

# **Mapping Inter-American struggle (1946-2001): an overview on military conflict and economic embargoes**

## **Mapeo de los conflictos interamericanos desde la Segunda Guerra Mundial: una visión general de los embargos militares y económicos**

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### **Abstract**

Latin America is considered a politically turbulent region but, after the end of the independence wars, a relatively peaceful geopolitical environment. It is usually related by its distance from main international conflicts and the consolidated dominance of a superpower over the region. Indeed, since the Second World War, the role played by the United States is crucial to understand regional conflict dynamics. But has this dominance guaranteed stability to the region? In order to understand conflict dynamics in the Inter-American subsystem and possible changes according to the international system transition, we explore data on Inter-American conflicts and map 55 years of economic and military disputes in the American continent. Using these data, we systematize conflictive interactions to identify patterns and changes in US-Latin America interplay. We present evidence of a significant change in the kind of conflict, from military to economic, from the Cold War to its immediate aftermath. Our findings also indicate a predominance of military interventions during the Cold War, especially as a US response to intrastate wars (revolutions and civil wars), targeting predominantly small Central American and Caribbean countries. After the end of the Cold War, economic sanctions dominated the agenda, with the US targeting mostly Latin America's three largest countries, Brazil, Mexico, and Argentina.

*Keywords: Latin America, conflict, economic embargo, military intervention, United States*

### **Resumen**

América Latina es considerada una región políticamente turbulenta pero, después del final de las guerras de independencia, un ambiente geopolítico relativamente pacífico. Eso está relacionado a su distancia de los principales conflictos internacionales y el dominio consolidado de una superpotencia sobre la región. De hecho, desde la Segunda Guerra Mundial, el papel desempeñado por Estados Unidos es fundamental para comprender la dinámica de los conflictos en la región. Pero, ¿este dominio ha garantizado estabilidad en la región? Para comprender la dinámica de los conflictos en el subsistema interamericano y los posibles cambios resultantes de la transición del sistema internacional, exploramos datos sobre conflictos interamericanos y mapeamos 55 años de disputas económicas y militares en el continente americano. Sistematizamos las interacciones conflictivas para identificar patrones y cambios en la interacción entre Estados Unidos y América Latina. Presentamos evidencia de un cambio significativo en el tipo de conflicto, del militar al

económico, entre la Guerra Fría y el período posterior. Nuestros hallazgos también indican un predominio de las intervenciones militares durante la Guerra Fría, especialmente como una respuesta de Estados Unidos a las guerras intraestatales (revoluciones y guerras civiles), dirigidas predominantemente a países pequeños de Centroamérica y el Caribe. Después del final de la Guerra Fría, las sanciones económicas dominaron la agenda y fueron direccionadas por Estados Unidos principalmente a los tres países más grandes de América Latina: Brasil, México y Argentina.

Palabras clave: *América Latina, conflicto, embargo económico, intervención militar, Estados Unidos*

## 1. Introduction

This article aims to evaluate an empirical analysis of war recurrence in Latin America and the Caribbean by way of a historical overview and dataset analysis. Since the end of World War II (WWII), when the United States' foreign policy shifted from isolationism to internationalism (Vaisse, 1995), continental politics has exhibited distinct geopolitical dynamics, and various theoretical streams have historically discussed American countries' foreign policy in terms of the tension between autonomy and dependence on the United States (Cardoso & Faletto, 2010; Hey, 1997; Merke & Reynoso, 2016). With the establishment of a bipolar system of cooperation with the Soviet Union, the US concentrated its efforts on securing supremacy over its primary sphere of influence, Latin America, and the Caribbean. The US intervened to avert the ascension of the Soviet bloc's rule. Domestic dynamics, particularly succession crises, were responsible for most hostilities in the region during that period (Pastor, 2001). As a result, the conflict between the major power poles would account for the conflicts throughout that time.

Despite concerted attempts by international relations (IR) researchers to analyze the causes of war between major powers, conflict dynamics on the American continent happened between small states or because of the main hegemonic power's violation of sovereignty. Major international relations theories concentrated on explaining major powers' dispute, such as those that resulted in significant shifts in the international system's (IS) structure and power distribution (Burchill et al., 2005; Brown, 2009; Fraser, 2011).

Alternatively, between the end of the Cold War and the September 11 Attacks, due to the disappearance of a concurrent superpower

in world politics, the IS was dominated by a lonely superpower, bringing a less conflict Inter-American subsystem. It resulted in a renewed US foreign policy agenda towards Latin America, with engagements directed to promote a new agenda of economic and political liberalization. Liberal theories could assert a less conflict-prone environment to Kantian inspired variables, such as the rise in the number of democratic regimes or the boost in trade flows; a vast literature has worked with the Triangulating Peace Theory, achieving a consensus that democracies are more pacific at least among each other (Benoit, 1996; Chan, 1984; Russett & Oneal, 2001).

The downfall of a competitor superpower seeking influence over American countries changed the dynamics of continental international relations, with military-related variables replaced by economic variables in determining the main logic of Inter-American relations. If so, it is expected that military capabilities have been replaced by economic capabilities as the main source of power over the region. To investigate if there was a change in Inter-American relations, the conflict dynamics in the region are analyzed during both these recent eras: the Cold War (1946-1990) and the immediate post-Cold War (1991-2001).

Considering this puzzle, this paper aims to address the following research questions: how is conflict dynamic in the Inter-American subsystem? How has it changed after the end of the Cold War? To investigate these research questions, we intend to map shifts in types and patterns of conflict in the continent during and after the Cold War. Bearing in mind the specificity of US and Latin America relations, we argue that the US shifted from the use of military force to economic coercion after the end of the Cold War, changing its main targets from small Central and Caribbean countries,

where ideological disputes took place during the bipolar era, to the three largest countries, where economic interests were mainly concentrated after.

Despite these changes, the use of power by the superpower has maintained constant, either using military or economic coercion. In this sense, the realist lenses and concept of power (Donnelly 2005; Brown and Ainley 2009; Bromley 2004) help us understand the Inter-American conflict dynamics, despite US government and systemic changes.

Based on a historical evaluation, we present a framework to understand Inter-American relations dynamics, as an approach to understanding the data presented in the empirical analysis. Using the criteria established by the dataset creators, we develop an analysis based on types of conflicts and sanctions and on temporal trends. We also build on the classifications proposed to gather different and complementary categories on embargos into new typologies and to select relevant military conflicts. The analysis is mainly qualitative, by taking a close look at conflicts and embargos, according to categories and types established, in accordance with the historical analysis that is presented in the following sections. As auxiliary tools, tables, graphs, and descriptive statistics are presented to organize evidence and to identify patterns in an integrated analysis among types of conflict and its temporal occurrence.

This article is structured as follows. Firstly, we briefly present theoretical, conceptual, and methodological issues, and the datasets used in the empirical analysis. Secondly, we do an overview of Inter-American relations history, focusing on the role of the US power over the region. Thirdly, we present an empirical analysis of Inter-American conflicts, focusing on military conflicts and economic embargoes, to classify and

systematize the data and identify patterns. Finally, we make brief conclusions to review our findings, their scope, and present future research agenda.

## 2. Theoretical approach, concept, and methods

In terms of theoretical framework, this article adopts the realist conceptualization of power to understand the conflicts and embargoes that occurred in Latin America between 1946 and 2001.

