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## **THESES**

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**Latin America and China:**

**New System of Relations?**

Ph.D. dissertation

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full professor

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**Institute of International Studies**

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# Contents

<b>1. Antecedents of Research and Description of the Topic</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>2. Methodological Principles</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>3. Main Findings</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>4. Main Sources</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>5. The Author's Own Publications in the Topic</b>	<b>23</b>

## 1. Antecedents of Research and Description of the Topic

My dissertation is the result of a more-year long research work. My interest in the Hispanic world goes back to my college years and was basically motivated by the language. With the definition of my topic Professor *Ádám Anderle* helped me a lot, who – as my supervisor – supported my work all the way.

The post-independence economic history of Latin America is a series of unfulfilled promises. In the last 200 years the states of the region were unable to break out of the category „developing” – despite the explaining theories (structuralism, dependency schools) and alternatives of solution (import substituting industrialization, neoliberal economic policy). Latin America is still outside of the so called Triad (United States, Western Europe and Japan) dominating the world economy, and is struggling against political and economic marginalisation. After the debt crisis of the 1980s the countries of the region resorted again to extrovert attitude and world economy integration as a tool of development. For Latin America this makes a fundamental priority the quality of relations towards the poles and main actors of world economy – since these are potential export markets and investors. In the last centuries the Latin American countries – according to world political and economic realities – basically focused on the United States and Europe in their foreign relations.

Around the millennium the centre of gravity of world economy development was shifted to the pacific region, in which the role of China is increasingly decisive. Today it is well-known that China is the most dynamically developing economy in the world, it is a fact that the Asian giant is a potential economic great power. Therefore she plays a determining role in the economic development and integration of East Asia, influences the indicators of world economy. Widespread literature deals with the position of China in Asia, her regional role, competition with Japan, relations with the US and Europe; opportunities and challenges in these relations. Nevertheless there is not much about the system of relations between China and Latin America that – parallel and in correlation with these – is also developing, becoming more complex and multidimensional.

The dissertation analyses the relations between China and Latin America and their impacts on Latin America's<sup>1</sup> foreign relations. The Sino-Latin American economic and diplomatic relations date back more decades, but after the end of the cold war and the breakup of the bipolar world new opportunities appeared in these relations. After the millennium these

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<sup>1</sup> In the dissertation I use the term 'Latin America' for Mexico, Central America and the South American Subcontinent. I don't analyse the Caribbean countries in depth, only indicate where (question of Taiwan, Sino-Cuban relations) they have special significance.

opportunities were broadening even more, and in the last years they gained dynamism never experienced before.

In my dissertation I am analysing how Latin America is getting into new international field through the Chinese connection and how its position in international relations is being realigned. The objective of the dissertation is to introduce how the presence of China affects the system of inter- and intraregional relations of Latin America and its relations with the traditional partner as the United States and Europe, how it renews the connection between Asia and Latin America and what opportunities and challenges China means for the region. I also analyse how the influence of China affects the different subregions and groups of countries, how it affects their ways of development.

My hypotheses concerning the topic are as the following:

I. Globally the presence of China in Latin America is not exceptional; it is the result of China's dynamically increasing role in world trade and demand for raw materials in her economic modernization.

II. The appearance of the People's Republic in Latin America is a kind of catalyst: the outstanding raw material prices and the fast increasing raw material export of Latin America supports the region's economic development; besides, the Chinese presence is an important factor in the political and economic diversification.

III. Chinese relation opens the door for Latin America to establish deeper political economic relations with Asia, which could be a new actor for the region besides the United States and Europe.

IV. China's presence affects all the states of Latin America, but the quality and intensity of Chinese influence is uneven; relations of different types – competitive and complement – and depth are evolving between the two regions, along inner ruptures in Latin America. These are determined by the size of inner market, structure of exports and the geostrategic position of the given country.

## 2. Methodological Principles

Since the dissertation belongs to the subject of international relations, in my analysis I allowed the fields of international politics, international economics, international law and history to give a multidisciplinary approach. Among these international economics is the most emphatic. In the first part of the dissertation I apply historical methodology – with chronological order and cold war context. The analysis of international contracts and institutions give international law dimension, while at the description of structural changes in foreign affairs and interregional relations aspects of international politics are central.

