beyond the nation state, the approach of regimes of territorialisation allowed us to understand why a regional synchronized historical development was taking place during this time in spite of the different kinds of government in power throughout the region.

With regard to the next period of spatial synchronisation – from 1960 to 1980 – I have come to realize that Latin America had stronger linkages to transnational and global forces than I initially expected. In fact, the long duration of military interference in regional politics and the military dictatorships during this period were not simply the result of internal factors but of repeated encouragement and support from external elements³⁰¹. For this reason, we can conclude that what

²⁹⁹ Zhenxing, "On Latin America's process of democratization," 19.

³⁰⁰ Ibid., 19.

³⁰¹ Ibid., 19.

unites Latin America as a regional unity and supra-national social imaginary, is the way in which its territories were and are integrated to international markets, global politics and other forces of globalisation. As an extractivist region (for initially European colonial purposes but afterwards for global capitalist expansion), external forces have imposed important commonalities in all Latin American countries, such as a race-based rampant inequality or the dependency of all of the economies on the export of one or two primary commodities to capitalistic centres. Yet because of the relatively weak strength of local bourgeoisies, the external forces would often collaborate with local conservative forces and utilize any means to stabilize social order and protect political and economic interests in the entire region³⁰². This is why we can conclude that the main commonality of Latin America relies on how international forces have seen and thus shaped the region in the framework geopolitical and capitalistic expansion.

In this sense, Latin American societies share similar economies, social structures and problems like inequality, due to the facts that they were shaped according to the political calculations of foreign powers and integrated to the international markets in a colonial and extractivist framework,. This is the reason why all the nations of the region are affected in a similar way by external shocks – like the Great Depression or the Debt Crisis – and also why they react with similar social phenomena to these impacts.

Another important point to mention is that periods of synchronisation and important change have occurred in tandem with international capitalist crises. As Latin American nations were created on social pacts between transnational actors and local elites (who profit externally from global capitalism but internally from colonial exploitation systems), major international economic crises that debilitate these actors and that increase social discontent will always increase conflict and force the opening of spaces for synchronized change in the entire region.

In this sense, what this study of Latin American regional junctures demonstrates is that change in the balance of regimes of territorialisation in the region are mainly accelerated by external shocks that have firstly, weakened these oligopolistic associations in economic and social terms and secondly, have allowed the emergence of other actors capable to exert pressure for reform. Although throughout Latin American history there have always been local attempts to break these power structures (like the example of Cuba), what this analysis shows is that in order to trigger a regional rebalance in terms of regimes of territorialisation,

³⁰² Ibid., 19.

there must always be an external shock that is three-fold. First, it provokes dissatisfaction and political mobilisation in the population that could threaten the established order. Second, it debilitates the traditional alliance between transnational actors and actors from above. And third, it forces transnational actors to reconsider the alliance with previous local elites and renegotiate new relationship with the new political actors.

However, as a critical juncture does not imply a total imposition of a new regime of territorialisation, but rather a continuation of previous ways of organisation reformed in subtle ways, the closed circles that have protected and prolonged the different unequal social and economic systems of the region have delayed the capitalistic development of Latin America and locked it in a vicious, extractivist circle. As Xin Zhenzeng states, *it is impossible for a bourgeois-democratic system to develop and become perfected on the foundation of a feudal or semi feudal economy*³⁰³.

Structural change throughout Latin American history has come progressively rather than immediately through forces beyond the control of dominant actors. This is found in, for example, external shocks or the advance of modernizing processes that modify the social fabric of national societies and force local and transnational elite groups to reconsider their relationship with society. This is the case of the democratic wave that took over the continent between 1980 and 1990. The softening of the United States diplomatic muscle towards the region due to the end of the Cold War and the local social upheaval caused by the debt crisis produced a generalized realignment of forces from ones that had previously supported dictatorships to more open political systems in order to maintain stability. This gave way to the emergence of democratic states and the implementation of new economic liberalisation policies based on different social pacts between the local democratic political actors and transnational agents. As the new elite pacts endorsed and orchestrated the reforms, few economic and social structures were changed. In fact, although repression was diminishing and politics were relatively more open to avoid further social conflicts, the new states were shaped in order to favour the takeover of national politics and key economic sectors by transnational actors seeking to safeguard their interests and the payment of Latin American foreign debts.

The same can be appreciated in the last period of synchronisation in Latin America between 2003 and 2015. By the 2000s, the failures of market-oriented

³⁰³ Ibid., 19.

reforms were clear, as there was not a significant improvement in poverty and inequality during a decade. Also, social upheaval was accelerated due to the Asian financial crisis that affected the region between 1998 and 2003, and to the unresponsive politics dominated by local closed circles allied with international bureaucrats and corporations. The rejection of this order produced a crisis of representation and increased the polarisation of societies, favouring the emergence of left wing and progressive politicians in the entire continent that re-shaped the relationship between the state and transnational actors.