Waltz's (1979) structural realism was prominent during the cold war (1946–89), and his colleagues maintained a similar dynamic with the collapse of bipolarity (1990–2001) until September 11, 2001. In this sense, and more precisely, Mearsheimer's (2001) offensive realism enables a more complete understanding of the nature of wars and economic sanctions on the American continent during and after the cold war. As we will see in the following section, the evolution of inter-American relations.

In the first instance, Waltz's (1979) structural realism dominated the Cold War discussion over international affairs. In a nutshell, his perspective is one of states exercising structural power of action based on their capacities, both military and economic. As a result, the concept of power would inevitably permeate states' capacity to acquire their objectives via the anarchic state of the international system (maximization of power), as he presents,

*According to the common American definition of power, a failure to get one's way is proof of weakness. In politics, however, powerful agents fail to impress their wills on others in just the ways they intend to. The intention of*

*an act and its result will seldom be identical because the result will be affected by the person or object acted on and conditioned by the environment within which it occurs* (Waltz, 1979: 192).

In the second, Mearsheimer's (2001) offensive realism exhibits both a continuity of thought with the realist tradition and a rupture in the concept of power, and much more specifically, in the understanding of states in relation to their environment, as we can see,

*... calculations about power lie at the heart of how states think about the world around them. Power is the currency of great-power politics, and states compete for it among themselves. What money is to economics, power is to international relations* (Mearsheimer, 2001: 17).

Thus, the offensive realism promotes a zero-sum game centered on material resources in order to conquer and control (two fundamentally dissimilar elements in realism) territory, taking the primary objectives of states into account (Baldwin 2013: 284).

In international relations, the concept of power is subject to a range of interpretations, preventing a fixed and continuous definition. Researchers from a variety of theoretical backgrounds examine the subject, which is frequently associated with a materialist position of power employed to defend the interests of states. As far as we are aware,

*The concept of power appears to be inextricably tied to the idea of developing and conducting a State's foreign policy with the objective of*

*protecting or increasing the defense of what its rulers regard as critical to their national interest. (210)* (Silva and Gonçalves 2010)<sup>1</sup>.

That said, this article's definition of power reflects the realism view (Donnelly 2005; Brown and Ainley 2009; Bromley 2004) and its current's duality, advocating for: first, a more emphasized use of force - related to the concept of States' military and economic capacities. As Guzzini (2013) recommends,

*[...] through the direct causal link between power (usually understood as resources or 'capabilities') and influence or control of outcomes, that is, when they did not simply infer power from influence or control over outcomes"* (Guzzini 2013: 3)

To map how and when political conflicts occurred in the American continent and the US exerted its power, we explore two datasets: International Military Interventions (Kisangani & Pickering, 2008; Pearson & Baumann, 1993) and Threat and Imposition of Sanctions (TIES) (Morgan et al., 2014). The first, documents all cases of military interventions in different continents of the globe from 1945 to 2005, trying to identify important political actions. The dataset coders define military interventions as "the movement of regular troops or forces of one country into the territory or territorial waters of another country, or forceful military action by troops already stationed by one country inside another, in the context of some political issue or dispute" (Pearson & Baumann 1993, 3). By examining this dataset, our intention is to identify the main sources of military conflict in American

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<sup>1</sup> Translated by the authors.

soil. The second, lists and classifies sanctions taken by one or more countries to limit or end economic relations with a target to persuade it to alter its policies ( it encompasses the same temporal frame). The dataset places two necessary conditions in its sanction definition: “Involve at least one sender state and a target state [...], be implemented by the sender in order to change the behavior of the target state” (Morgan et al., 2014: 1). In this case, our objective is to identify main sources of economic conflict.

Considering the former, some conditions were applied to focus on significant conflicts, excluding minor incidents without casualties: first, for geographical matters, there were only included cases that the target is an American country (extra-continental wars with American countries involved or interventions led by American countries outside of the continent were unconsidered); troop incursion occurrence was required; battle casualties needed to be different from zero. The pursuit of rebel or terrorist forces across Border or into Sanctuary, and non-supportive or neutral intervention were excluded (a close look at data show that they did not represent cases of conflict among states).

Regarding the embargos, the TIES dataset classifies embargos in 15 categories: 1) contain political influence over a third state; 2) contain military behavior; 3) destabilize regime; 4) release citizens, property, or material; 5) solve territorial dispute; 6) Deny Strategic Materials; 7) Retaliate for Alliance or Alignment Choice; 8) Improve Human Rights; 9) End Weapons/Materials Proliferation; 10) Terminate Support of Non-State Actors; 11)

Deter or Punish Drug Trafficking Practices; 12) Improve Environmental Policies; 13) Trade practices; 14) Implement Economic Reform; 15) Other<sup>2</sup>.

### 3. Historical overview of Inter-American relations

Historiography defends that the United States achieved a global leadership role in 1946, ending its isolationist period, which marked the start of policies of global scope aiming to guarantee its national interests across the world (Wittkopf et al., 2008: 39). By analyzing the continental IR dynamics, most are explained by US foreign policy towards the continent. Between 1945 and 1947 it was still not clear. As it was an area of consolidated power, the region was not considered potentially risky and the main concerns regarded domestic political instabilities and extra-continental forces actions (Pecequilo, 2011: 218-219). During this period, there was a short period of democratic boom in the region, in part, as a result of the Allied's victory in WWII, bringing free elections in Ecuador, Cuba, Guatemala, Venezuela, Peru and Bolivia, and consolidating democratic regimes in Costa Rica, Colombia, and Chile.

The Truman Government (1945-1953) initiated a process of pressuring dictatorships to democratize by denying financial support, aiming to dissociate the US image from autocratic regimes (Pastor, 2001: 226). Despite this, the Truman Doctrine launch by the end of 1947 marked a turning point by inaugurating the communist contention policy, as a clear response to Soviet's attempts to influence

<sup>2</sup> There are only nine occurrences of this residual category. Eight are labeled as “Sign a bilateral non-surrender agreement with the U.S.” and refer to US pressure over countries to sign an agreement that would prevent U.S. nationals from being surrendered to the International Criminal Court (ICC). One is an US retaliation to the purchase of Jet Bombers by Peru.

domestic politics in Greece and Turkey (DeConde et al., 2002: 22). Combined with the institutionalization of its hemispheric power by the signature of the Inter-American Treaty of Reciprocal Assistance (TIAR) in 1947 and creation of the Organization of American States (OAS) (1948), the US adopted a strategy of “delegating” anticommunist contention to authoritarian regimes, allowing the superpower to center its efforts to maintain its interests in other areas of the globe.

It is important to stress the fact that US main goals for Latin America were to avoid political instability and intrusion of extra-continental forces. The use of authoritarian rule and the prohibition of the communist ideology by the exclusion of political forces transformed political disputes among polarized political groups in armed conflict and the development of alliances among right-wing against left-wing governments. A significant part of instability in the region might be credited by adventurist missions supported by a specific political leader aiming to overthrow adversaries and rival regimes.

The mid-1950s represents a period of hardening in that policy. In 1953, the Eisenhower Government started to act directly against communism in the region, with the National Security Council defining among its objectives to eliminate the communist menace by standardizing, training and indoctrination of Latin American military following American guidelines (Foreign Relations of The United States, 1953). The intervention in Guatemala in June of 1954 marks this transition: responding to the agrarian reform of Jacobo Arbenz Government, the X Inter-American Conference was called originating the “Declaration of Caracas”, which considered that the control of an American state by communist politicians as a threat to other Latin American countries’ sovereignty (CPDOC, 2017).