The temporal framework of the dissertation is 1949–2008, but it basically focuses on the post cold war period, especially on the years after the millennium (2000–2008), since in these years the Sino-Latin American economic and political relations got dynamism never experienced before and new quality. The objects of my research are the Latin American countries and the – not homogenous at all – subregions of these.

The concept of the dissertation is to analyse the Sino-Latin American relations at three levels: regional, subregional and state, since we could get the most complex picture from the mix of these.

The regional/subregional approach is important because in my opinion the future of international relations would be determined by regions and the relations between regions could have ordering function. Now for decades regionalism has been a fundamental research field in world economy, international politics, history and sociology, too.

In spite of the exceptional broad literature on the topic there is no consensus on the definition of regionalism. It is not agreed whether a region must be a geographically close space or could be a collective of states not geographically close to each other but related to each other in terms of some other aspect (e. g. currency-region).<sup>2</sup> The idea of regionalism means concentrated, saliently dense net of relations, cooperations, interactivity and interdependence along certain dimension(s). This dimension could mean political, economic, social or institutional cohesion or – in reality – any combination of these. This means that a given country might be part of more parallel or even overlapping regionalisms in function of its political, military, economic, cultural etc. relations with other countries. International relations mainly focus on political and economic regionalism, analysing regional institutions, their operation and affects.

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<sup>2</sup> In more details: Mansfield – Milner [1997].

In the 1950-1960s the ground of the so called 'first wave of regionalism' was the European integration but soon several developing nations tried to follow the example and established regional economic groups. In the developing world this wave of regionalism – especially among the structuralists – was the vehicle to set free these regions from the exploiting system of centrum-periphery. The literature describing the first generation regional groups – Ernst Haas, Karl Deutsch, Leon Lindberg, and David Mitrany – examined the causes and consequences and basically tried to apply the experiences of the European integrations for the other groupings. The first wave of regionalism brought disappointment for the participants; most of these blocks were failures.

In spite of these in the nineties one of the most determining world economic phenomena was regionalism – strengthening and deepening parallel with fast moving globalization. In this period several new regional groupings were established, while more already existing blocks got new impetus.<sup>3</sup> Consequently today there are few countries that are not member of any regional organization and several countries takes part in more organisations parallel. The groupings of the nineties show many new features compared to the integration groupings after the second world war, therefore this phenomena is called 'new regionalism'.<sup>4</sup> It is also called 'open regionalism' referring to the extrovert attitude of these – in contrast with the often protectionist practice of the first generation.

In light of this it is not surprising that since the millennium more and more sources deal with the third generation of regionalism, the so-called interregionalism that is the institutionalized system of relations among regions of the world. Interregional relations are the logical and chronological consequence of regional integration. It is about how the institutions of new, open regionalism build relations with each other. So at this wave of regionalism geographical proximity loses its importance. The reasons for institutionalization of interregional relations are the following: there is some kind of systematization of the more and more complex and interdependent world and this is a way in which regions are wishing to compensate the alliances of other regions. (Hänggi [2000])

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<sup>3</sup> As part of this wave of regionalism was established NAFTA, Mercosur, APEC and got new impetus the Andean Community, the Central American Common Market or ASEAN. The single market program of the EC made Western Europe's political and economic integration more intens. (Breslin – Higgott [2000] p. 333.)

<sup>4</sup> The term refers to to fact that regionalism of the past two decades has differing features compared to the wave of the 1950s. These new regional groupings are more flexible, have looser institutional structure, and are main 'supporters' of free trade and against statal intervention in economics. (Hänggi – Roloff – Rüländ [2006] p. 4.), their activity is more complex, have wider range of objectives than their ancestors. This multidimensionality means the fading away of boundaries between political, economical, cultural etc. dimensions. The main theorists dealing with the features of new regionalism: Björn Hettne, Heiner Hänggi, Frederik Söderbaum, Wilfred J. Ethier, Shaun Breslin, Paul Bowles, Diana Tussie; in Hungary András Inotai.

In the nineties the third wave of regionalism meant the relations among members of the so-called triad. It is a post-millennium phenomenon that regional groupings of the developing world are parts of the system, they build their interregional relations with the members of the triad and with each other (also) with the intentions to avoid marginalisation. Non-triadic interregional relations – as we will see in the case of China and Latin America – are in their infancy, they could be evaluated as embryonic shots rather than concrete interregional relations. An important feature of interregional relations is asymmetry, since usually regions at different paces of development are in relation with each other. The literature calls the attention to the fact that interregionalism – similarly to globalization – works towards economic unevenness: it marginalizes the developing nations and lock in the centrum-periphery hierarchy. (Song [2007] p. 81.) For the compensation of these tendencies non-triadic interregional relations get special emphasis.

