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By Juan J. Paz-y-Miño Cepeda  
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## Between empires and imperialisms



Sources: Rebellion

The first proposals on *Latin American dependency* emerged during the 1960s, associated with ECLAC's formulations on external dependence, which implied the fragility of the countries of the region in international trade, since primary products are exported and processed goods and technologies are imported. There is even a gap in the terms of trade. There was early talk of "center" and "periphery." But at the end of the same decade and,

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above all, in the 1970s, what came to be called the *theory of dependency* took off, linked, instead, to the reflection on *imperialism*. And it was explained, ultimately, that the "underdevelopment" of Latin America correlates with the "development" of the capitalist "centers", which historically "underdeveloped" their "satellites", which could only escape "dependence" by overcoming the capitalist regime. André Gunder Frank summed it up in a formula: the development of underdevelopment. But also, next to him, there were formidable Latin Americanists, such as Theotonio Dos Santos, Ruy Mauri Marini, Celso Furtado, Enzo Faletto, Fernando Henrique Cardoso.

The dependency theory was cultivated in all countries and had a long influence. He left a special way of appreciating power relations in the international world: Iberian colonialism (particularly Spain) was the starting point, which was followed, during the nineteenth century, by dependence on England and on US imperialism in the twentieth century. In Ecuador the "dependentistas" made important contributions and among the pioneers was Fernando Velasco. Also admirable is the early criticism of the famous theory by Agustín Cueva, a renowned sociologist throughout Latin America.

Another way of understanding international relations and the situation of Latin America, already initiated in the fifties by historians such as the Argentine Ricardo Levene, emerged in the 1990s, as a prelude to the bicentennial of the region's independence processes. From the studies published by François-Xavier Guerra followed other works, such as those of Jaime Rodríguez (very questionable his interpretation of the Quito Revolution of 1809-1812), Clément Thibaud, Mark Thurner, Josep Delgado, Manuel Chust, Geneviève Verdo or also Federica Morelli (who has even worked on Ecuador) and lately Deborah Besseghini, with his studies on empires. It has become clear that Latin American independence cannot be seen exclusively as a confrontation between patriots and Spaniards, but as a broader process, in which the reconfigurations of the great powers were also at stake. Britain was in the lead, playing alliances with anti-French Spain, which was fighting against the invader Napoleon (1808); But it also acted autonomously to introduce itself among the Latin American revolutionaries, collaborate in the Independences and favor not only their commercial presence in the region but their hegemony. British resources were involved in Miranda's project to make Venezuela independent (1806) and there were British officers next to O'Higgins or also next to Bolívar. France, which came to control territories in Canada, possessed the most coveted colony in Haiti (which became independent in 1804), achieved one of the Guianas in Suda. He even imposed an emperor (Maximilian, 1864-1867) in Mexico already liberated.

The monarchy of Portugal moved to Brazil and from there the expansionist desires of Queen Charlotte, who pretended to represent Spanish interests, were fed. Finally, there is the USA with its own interests vis-à-vis all Europeans; he expanded his territory in war not only against the Indians and on the way to the Wild West, but against Great Britain (1812), bought Louisiana from France (1803), Florida from Spain (1819) although without paying it and Alaska from Russia (1867), but also taking half Mexican territory (1848). His advantage was unstoppable and he secured it with the Monroe Doctrine (1823) that marked the hegemony: "America is for the Americans."

It is true, then, that Latin American independence must be observed not only from nationalist perspectives, but in the fields of "Hispanic unity", the "modernity of the Hispanic world", the projections of the "Mediterranean world", the "Atlantic reconfiguration", the British "informal imperialism", the "interimperial" or "trans-imperial" connections, which are the categories used in the studies I point out. But there is still a basic fact that cannot be interpreted Hegel-style, that is, considering that America is an "echo of other people's life." Because it would seem that the Latin American independence revolutionaries were a kind of "outpost" or pieces mobilized by the interests at stake among the great powers in full rise during the contemporary era. This minimizes a crucial issue: the independences in the continent and particularly those of Latin America broke with *colonialism*, they did so at the dawn of capitalism even before the independences in Asia or Africa and, in addition, allowed the constitution of ambitious States of sovereignty, all of which constitutes a fact of global transcendence and different from the interests of the great powers of the time. No doubt the dependentistas were right to warn that these independences were formal, of a political nature, because the Latin American national states fell into a new form of economic-structural dependence on Great Britain, first and then on the United States.

And, without a doubt, another understanding is imposed: empires and *imperialisms* (because the term has had different connotations) not only acted during the era of Latin American independence and the construction of national states, but continue to act to this day. We are precisely at a time when the hegemony of the US and Europe has been challenged by the rise of China, Russia, the BRICS and the constitution of new blocs in diverse regional spheres. We are witnessing a new era of profound changes in human history, traced by the recomposition of world powers. In Latin America there is a clear movement of vindication of sovereignty in more open and forceful terms

than in the past, as observed in the configuration of institutions such as CELAC, MERCOSUR or UNASUR, the interest of several countries to join the "new silk road" with China, or the clear sovereigntist positions. at the same time as Latin Americanists, of the progressive governments of the XXI century, which are expressed, at present, in the geopo definitions These were carried out by Presidents Alberto Fernández of Argentina, Gustavo Petro of Colombia, Inácio Lula da Silva of Brazil and Andrés Manuel López Obrador of Mexico, to name the largest, which seek to combine the region's own strategies for the future. The reaction against Monroism and against the OAS, which has been its contemporary instrument, has deepened, in addition to the fact that the "interference" (that is, direct imperialist actions) that is still present, arouses increasing rejections, while the cause of Cuba against the US blockade has become resolutions of condemnation by the UN during the last 30 years, although they remain unobserved by the US. In this context, Latin America finds no reason to lean towards the powers that seek its alignment in the conflict in Ukraine, since our thesis is based on the demand for *peace*, since international policy was assumed in the Proclamation signed by the II CELAC Summit (Havana, January 2014). The *Mundus Novus of the twenty-first century* is a historically unstoppable process, although it may last several decades. It goes hand in hand with the growing triumph of Latin American progressivisms, the new left, the rise of popular social movements and the questioning of imperialisms, as well as internal oligarchic dominions.

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