The contention strategy marked the hardening of US foreign policy toward leftist and/or nationalist leaders in Latin America, giving support for traditional local elites to use authoritarian practices, resulting in six military coups against democracies in the continent between 1948 and 1954 (Pastor, 2001: 227). In Venezuela, Peru, Ecuador, Cuba, Paraguay and Colombia landholding oligarchies allied with military forces to block leftist governments. By 1954, only four democracies survived: Uruguay, Costa Rica, Chile and Brazil, even though communist parties were forbidden in Brazil, Chile and other seven Latin American countries (Livingstone, 2009: 24-25).

Both nationalism and leftist governments were responsible for economic policies that led to industrialization processes which created urban working and middle classes, raising the power of unions and strengthening of communist ideology. To contain this shift in class-struggle, anticommunist activism rose in Latin American countries during the 1950s, mainly based on an alliance of both Truman and Eisenhower governments with Latin American anticommunist governments, thus guaranteeing for the formers access to markets and, at the same time, the assurance of American corporations’ interests, and to the latter the hegemon political support and aid (O’Brien, 2007: 182-184).

A new change of scenario started in the second half of the 1950s, with Perón falling in Argentina, followed by Somoza in Nicaragua the subsequent year. By 1959, Pinilla in Colombia, Jiménez in Venezuela, Manuel Odría in Peru, and Getúlio Vargas had also left office (Pastor, 2001: 229). Two events marked that change in US foreign policy. First, Nixon visited Venezuela and gave his administration a clear image of the Latin American discontentment with the American interventionist policies that led to a nationalist

resurgence in the region. Aiming to soften anti-Americanism, the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) was created. Second, the Cuban Revolution (1959) concretized the victory of a leftist revolution in the region, representing a path for other countries and a door for Soviet infiltration.

These events raised US concerns over its regional leadership. That finally satisfied Latin American long-standing requests for more investments in the region, resulting in the creation of the “Alliance for Progress” program, announced in March 1961 by President Kennedy (Pastor, 2001: 207). Despite being created to reduce poverty and incentivize democratization, in practice, the interventionism and support to right-wing governments were maintained. Financial transfers aimed to satisfy US political goals, with Chile, Brazil, Dominican Republic, and Colombia receiving almost 60% of total grants (Taffet, 2007: 5-7). With the support of national Latin American elites, contrary to reforms, the US funded the training of several Latin American military forces through the creation of military schools and by doubling military aid transfers in the first half of the 1960s. As a result, several military coups occurred: Argentina (1962), Peru (1962), Guatemala (1963), Ecuador (1963), Dominican Republic (1963), Honduras (1963), Brazil (1964), Bolivia (1964) and Argentina again (1964) (Livingstone, 2009: 42-44).

Despite at first having adopted a hardline posture by cutting aid and withdrawing ambassadors from military regimes, the US quickly changed its posture by substituting democratization for stability as the primary foreign policy objective. The Johnson (1963-1969) administration represented this change of posture, enhanced by his successor Nixon (1969-1974), who started to openly support autocratic regimes in the 1970s. The

Vietnam War efforts prevented the US from sending troops to Latin America, leading to this strategy of allying with military regimes to guarantee regional stability (Livingstone, 2009: 50). The inauguration of the Nixon administration, with Kissinger as State Secretary marked a change in US foreign policy, with Latin America losing its upper position in the agenda (Pecequillo, 2011: 231).

Benefiting from this relative continental stability, the US centered its efforts in destabilizing adversary regimes. In that sense, CIA tried to prevent Allende from winning the elections in Chile by giving financial support to concurrent politicians in the 1964 and 1970 elections; additionally, Jorge Alessandri (1958-1964) and Eduardo Frei (1964-1970) administrations received considerable financial support from US government (Taffet, 2007). Despite those efforts, Allende was elected, leading the US, first, to work in avoiding his step-in office by orchestrating an unsuccessfully kidnap of the Commandant-in-chief of Chilean Military Forces, and after, by disturbing his government success by cutting financial aid. During Allende’s three-years period in office, the CIA spent US\$ 7 million in propaganda and financing oppositional groups (Livingstone, 2009: 51-56). The Nixon administration had also close ties with the Somoza dictatorship in Nicaragua and supported the military coup in El Salvador after the annulment of José Napoleon’s election in 1972 (Pastor, 2001: 232).

The presidency of Jimmy Carter (1976-1981) marked another turning point in the US’ foreign policy towards Latin America. Thus, he initiated a gradual withdrawal of support for authoritarian regimes and pressured them to enhance the respect of human rights. However, that did not represent the end of an interventionist posture towards Latin America as the US tried (but failed), with OAS support,



to avoid Nicaraguan Sandinistas' rise to power (Pecequilo, 2011: 233-234).

That failure, combined with the beginning of the Renew Confrontation against the Soviet Union (1980) and Reagan electoral victory (1981), typified the return of classical practices of communist contention in Latin America, bringing the region back to the spotlight. Based on the Reagan Doctrine, the US opted to openly support counter-revolutionary groups, offering financial help (Pecequilo, 2011: 235). The hegemon also adopted an intimidator posture against left-wing regimes in Grenada, Nicaragua, and Cuba while closing ties with military regimes in the Southern Cone, removing arms embargoes due to human rights violation, imposed by his predecessor (Lowenthal, 1989: 42).

Meanwhile, the economic agenda started to have a larger weight in continental relations, as in 1982, several countries started to face difficulties in paying the foreign debt interests. The economy became a new tool of US foreign policy. The Baker Plan<sup>3</sup> (1985) became a guideline to Latin American economic policies (Lowenthal, 1989: 44). Reagan's government strategy to resume US global power encompassed pressure over developing countries to adopt financial deregulation and trade liberalization policies, and fiscal reforms. Latin America countries were the main targets. Together with economic liberalization, new themes embedded US foreign policy agenda, like the wars against drug trafficking and terrorism, and the respect for human rights. The US' unilateral posture was maintained, with the military intervention in Panama

(1989), under the justification of local government collaboration with drug trafficking.

The 1990s represented a turning point for US-Latin America relations with a new emphasis over the economic agenda, mainly via regional economic integration, which led to the Free Trade Zone of the Americas (FTAA) negotiations. Therefore, the top-two main US concerns over the region were: implementation of neoliberal economic reforms and the combat against drug traffic (Herz 2002: 85-86).

During the George H. W. Bush Administration (1989-1993), the previous coercive posture lost impetus, giving place to a more multilateral and cooperative agenda. The paradigm of cooperative security becomes one of US security agenda to the continent with measures of mutual confidence being incorporated to security doctrines in different Latin American countries. It aimed at raising predictability and creating restrictions to military activities (Herz 2002: 88-89).

After the end of the Cold War, the Clinton Administration (1993-2001) adopted the "Assertive Multilateralism" strategy, giving weight to the United Nations and multilateral institutions' role in military operations. It tried to divide military and economic support to drug production and traffic from support against insurgency (a position that was later reviewed by George W. Bush Administration after the September 11 attacks and the end of peace negotiations between the Colombian Government and the FARC in 2002). The invasion of Haiti in 1994 was the first case in which the US Government sought multilateral

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<sup>3</sup> The Baker Plan (1985) was named after the US Secretary of Treasury, James Baker, and was a financial proposal to help resolve the Latin American debt crisis. To stimulate economic growth, it proposed that the World Bank would make available new loans, while debtor countries would adopt austerity economic policies in return. These financial arrangements helped alleviate the current shortage of foreign loans (Smith, 2007: 16)

approval for the use of military force in the continent (Herz 2002: 88-89).