The extreme proliferation of free trade agreements, the intensive spread of regional groupings, and the multiplication of connections between regional groupings are all signs of the tendency that in the future the relations between regional grouping – their competition and cooperation – would give more and more important projection of international relations. In the next decades states probably would operate in wider regional frameworks, so interregionalism could become an important forum of international relations.

The literature on this phenomenon<sup>5</sup> has only reached the surface of the process, since the contours are misty, and it is by far not a linear, even process. Researchers agree that interregionalism is a long term, uncertain, but irreversible process. End product could be multiregionalism that would mean a new, regionalized form of multilateral world order in which interregional relations dominate. Today agreements among regions are voluntary and cooperative, but in the future these could be institutionalized which would affect the structure of world order. (Hettne [2005] p. 558.)

The dissertation consists of four coherent parts. The first two chapters draw up the political and economic dimensions of Sino-Latin American relations; touch upon the political system of relations between the two regions, take into account the common elements of their foreign policies and the seeds of the institutionalization of the relations. Besides these they analyse the main tendencies of economic relations between the two regions and the characteristics of bilateral trade and investments. The first chapter deals with the cold war

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<sup>5</sup> Researchers studying inter-regionalism are mainly representatives of new regionalism's research, e. g. Hänggi, Hettne or Söderbaum. This is because of the relatively short time period between the second and third wave and the fact that many features of interregionalism are logical consequences of the characteristics of new regionalism.

period, while the second examines the last almost twenty years. In these chapters I applied linear analysis, dividing the periods into phases. The second chapter unequivocally indicates that China's presence in Latin America shows different intensity and depth in the subregions. So in the examination of Latin America's interregional relations I followed these – not at all homogeneous – groups of countries. Historically, in the interregional relations of Latin America the United States and Europe are important partners. These relations show similar – but not identical – inner ruptures.

The third chapter – already applying the subregional approach – analyses the impacts of China's appearance on the relations between the Latin American regions and the US, the EU and Asia, in comparative approach. In the XXth century, researchers often examined the Inter-American system's connection with further actors as triangles – as with Japan in the 1960-70s or with Europe from the 1980s on. This „triangle method” helps to feature the dynamics and characteristics of these trilateral relations.

Similarly to this, I executed triangle analysis – always from the perspective of Latin America. The construction of the analysis relies on the idea of interregionalism. This method is useful because the international opportunities of Latin America are strongly controlled by the external environment, the relations with the traditional partners. Besides, the method pictures well the different quality of relations of certain countries/group of countries to the US, the EU, Asia – and of course, China. These mosaics emphasize how diverse and manifold these systems of relations are which arouses the methodological dilemma, whether a series of case studies could give the most detailed picture. But this method would morsel the results, and my research exactly shows the existence of the inner ruptures concerning the relations with China.

To capture the main features of the triangles the description of the biregional relations (US–Latin America; EU–Latin America; Asia–Latin America) was necessary. For the sake of comparability I applied similar aspects. Besides mapping the political and economic relations the third aspect was the institutional element. This complex approach helps deeper understanding. The examination of bilateral and biregional relations traditionally focuses on political and especially economic characteristics, points out through these the main motivations and possible future scenarios of the relations. I found it important to examine the institutional dimension because I believe that the extremely extended network of regional and interregional relations gives new trend and forum of cooperation among states and regions. I refer to regional and interregional institutions, free trade associations, business councils, interregional institutions, free trade and investment agreement as institutional element ( i.e. all the institutions, regular forums and international contracts) that mirror and influence political and

economic relations simultaneously.<sup>6</sup> In the last decades the institutionalization of political and economic relations is so overgrown that now it exists in itself, as an important feature of inter-state or interregional relations.