By putting national interests over the previous order and redefining the relationship between the state and transnational actors, these agents transformed the state into an important actor in societies by increasing their share in the extractivist profits key to national economies. For this reason, we can consider that this period of spatial synchronisation in the region was characterized by the expansion of the state fostered by the agency of non-traditional elites that ended the dominance of transnational actors in local politics. However, this expansion did not affect the common extractivist regime of Latin America, and actually, the state fostered extractivism in order to get more revenue to sustain social welfare policies.

We can see that critical junctures when Latin American countries have been synchronized in historical processes do not necessarily imply a radical change or a radical imposition of a regime of territorialisation. But rather, they consist of a rebalance in the dialectic interaction between them that produce new amalgamated orders in which previous ways of social, political and economic organisation continue to exist shaped or under the control of the new dominant regime (colonialism, the nation state, modernisation or extractivism).

For this reason, I would like to contradict the statements seen lately in academia and media about the emergence of a right-wing wave in Latin America in response to the failures and mistakes of the governments of the Pink Tide. As it was mentioned before, the powerful closed circles that dominate politics and economy in Latin America prevent fast and radical reforms. In this sense, structural social change happens progressively. Even though shock events trigger spatial synchronisations that accelerate social processes, during the after shock periods (as times of social assimilation), differences among actors are renewed producing local processes that can limit, counter-reform or encourage the transformations of the previous juncture.

This is why, what is more likely to come in the future years is a dispersion period of right wing and left-wing governments all over the region as each society deals with the different legacies of the pink tide or progressive period. Furthermore, if a right wing wave is expected as a process of regional synchronisation it needs an external shock with impacts deep enough to accelerate social unrest, weaken economic elites and decrease socio economic welfare.

It is important to remark though that the new fall in international commodity prices could become an external shock that could trigger a regional spatial synchronisation. However, it is impossible to predict if the emergence of right wing politics would be the result of it... everything will depend on how the crisis affects inequality and poverty.

ABSTRACT

Latin America as a spatial construct has been created on the basis of political ideals rather than on epistemological criteria. From a historical perspective, to talk about Latin America is to recall a lost utopian dream that reflects the aspirations of intellectuals, politicians and others to unite highly diverse peoples and societies for a common anti-domination goal³⁰⁴.

The ambiguity of the ideological origin of this term poses an important obstruction for the study of this region, in this sense, the objective of this Master Thesis will be to create a framework of historical analysis that can be used to explain why Latin America can be considered as such without falling into political fallacies.

By reviewing common regional historical processes or “critical junctures” such as independence, the creation of nation-states, populism, dictatorships and the democratic wave, the shared connections and similar ways in which Latin American societies interact with global flows will be unveiled in order to determine what are the regional ways of organization and integration that provide to this space a commonality that distinguishes it from other regional spaces.

Lateinamerika als eine räumliche Konstruktion wurde eher auf der Grundlage politischer Ideale als auf epistemologischen Kriterien beruhend erschaffen. Aus historischer Perspektive erweckt Lateinamerika die Erinnerung an einen verlorenen utopischen Traum, welcher die Bestrebungen von Politikern, Intellektuellen und anderen relektiert – Bestrebungen, höchst diverse Völker und Gesellschaften zugunsten eines gemeinsamen “Anti-Dominationsziels” zu vereinen.

Die Ambiguität der ideologischen Herkunft des Begriffs “Lateinamerika” stellt die Studie dieser Region vor ein bedeutendes Hindernis. Das Ziel dieser Masterarbeit ist demnach, einen historischen Analyserahmen zu erstellen, mit dessen Hilfe Lateinamerika als solches betrachtet werden kann, ohne dabei politischen Trugschlüssen zu verfallen.

Durch die Überprüfung allgemeiner regionalhistorischer Prozesse oder “kritischer Augenblicke” sowie Unabhängigkeit, die Entstehung der Nationalstaaten, Populismus, Diktaturen und Demokratisierung wird gezeigt, wie lateinamerikanische Gesellschaften auf ähnliche Weise mit globalen Strömungen

³⁰⁴ Gros Espiell, *Estudios sobre derechos humanos*, 65-66.

interagieren. Dadurch wiederum werden regionale Formen räumlicher Organisation und Integration veranschaulicht, die dem Raum Lateinamerika eine Gemeinsamkeit verleihen, die ihn von anderen Regionen unterscheidet.

List of Abbreviations

UFCo: United Fruit Company

ISI: Import Substitution Industrialization

ALADI: The Latin American Integration Association

SELA: Latin American Economic System

MERCOSUR: Southern Common Market

CELAC: Community of Latin American and Caribbean States

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