Regarding the dynamics of US and Latin American relations, any of such analysis directs our attention to a concurrent or complementary explanation for conflict occurrence derives from the hegemonic position held by the US across the whole period under analysis. To exert domination over Latin America, the US broadly supported aligned regimes<sup>4</sup> by transferring economic and military resources, while pressured adversary regimes by imposing economic embargoes or military intervening. That might have played an important role in countries' individual behavior and resulted in subsystem instability and conflict, following the argument presented in this project. That followed two basic paths: the use of violence (or its threat) and inducement, following a punishment and reward logic – basically, the “carrot and stick” politics – responding to countries' international behavior and domestic political-economic guidelines.

Notwithstanding, despite the alternation among dovish and hawkish postures,<sup>5</sup> since the end of the Second World War (SWW), the US has acted like a superpower aiming to guarantee its interests across the globe and to impose its hegemonic leadership towards its area of consolidated dominance. Therefore, to maintain leadership, one recurrent tool for inducement is foreign aid. Pastor (2001) points out the level of foreign aid was historically influenced by the US' perception of security threats. The definition of aid allocation, despite the alleged official objective of low poverty and incentivizing democracy in the region,

aimed to guarantee US interests and to contain the antagonist superpower influence's rise.

When the strategic use of inducement did not work, the US had to go beyond aid allocation. That is when conflict became latent and the use of power imminent. First, economic embargoes were used as more aggressive policies. Insofar as states developed foreign and domestic policies disregarding US' interests, sanctions try to reverse such behavior. In cases when economic coercion wasn't enough, the last resort is military intervention.

Pastor (2001: 33) summarizes US foreign policy towards Latin America as a fluctuation among periods of negligence, during phases of political stability, and panic after events contrary to political or economic interests or considered as threats to national security. That determined the level of attention employed – which varied the level of aid transfers, and the possibility of the use of embargoes and force – and the kind of policy applied to solve a possible crisis – usually, aid drops would be followed by the imposition of embargoes and ultimately military interventions.

During the Cold War, security issues were clearly connected to ideological matters. Leftist governments, nationalist political economies, and anti-US/pro-USSR international behavior represented instability to all-capitalist and occidental subsystems. The USSR collapse brought an end to superpower concurrence threat, having a twofold impact: countries over hegemonic dominance were freer to adopt leftist policies, as they were not automatically linked to soviet influence, while the absence of concurrence to US dominance

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<sup>4</sup> States that behaved as satellites, clients, dependents, and/or puppets, that broadly supported the US ideological agenda of the National Security Doctrine and anticommunism during the Cold War.

<sup>5</sup> Dovish postures opposed the excessive use of power, preferring cooperative and multilateral strategies; alternatively, hawks preferred the use of power as a means to achieve US' interests.

also undermined these countries bargaining power for inducements. That marked a change in US policies, being the use of military force partially substituted by economic coercion, which might also be a complementary explanation for military conflict reduction in the continent.

#### **4. Latin America conflicts: mapping the military and economic embargoes aspects**

This brief historical analysis shows that conflict-occurrence in the American continent, which resulted mainly in containing Soviet's influence over the region during the Cold War, was substituted as a major explanatory variable by the coercion against the maintenance of nationalist/authoritarian policies and drug trafficking support/negligence (tendencies contrary to democratization processes). It is also highly acceptable to explain that conflict was constant across the two different IS structures under analysis, with the United States acting as a major power, and intervening always that the political outcome in countries of the region was against its interests.

This kind of activity accounted for a significant part of military conflicts that took place in the Americas as military conflicts derived mainly from civil wars with the participation of international forces, especially

by the United States, or incursions to overthrow or support political regimes. Among US interventions, most of them were disputes connected to the bipolar Cold War dispute, with the exception of the last ones in Panama and Haiti. Two major differences are evident in these more recent conflicts: they were justified by the objective of fostering democratic governments, with the one in Haiti having the participation of multilateral forces (Kisangani & Pickering, 2008; Pearson & Baumann, 1993).

Changes in international politics might have also resulted in a new fashion of hegemonic dominance over the region, being military interventions substituted by economic coercion, such as economic embargoes and sanctions. To systematically review how conflict occurred on the American continent throughout the period and identify changes we take a look at data and present it in an organized fashion to classify within variation in military and economic coercion.

First, we present and analyze military conflicts by examining the International Military Intervention dataset (Kisangani & Pickering, 2008; Pearson & Baumann, 1993). Table 1 lists events of armed conflict that occurred in American soil, identifying the intervener, the target, duration, objective, type of activity, amount of troops incursion, and a short description.

**TABLE 1 – CONFLICT IN THE AMERICAN CONTINENT SOIL (1946-2001). SOURCE: KISANGANI & PICKERING, 2008; PEARSON & BAUMANN, 1993, ADAPTED BY THE AUTHORS.**

Intervener	Target	Start - YYYYM MDD	End - YYYYM MDD	Objective	Type of activity	Troops incursion	Description
Nicaragua	Costa Rica	19480315	19480423	Support government	Intimidation	1-1000	C.R. Civ. War
Peru	Ecuador	19510809	19510821	Oppose government	Not ascertain	Not ascertain	Old Border Dispute
Nicaragua	Honduras	19570418	19570631	Oppose government	Combat	1-1000	Border Dispute
Cuba	Dominican Republic	19590623	19590623	Oppose government	Combat	1-1000	Officer Leads Invasion
Cuba	Haiti	19590815	19590906	Oppose government	Intimidation	1-1000	Raiding Party
USA	Cuba	19591120	19600215	Oppose government	Patrol/guard/defend (SAMS)	Not ascertain	US-Castro
USA	Dominican Republic	19650428	19660931	Oppose rebels or opposition	Combat	10000+	Civil War
Cuba	Venezuela	19670508	19670512	Oppose government	Intimidation	1-1000	Guerilla Landing
Cuba	Bolivia	19671231	19671231	Oppose government	Combat	1-1000	Che G. Guerrillas
El Salvador	Honduras	19690714	19710501	Oppose government	Combat	1-1000	Football War
Venezuela	Guiana	19700221	19700222	Oppose government	Not ascertain	1-1000	Border Dispute
Honduras	El Salvador	19760714	19760731	Oppose government	Not ascertain	Not ascertain	Border Flareup
El Salvador	Honduras	19760714	19760731	Oppose government	Not ascertain	Not ascertain	Border Flareup
Panama	Costa Rica	19780914	19791231	Support government	Not ascertain	Not ascertain	Anti-Somoza
Venezuela	Costa Rica	19780914	19791231	Support government	Not ascertain	Not ascertain	Anti-Somoza
Honduras	Nicaragua	19801231	19811114	Oppose government	Not ascertain	Not ascertain	Border/Contras
Ecuador	Peru	19810123	19810222	Oppose government	Combat	1-1000	Border Dispute
Argentina	UK	19820401	19820614	Oppose government	Combat	5001-10000	Falklands war
USA	El Salvador	19830202	19881231	Support government	Combat	1-1000	Advisors Insurgency