At the political dimension I applied qualitative tools, like similarity of foreign strategies, agreement in global questions, atmosphere and results of high-level political meeting. In the case of economic relations I made the analysis with quantitative tools, like trade (main products, volume, market share) and investments (sectors, volume, market share), revealing the tendencies of last decades. In the framework of institutional relations I examined regional, interregional and transregional organisations, the connection between certain states and regional groupings and bilateral agreements. This way the dissertation draws up the network of interregional relations of Latin America's and its subregions'. My objective is to complement the existing literature mostly dealing with the triadic relations or the relations between the EU and some developing region.

In the fourth chapter I analyse bilateral relations between China and Latin America – with the help of case studies. Interregionalism does not reject the primacy of nation states. This realist approach is reflected in this part of the dissertation, applying comparative case study method. I chose an example of each of those groups of Latin American countries that share similar characteristics in their relations to China. Mexico was chosen as an example of competitive relations, Brazil as the greatest South American country with strategically important raw materials for China, and Bolivia as the poorest South American country which is also affected by the Chinese presence but she is only a 'second-line' partner for the Asian giant.

The novelty of my work is that it shows China's presence in Latin America projected on the regions' interregional network of relations; besides, it gives rather a complex approach beyond political and economic dimensions with special emphasis on institutional relations, since the mapping of these is indispensable for placing China – and its opportunities and challenges – in the foreign relations of Latin America.

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<sup>6</sup> This does not mean that if two entities – state or region – build developed system of institutions, that it means automatically close political and economic relations, since the institutional history, culture of a certain country/region influences the development of institutional relations.

### 3. Main Findings

**A) Historically the relations between China and Latin America was determined by external factors (like international order, behaviour of great powers), but after the end of the cold war and through China's economic rise these relations became „independent“.**

Although the Sino-Latin American relations dates back more hundreds of years in the Latin American colonial period, even in the first half of the XXth century, they were sporadic and without structure. After World War II the People's Republic integrated into the Eastern bloc, while Latin American countries were part of US sphere of interest in the cold war. Sino-Latin American economic relations did not show complementarities during these decades, consequently, these relations were almost non-existing. At the same time it has to be emphasized that trade relations historically show – even today relevant – „concentrated“ picture, which means that these modest although increasing relations focused on stronger Latin American economies, like Mexico, Chile, Argentina or Brazil.

The results of the Chinese reforms as of 1978 meant the seed of biregional relations. Firstly, because Chinese industrial modernization and economic development helped complementarities with Latin American economies, the dynamically increasing Chinese raw material and energy demand, plus the need for new markets revalued the significance of the Latin American region. For China it is a fundamental objective to sustain current economic development and modernization and guarantee the necessary environment for that. Latin American countries seem to be perfect partners to promote this. Secondly, after the end of the cold war multipolarity and moderating Washington's unilateral behaviour brought common ground for China and Latin America. While China is wishing to be a new pole in the multipolar world, for the Latin American countries the end of the cold war gave the promise of autonomous foreign policy.

**B) The Sino-Latin American relations are based on trade relations, the division of labour between them recalls the original integration of Latin America into the world economy, but raw material export – considering the current world economy tendencies – is an opportunity rather than a handicap for the region.** The processes of the nineties matured by the millennium, when in the framework of economic complementarities and multipolar world order new, more structured, deeper relations were evolving. The core was bilateral trade but further dimensions, like investments, technological cooperation or the development of institutional relations were built on this. The jump in trade was motivated by China's raw material demand, WTO membership and the reactions of Latin American countries. Today China is second or third most important trade partner of more Latin American countries – like

Brazil, Argentina, Chile or Mexico. It is striking how the export from Latin America to China is concentrated on a few products per country and its raw material or raw material based manufactured goods content is high (70-80%-os).

This creates an interesting dilemma for Latin America. Most countries of the region introduced import substituting industrialization (ISI) supported by the state – and from the 1950s by the theorists of CEPAL – to eliminate or at least to loose dependence on world market raw material prices and escape worsening terms of trade. The failure of this strategy was evident by the 1960s but most of the Latin American military dictatorial regimes chose the deepening of ISI as a solution. After the debt crisis of the 1980s Latin American countries followed the premises of neoliberal economic policy which brought improving macroeconomic results. The millennium – and the appearance of China meant a new perspective of raw material sale – right now – at rising prices. That is the „bogy” of the past, from which the countries of the region tried to escape in the 1930-1940s.