USA	Grenada	19831025	19831216	Oppose government	Combat	5001-10000	After Coup
West Indies Associated States	Grenada	19831025	19831216	Oppose government	Patrol/guard/defend (SAMS)	1-1000	After Coup
Peru	Ecuador	19840116	19840117	Oppose government	Not ascertain	Not ascertain	Border Dispute
Costa Rica	Nicaragua	19840503	19840503	Oppose government	Not ascertain	Not ascertain	Retal Firing
Honduras	Nicaragua	19850913	19850930	Oppose government	Not ascertain	Not ascertain	Down Copter
USA	Bahamas	19851231	Not ascertain	Support government	Not ascertain	Not ascertain	Drug Pursuit
Honduras	Nicaragua	19860331	19880320	Oppose government	Not ascertain	Not ascertain	Contra War
USA	Honduras	19880317	19880331	Support government	Patrol/guard/defend (SAMS)	1001-5000	Contra War
USA	Panama	19880402	19881231	Oppose government	Patrol/guard/defend (SAMS)	1001-5000	Noriega Dispute
USA	Panama	19891220	19900228	Oppose rebels or opposition	Combat	10000+	US removes Panamanian government
USA	Haiti	19940919	19950331	Oppose government	Intimidation	10000+	US restores democratically elected government in Haiti
Multinational forces	Haiti	19941003	19950331	Support government	Patrol/guard/defend (SAMS)	10000+	Coalition attempts to restore elected government in Haiti
Peru	Ecuador	19950109	19950407	Oppose government	Combat	1001-5000	Peru carries out air raids against Ecuador in border conflict
Ecuador	Peru	19950109	19950407	Oppose government	Combat	1-1000	Ecuador bombs Peru over border dispute
Belize	Guatemala	19950827	19950911	Oppose government	Patrol/guard/defend (SAMS)	Not ascertain	Belize border guards attack Guatemala village

An important consideration to be made before discussing the data is that different types of

conflict might have different explanatory variables, as part of military intervention did not target incumbent governments but aimed to support the current leaders and/or to oppose rebels. Alternatively, there were attempts to overthrow incumbents either by supporting rebels or by military intervention. And finally, territorial disputes represented more traditional kinds of military conflicts (interstate wars).

Taking a more detailed look at each of these events (rows in table 1), five of them were related to the Sandinistas-Contra conflict and are a clear result of Cold War dynamics' impact over Inter-American international relations (mainly in Nicaraguan soil between 1980 and 1988). Another four events were also directly related to Cold War issues, as they were initiated by the Cuban expansionist foreign policy of "revolution exportation" as attempts to reply to its successful leftist revolution over other countries in the region. Other seven events were US interventions aiming to either overthrow adversary incumbents or to support allied regimes (only one occurred after the end of the Cold War). Additionally, another two events are related to multinational forces or allies backing interventions to support or overthrow incumbents, such as in Grenada in 1983, when the US forces were supported by the Caribbean organization "West Indies Associated States," and multinational forces' support during the intervention in Haiti (1994). Furthermore, seven events refer to border disputes among neighbors countries, such as the four events related to Peru and Ecuador longstanding border dispute (1951-1995), two events between Honduras and El Salvador (1976 and 1980-1981), and isolated events among Nicaragua and Honduras (1957) and Venezuela and Guyana (1970). Two events represent cases of interstate wars: the "Football War" among El Salvador and Honduras (1969), and the

Falkland War between Argentina and the United Kingdom (1982). One minor event occurred in a border area between Belize and Guatemala (1995). Finally, one event is related to the Nicaraguan support for the "Vanguardistas" Government, considered by Longley (1993) as the first battleground of the Cold War; and another is a drug pursuit led by American troops into the Bahamas territory.

Considering so, twelve events respond directly to Cold War disputes (with or without US involvement), while seven other events were a direct result of US hegemonic actuation over the continent, (with six being a part of these also related to the dispute with the Soviet Union for maintaining dominance over the region). Only thirteen may be labeled as interstate wars, such as the border and territorial disputes listed above.

To identify temporal patterns and make comparisons among types of conflicts, we merge conflicts related to a same event/crisis; our intention is to avoid double-counting events. Different events are related to a same crisis, as more than one actor might join an intervention, one country might initiate two actions against the same country, and in cases of bilateral disputes, both countries' actions vis-à-vis might be listed.

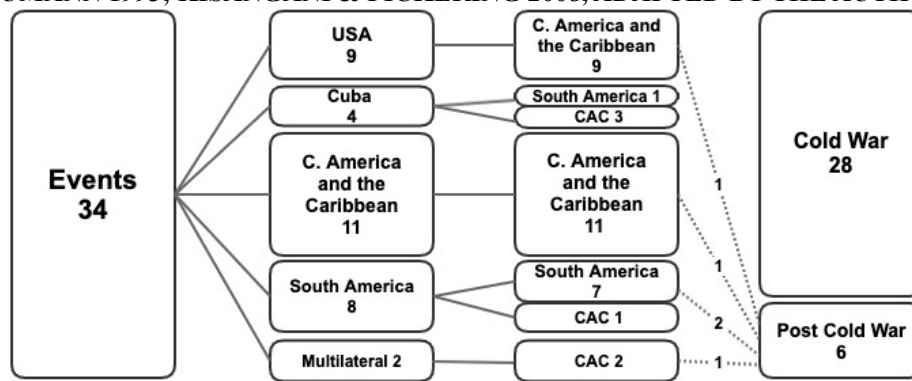
There are 34 events listed. First, we classify conflicts geographically, identifying interveners and targets. That helps us localize conflicts and identify US' agency in military disputes. Among these events, the US is the intervener in nine of them. Cuba also stands out with its "revolution exportation" policy, being the starter of four conflicts. Of the remaining, Central America and the Caribbean countries accounted for 12 cases, and South America for another seven. Multilateral forces participated in two interventions: Grenada in 1985 and Haiti in 1994. Another feature is that

conflicts took place mainly in Central America and the Caribbean.

Regarding the target, most conflicts were in Central America and the Caribbean, both when the intervener was the United States or another country from the region. They were mainly related to Cold War issues, such as the Contra War, Cuban revolutionary activism or US interventionism against left-wing governments or supporting allied regimes.

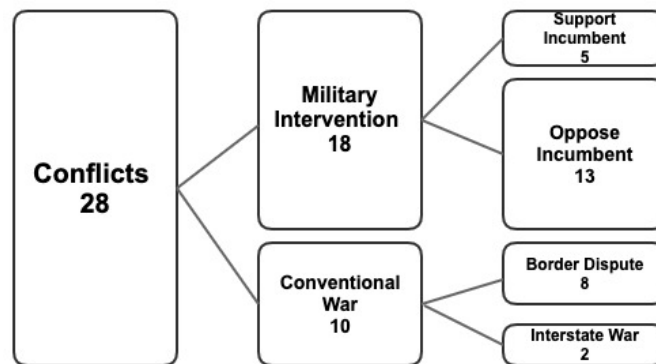
Regarding South America, most events are related to the dispute between Peru and Ecuador that, despite some considering it an interstate war, there never was a formal declaration of war among the rivals. Respecting cross intra-regional occurrences, they were rare. Only two cases: the Cuban activism in Bolivia in 1967 and the Venezuelan support for Costa Rica against Somoza in 1978.

**ORGANOGRAM 1. CONFLICTS BY AGENTS, TARGETS, AND PERIODS (SOURCES: PEARSON & BAUMANN 1993; KISANGANI & PICKERING 2008, ADAPTED BY THE AUTHORS)**



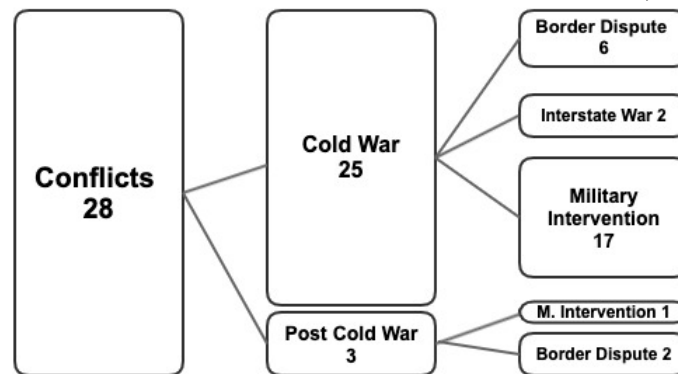
Those 34 events are related to 28 military conflicts. We separate these military conflicts in two groups: 1) military interventions – includes conflicts with the involvement of international actors – such as neighbors, global powers, and international institutions – in local disputes, like civil wars, guerrillas and attempts to destabilize incumbents, a dynamic typical of Cold War battles; 2) border disputes and bilateral conventional wars. The first group includes five incursions intended to support the

incumbent, and 13 to oppose the current government (if the following event had the objective of supporting the recently installed government, it was classified according to the inaugural event). In the second, we counted eight conflicts that took place over border disputes, and two conventional as interstate wars (Malvinas and Football wars). Organogram 2 summarizes and organizes this classification.

**ORGANOGRAM 2. CONFLICTS BY TYPE (SOURCES: PEARSON AND BAUMANN 1993; KISANGANI AND PICKERING 2008, ADAPTED BY THE AUTHORS)**

Among the 28 military conflicts, only three occurred between the end of the Cold War and the September 11 attacks: one multilateral intervention in Haiti, and two border disputes between Ecuador and Peru, and Belize and Honduras. Despite the Cold War period being longer in our sample (1946-1990), the data points to continental higher stability after and,

especially, less interventionism. Organogram 3 presents the periodization of military conflicts. Regarding the periodization, organogram 1 also helps us identify that US' interventionism and conflicts located in Central America and the Caribbean took place mainly during the Cold War.

**ORGANOGRAM 3 – CONFLICTS BY PERIOD (SOURCES: PEARSON & BAUMANN 1993; KISANGANI & PICKERING 2008, ADAPTED BY THE AUTHORS)**

Some recurrent patterns are identified by analyzing the organograms. Close examination of the data reveals that Cold War issues sparked domestic conflicts in Central America and the Caribbean, with multiple actors involved in domestic conflicts such as Nicaragua's conflicts with the Sandinistas, Cuban activism to replicate its revolution, and neighboring countries' support for Costa Rica's neighbors against the Somoza regime, a dictatorship that lasted long due to its

anticommunist actions. This demonstrates three fundamental patterns. To begin, only three wars occurred over the 11-year era, compared to 25 during the 45-year period known as the Cold War, indicating a less conflictive setting. Second, following the Cold War's end, the US has reduced its unilateral engagement in internal affairs. Following that, the sole military intervention was in Haiti (1994), but it involved multilateral task forces and



international institutions. Three, no interstate wars occurred after 1990.

Following, we discuss economic conflicts by examining embargoes in the region, using the Threat and Imposition of Sanctions (TIES) 4.0 dataset (Morgan et al., 2014). The embargoes were analyzed by type, starting period, sender, and target. Additionally, we also separated those which the US was the sender, both by type and starting period, as that country was responsible for starting over 58% of them (we will get back to a closer look to US-imposed embargoes later on).

In that sense, Graphic 1 presents the primary responsibility for embargoes that targeted Latin American countries. As mentioned, the dominance of US as a sender is clear; it is followed by far by a list of international institutions: Europe Union (EU), League of Arab States (LAS), Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), and Central American Monetary Stabilization Fund (CAMSF), that altogether only represented 27% of embargoes. The latter institution, of low degree of public awareness, was mainly

financed by the US and aimed to assist balance-of-payment surplus, harmonize monetary, fiscal and exchange policies, giving support to the creation of the Central American Common Market. The remaining 15% of embargoes were sent by a list of different countries and institutions.

The embargoes imposed by the listed institutions are related to specific issues in certain years when one sender targeted different countries for the same behavior: ASEAN imposed several embargoes over Brazil, Mexico, and Argentina due to trade practices in 1993; CAMSF targeted eight small Central American and Caribbean countries to pressure for economic reforms, all in 2000; EU embargoed 10 Central and South American countries over trade practices both in 1994 and 2001; finally, the LAS targeted 12 different Latin American countries as retaliation for alliance or alignment choices, all in 1979, due to their political positioning over the Arab-Israeli conflict. Central, South American and Caribbean countries rarely originate embargoes.

**GRAPHIC 1. NUMBER OF EMBARGOES BY ORIGIN (SOURCE: MORGAN, BAPAT, AND KOBAYASHI 2014, ADAPTED BY THE AUTHORS)**



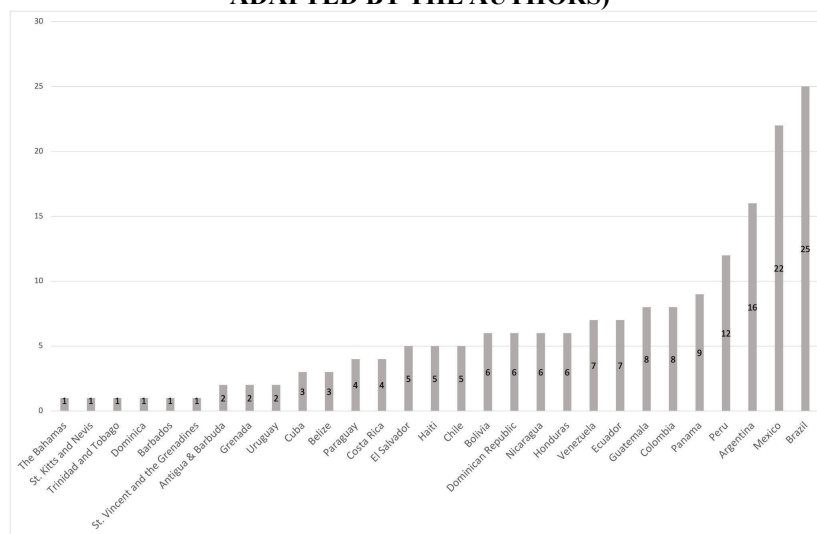
Following, we take a look at major targets. We first identify a concentration on large countries,

which constitute the main targets of economic sanctions. Brazil is at the top of the list with 27

cases, followed by Mexico and Argentina, with the ‘big three’ representing over 35% of embargos received. Those are followed by specific “second-rank” regional countries (Peru and Venezuela), and countries with sensible US interests, like Panama. Ecuador, and Colombia, due to, respectively, the Panama Canal, dollarization and high dependency on trade, and to drug trafficking issues; these countries

total 24% of cases. The remaining 40% is distributed among 21 different countries. Taking a deeper look over the “big three”, there is a clear predominance of embargoes over trade practices, representing over 82% of embargoes imposed (against around 43% in the whole sample, as will be discussed next), especially starting in the 1990s, with a variety of different sender. Graphic 2 lists all targets.