The significance and opportunity of the Chinese relation is that Latin American countries at last recognize the possibility of balance and get rid of the practice of extreme economic policy. The utilization of the extra income generated by the Chinese demand is crucial in the next decades of Latin American countries. With the reconstruction of the melted middle class and emphasis on infrastructure and education Latin America could redefinition its place in the world economy. The extra profit from raw material export was an important factor in the past years – relatively – exceptional economic growth (4-5%). From this perspective China is a catalyst for the region. In today’s interdependent world economy it’s worth evaluating the Chinese demand as an opportunity – especially for South American countries, and not as a phenomenon that forces Latin America back to raw material export. Trade with China might be a supporting factor in overrunning the well-known Latin American illnesses as widespread poverty, narrow internal market, underdeveloped health and education system.

**C) Chinese presence is an opportunity for more developed South American countries; the key is in their hands to utilize the People’s Republic increasing role in world economy. For Mexico and Central America China is a challenge, to which a possible answer is the integration into the Asian production chain.** Since Latin American countries are in general heterogeneous, the opportunities and challenges arising from China’s presence show different matrices for the subregions and countries of the region. The strengthening political and economic presence of China seems to deepen those inner ruptures that are typical of Latin America’s relations with farther external actors (US, EU), though not by exactly the same boundaries. Mexico and Central America are usually described as losers of the Chinese

presence because of their similar export structures to China's and the competition in the US market. But Mexico – exploiting its geographical proximity to the US, NAFTA-membership and maquila experiences – might effectively integrate into the Asian production chain aiming at the US market. Central American countries could get extra profit from the diplomatic competition among China and Taiwan, though in the long term it is not a solution for the competition with China – especially in the textile sector.

Concerning the Chinese relation South America can be divided into two groups: The so called ABC countries (Argentina, Brazil and Chile) plus Peru are the main winners of China's rise. These countries are the first line „targets” of Chinese raw material demand; therefore besides their imports the export side also shows increasing Chinese presence. Furthermore, their more decade long diplomatic relations with China and their geostrategic significance leads to serious diversification opportunity. So, the Chinese presence „raises” these countries offering them export diversification and extra export income. These countries originally had more diversified foreign trade relations, in the case of Chile, for example, it was a declared strategy to divide foreign trade equally among the US, the EU, Latin America and Asia. (Anderle [2008]) Probably the other above mentioned South American countries would follow this strategy, in which China – with other Asian partners – might be an important factor.

The other countries of the subcontinent – Colombia, Bolivia, Ecuador, Venezuela, Uruguay and Paraguay – are also affected by China, but the quality and depth of this does not reach the others. These countries basically apprehend the Chinese presence in their imports, but they – at least today – can not offer any export product that is strategically important for China and huge amount of it can be transported. An exception is Venezuela, which is inbetween the two groups because of its oil reserves. Still I rate her to this group since China does not buy spectacular percent of its oil exports for the time being and there are serious limits to significant growth. This group seems to be the most heterogeneous. Colombia is an important ally of the US – proved by trade, investment and aid statistics – therefore she ought to have a careful China policy. The Ecuador–Bolivia–Venezuela „circle” has shown an ideologically supported opening towards China led by Venezuelan president Hugo Chávez in recent years. This is motivated by the hope that the Asian country would actively take part in the modernization of the nationalized energy sector. In the foreign affairs of Uruguay and Paraguay, Mercosur and its „big members” Brazil and Argentina have determining roles. So they are affected indirectly by the Chinese relations through these South American countries. Besides, Paraguay, the last South American country with diplomatic relations with Taiwan

seems to follow world economy realities and probably the whole subcontinent would follow the one-China principle in the following years.

**D) The appearance of China found the countries of Latin America in a slow transition period of foreign relations. The modest presence of the traditional partners and with old Asian partner as Japan and new potential ones as India China could mean a new pole, especially for South America.** The role of Beijing in Latin America has important impacts on the region's relations with its traditional partners and with Asia in general. The Chinese relation coincides with the slow erosion with Washington and with the worn-out enthusiasm for the EU's role. Politically rare high-level meetings and more and more often conflicts over international issues prove this tendency, while decreasing or stagnating market share and the deceleration of investments – especially from the EU – are the economic signs.