**GRAPHIC 2. NUMBER OF EMBARGO BY TARGETS (SOURCE: MORGAN, BAPAT, & KOBAYASHI 2014, ADAPTED BY THE AUTHORS)**



Now, considering the classifications on the types of embargos, we analyze not only the total sample, but also separate embargos sent by the US (as they represent over 60% of cases), to contrast them against the remaining cases. Graphics 3, 4, and 5 help us visualize the data. Considering the whole sample (Graphic 3), trade practices counts for almost half of the embargos (44%), with several other issues reaching from 4 to 9%, such as the signature of a non-surrender agreement with the US, improve human rights, destabilize regimes, improve environmental policies, implement economic reform, retaliation for alignment choice.

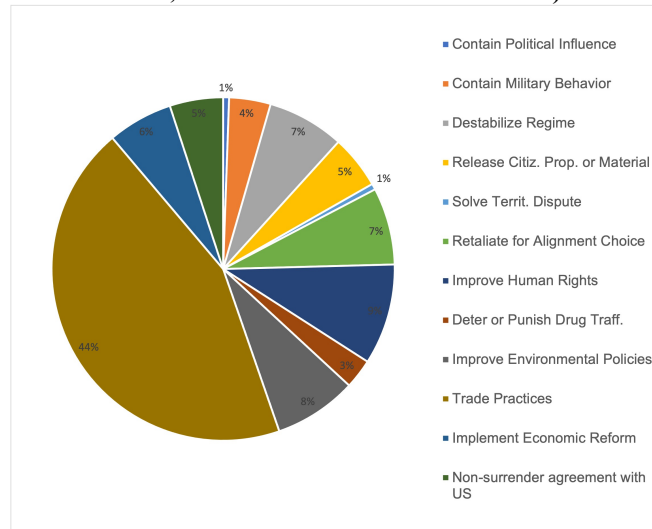
Comparing only the US (Graphic 4), we can note a more diverse agenda of embargos

for the US, than the rest of the sample, despite both being dominated by trade practices conflicts (40% for the US). The main differences identified are US pressure regarding the signature of non-surrender agreement with respect to the ICC, a stronger actuation aiming to destabilize regimes, over human rights and environmental policies, and to release citizens, properties or materials (that range from 7 to 13%). Contain military behavior, solve territorial disputes, and implement economic reform are absent. Despite the absence of the latter being a surprise it is probably explained by the fact that Multilateral Financial Institutions, such as the IMF, played this role for the US.

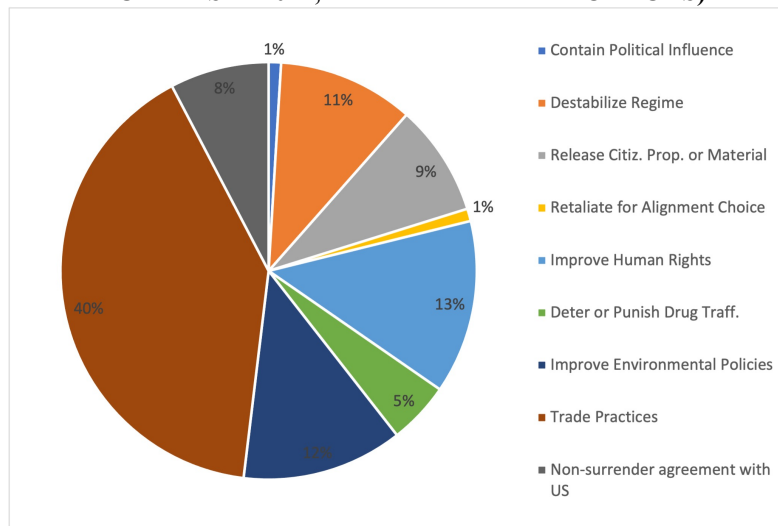
The rest of the sample (Graphic 5) is less diversified, with trade practices representing 51%. Retaliation for alignment choice (16%) and implementing economic reforms (13%) also stand out, the former, an outcome of the LAS initiatives in 1979, and the latter, of the

CAMSF (an US-supported institution) pressure over small Central American and Caribbean countries. Some types are absent, like contain political influence, deter or punish drug trafficking, and non-surrender agreement with the US.

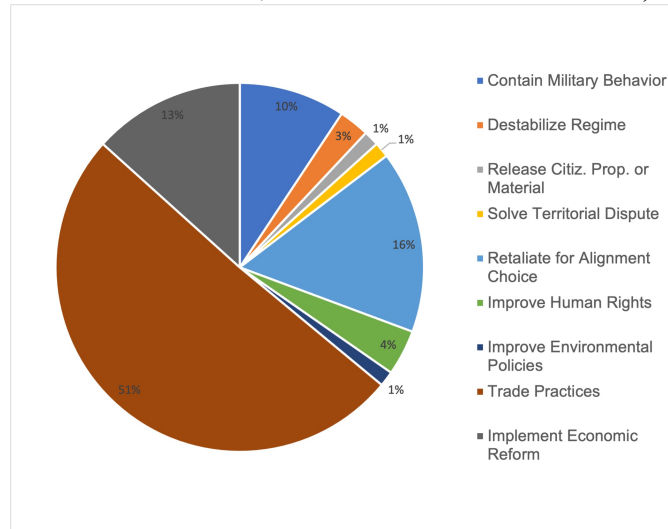
**GRAPHIC 3. EMBARGO TYPE PERCENTAGES (TOTAL) (SOURCE: MORGAN, BAPAT, & KOBAYASHI 2014, ADAPTED BY THE AUTHORS)**



**GRAPHIC 4. EMBARGO TYPE PERCENTAGES (US ONLY) (SOURCE: MORGAN, BAPAT, & KOBAYASHI 2014, ADAPTED BY THE AUTHORS)**



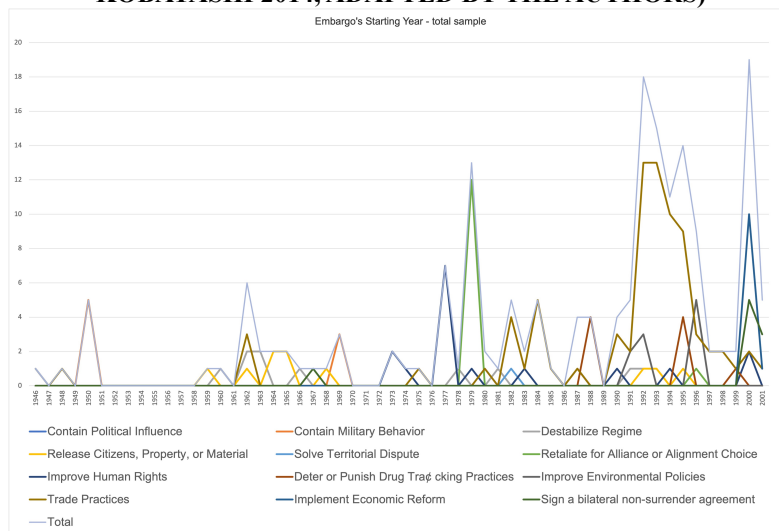
**GRAPHIC 5. EMBARGO TYPE PERCENTAGES (US EXCLUDED) (SOURCE: MORGAN, BAPAT, & KOBAYASHI 2014, ADAPTED BY THE AUTHORS)**



Lastly, we also examine when these embargos were imposed. Until 1977, when the Carter policy on human rights started using such diplomatic instrument, embargoes were quite rare, and restricted to political issues, usually related to Cold War issues, such as the contention of military behavior, the release of citizens, property or material (usually a response to nationalization policies by countries implementing socialist economic policies), and the destabilization of adversary political regimes. At the end of the 1970s,

respect to human rights (especially when the US was the sender) and the retaliation for political alignment by the LAS were the main issues. Starting in the end of the 1980s, trade practices and policies dominated the continental agenda, representing the US, other global powers and international institutions' pressure for economic and trade reforms by Latin American countries' economic policies. Graphics 6 and 7 help us visualize such trends. Broadly, there is no significant difference among the US and the rest of the sample.

**GRAPHIC 6 - EMBARGO'S STARTING YEAR (TOTAL SAMPLE) (SOURCE: MORGAN, BAPAT, & KOBAYASHI 2014, ADAPTED BY THE AUTHORS)**



**GRAPHIC 7 - EMBARGO'S STARTING YEAR (US ONLY) (SOURCE: MORGAN, BAPAT, & KOBAYASHI 2014, ADAPTED BY THE AUTHORS)**



It is important to stress that the descriptive statistics presented so far focus mostly on event rate occurrence, not being considered the magnitude of its political importance or economic impact. Despite this, we could clearly identify important patterns in Inter-American conflicts, following the argument presented, that closely matches both the historical overview and the dynamics of US-Latin American relations.

Regarding the embargoes, we identified some patterns. Considering the type of issue that triggered the embargo, there are three main considerations. First, economic issues (trade practices and economic reforms) dominated the agenda in the continent, representing an important source of conflict; it reached almost 50%. New themes of the global agenda that gained distinction especially after the end of the Cold War, such as environmental policies, drug trafficking, and human rights, represented a secondary matter; altogether these three categories reached 20%. Finally, political issues, such as the contention of military behavior or political influence, territorial disputes, solve territorial disputes, retaliation for alignment choice, and destabilization of

regimes, were relatively insignificant if looking at the big picture; all these six categories added up reached only 20%. Regarding geographical distribution, Latin American countries are mainly embargoes' targets and not senders, usually international institutions, and major powers. Also, embargoes were more directed to large economies, instead of Central American and the Caribbean.

That is a contrast to military conflicts that mainly took place in that region. That shows that the use of military coercion is more usual against small countries and during the Cold War. The ideological worldwide conflict permeated more strongly domestic politics in these countries that served as a backyard for the dispute between the two superpowers. Against Latin American "big three", economic coercion was the preferred strategy. The US showed bigger concern with economic reforms and trade practices, aiming to open those large markets, leaving behind ideological concerns that dominated the agenda during the Cold War.

The empirical analysis also brings evidence of a significant trend change in types of conflict and of coercive diplomacy in the

American continent from 1946 to 2001. The bipolar ideological dispute, which dominated the global agenda during the Cold War was easily identified as the main source of conflict in the continent: several crises that took place in Latin America were related to Cold War issues, while also aimed to either destabilize adversary regimes, contain its political influence or military behavior or to penalize the implementation of socialist political economies. Among military conflicts, most occurred during the Cold War, with most of them being military interventions to overthrow adversary regimes or the engagement of international institutions or major powers in civil or revolutionary wars. Starting at the end of the 1970s, especially with Carter's policy towards Latin American on human rights, the agenda shifted towards a more intense use of economic sanctions, mostly directed to pressure states to alter their political economies towards a liberalization process, aiming to favor US directives. Reagan's administration was responsible for the last battles of the Cold War; afterward, military interventions were all multilateral, and embargos focused on trade practices, representing a clear change in patterns. That pattern was maintained until the end of our period of analysis, with unilateral military actions being substituted by multilateral or international institutions-backed interventions.

## 5. Concluding remarks

In this article, we mapped Inter-American conflicts from 1946 to 2001. It serves as empirical and analytical evidence for researchers that need summarized data on Inter-American conflicts. To respond to our research question, we have identified clear trends in data that should help our understanding of Inter-American conflict

dynamics. First, military interventions were the most recurrent kind of military conflict, overcoming border disputes, while interstate conventional wars were rare; this shows a predominance of a vertical logic, with a major power mastering its area of dominance. Second, military conflicts occurred mostly during the Cold War, and as foreign responses to intrastate wars, such as revolutions and civil wars; the image of America as a pacific continent (historically few interstate wars, free of nuclear weapons and distant from main geopolitical global issues) should be challenged. Third, the US was the main sender of economic sanctions, mostly targeting Latin America's "big three" and centering on economic and trade practices; other senders were mainly international organizations, showing the predominance of the US as a sender, even when compared to multilateral bodies.

And most importantly to our research question, embargos substituted military interventions as the main source of coercion; despite embargos during the Cold War centered on ideological/political issues, they were mostly adopted after 1990. Complementary, while military force was mainly used against small Central American and Caribbean states, because they were the main grounds of Cold War battles, economic coercion targeted mostly big states, due to their economic international relevance and domestic market size.

The realist tradition, as well as its appropriate grasp of the concept of power, we argue, makes an important contribution to the understanding of Latin American conflicts on a theoretical level. During the Cold War, we will first discuss the ups and downs of Waltz's structural realism (1979), as well as how state military power supported the ability of the United States to exert control over much of the North, Central and South America. According

to Mearsheimer (2001), who remains within the realist tradition, it presents offensive realism as an understanding of the state around it, making economic embargoes a more effective tool in terms of the instrumentalization of its authority than previously thought possible. Nonetheless, this exercise or capacity to exert power turned considerably more to economic sanctions and embargoes in the 1990s than it did to any bipolar battle, reshaping the landscape of Latin American conflicts in the process.

If during the Cold War ideological concerns appeared to represent a clearer threat in the eyes of US decision makers, leading them to respond more strongly, the global agenda shaped around economic issues during the period of lonely leadership after the ending of the Cold War permitted the US to use softer foreign tools to coerce Latin American states. Therefore, the end of the Cold War brought unipolarity and consequently stability to the continent, as the new agenda proposed by the hegemon matched with different foreign policy tools. That, together with the process of democratization and institutional advancement in Latin America (also part of the hegemon regional policies), might also explain such stability. Despite this, the hegemonic role of the United States continued with the alternation

among harder to softer tools according to its dominance and dissident behavior of Latin American countries, while there were changes in the type of policy used, transiting from military to economic coercion.

Additional historical research is needed to fully understand US actions towards Latin America after the end of the Cold War, especially its anti-drugs politics, that substituted former military aid transfers to allied regimes. These new dynamics are usually treated as matters of public security, but its international dimension is a crucial axis of analysis to understand current conflicts in Latin America.

It is evident that new security dynamics emerged after the end of the Cold War, presenting new challenges to global security. This shift explains the changes in US foreign policy towards Latin America in this period. Nonetheless, new challenges represent new actions needed. Therefore, further empirical analyses merging intra and interstate conflicts might show how military conflict might have relocated to the domestic sphere after the end of the Cold War. That should bring additional support to criticizing an accepted idea of the Inter-American subsystem as a pacific and stable continent.

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