Concerning Asia it has to be emphasized that China's appearance is the second „chance” for Asia, after Japan. After World War II the Latin American countries were important raw material providers for the Japanese economic modernization. By the eighties Japan's interest seemed to fade away and has not been rebuilt since then. So the traditional division of labour was relevant in the case of Japan and Tokyo had deep relations with those Latin American countries that a most important for China now. An important difference that would probably influence seriously the future of Sino-Latin American relations is that in the 1950-1960s Japan belonged to the US security umbrella while today China is rather an independent actor in world politics. Therefore the People's Republic is a 'real' new partner, not 'only' a fundamental ally of Washington. Besides – as a result of the size of her territory, population and economic potential – China's raw material and food demand would probably last longer. So, on the one hand China's current role could be built upon the Japanese experience and on the other hand it restructured the relations between Asia and Latin America. The Chinese presence seems to give impetus to other Asian countries (e. g. Japan) to strengthen their Latin American positions. Besides, world economy tendencies brought the appearance of such new actors as India – who focuses on relations with Mexico and Brazil. Consequently, in the following decades the Asian-Latin American relations might get new contents and perspectives; with a broader circle of Asian partners wider relations could be established. Today it is out of the question that Asia would be as important partner for Latin America as the US, although in the case of certain countries or groups in Latin America (as the Andean Community, Argentina, Costa Rica or Chile) Europe's commercial share is similar or less than Asia's. Due to the current trends it is possible that in the following decades Asia grows up to traditional partners – at least in trade. Politically the China-led Asian presence in

Latin America might also open new perspectives. The Sino-Brazilian and the institutionalized India-Brazil-South Africa cooperation is already an exceptional axis of the South-South relations. Brazil's and Mexico's active participation in G5 and G20 forums could help Latin America to be a more and more important participant of world politics.

Besides, it has to be emphasized that relations between Asia and Latin America are concentrated on several countries on both sides and the modest success of the Forum on East Asian – Latin American Cooperation operating since 2001 proves the narrow frames of the development of biregional relations. These boundaries – besides geographical situation and underdeveloped infrastructure (especially on Latin American side) – are the 'heavy' position of traditional partners, especially the United States. For all the mentioned actors the harmonious relations with Washington are important priority. Altogether China's Latin American role is controlled mostly by the US, while the Chinese presence influences strongly the Asian-Latin American relations. From this aspect the European-Latin American relations are the most 'independent' from China.

The Latin American subregions' foreign relations typical of the nineties are changing and this possible variation of structures is dominated by the Chinese relation.

**E) The People's Republic strengthening political and economic presence in Latin America also affects the Latin American integration and current tendencies show that it would probably help South America's inner and Mexico's and Central America's Northern integration.** The dissolution of the term Latin America, the never existed unity's break into two is not a new phenomenon. While NAFTA and CAFTA-DR supports Mexico's and Central America's cohesion with the United States; South America – especially since the failure of FTAA negotiations – is peeling off the US economy, Washington's economic policy and foreign strategy. This process started in the nineties, so its reason is by far not China's presence in Latin America but these relations support these tendencies.

The future of the South American integration (UNASUR) led by Brazil is uncertain, although the first institutional frameworks have been established. The main topics of the integration are infrastructure and energetic cooperation. Though China has no direct effect on the integration, with its infrastructure developing investments and interests in the Latin American energy sector she supports the main dimensions of South American cooperation. Besides, the Chinese presence in Brazil, Argentina, Chile and Peru by advanced inner trade could influence South American integration. Old problems of Latin American cooperation are the narrow inner market and the competitive economies. The above mentioned extra profit from trade with China could help the widening of middle class and the modernization of

manufacturing of the relevant countries. This could support South American division of labour between 'big' and 'small' countries.

For South America the new presidents supporting cooperation, the disappointment with the neoliberal economic policy and the appearance of new partners as China (and India) could be important factors in that the following decades bring the fulfilment of the old dream: that the subcontinent could function as an independent international actor in world politics and world economy.

**F) Further research field.** The dissertation draws up the quality of relations between China and the Latin American subregions. Further research is needed to 'shade' this picture to map the further inner ruptures and their characteristics. Among these, Cuba gets special emphasis. Cuba's example can hardly be fitted into the Latin American picture, because of its special international position, differing historical development, specific political and economic system. Besides, the exploration of the Sino-Cuban relations would be an extraordinary element of Sino-Latin American relations.

The relations between India and Latin America could also be an interesting further research field, especially the mapping of the China–India–Brazil triangle.

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