

## Book Review

- *Latin American foreign policies in the new world order: The active non-alignment option*, edited by Carlos Fortin, Jorge Heine, and Carlos Ominami, Anthem Press, 2023

The current shifts in global power pose great uncertainties for Latin American states. On the one hand, economic opportunities and the diversification of political relations promise to increase the region's autonomy vis-à-vis established powers, most notably the United States. On the other hand, China's growing presence might entrench commodity dependence and force Latin American states to choose sides in the US-China rivalry, thereby transforming economic opportunities into geopolitical risks. Undoubtedly, the question of how to navigate these waters has emerged as a key concern across the region.

*Latin American foreign policies in the new world order: The non-alignment option* marks an important intervention in this debate, bringing together an impressive line-up of former policymakers and academic experts. The twenty-one chapters bear testimony to the editors' convening power. Since its inception in 2019, the editors and former ambassador Jorge Heine, in particular, have incessantly worked – and ultimately succeeded – in placing the notion of 'active non-alignment' (ANA) at the centre of the conversation. The volume stands in the best tradition of Latin American thought on foreign policy-making, bridging quite naturally the practice-theory divide that vexes discussions in the English-speaking literature. The authors' immediate goal is not abstraction and generalization but critical reflection and concept formation to inform and shape policy-making. In fact, a sense of urgency permeates many chapters; the 'Non-alignment option' is, first and foremost, a call to political action. But policy immediacy comes with a trade-off.

Readers will notice that individual chapters do not agree on the meaning or merits of ANA. The framing chapters by Carlos Fortin, Jorge Heine, and Carlos Ominami define the 'doctrine' (p. 5) largely by negation. Accordingly, ANA should not be confused with neutrality or alignment, sharing with non-alignment a commitment to 'non-intervention, national sovereignty, peaceful coexistence, and respect for multilateralism' (p. 4). ANA, the editors further explain, 'stands for an independent position in relation to both powers on global issues, and for

a domestic synthesis of the market economy model represented by the US and that of state capitalism embodied by China' (p. 269). However, what this synthesis concretely entails is left unexplained. ANA is politically expedient – 'seductive and timely,' as Jorge Castañeda puts it (p. 139) – but social scientists will also find it ill-defined, encompassing a wide range of choices between the extremes of unconditioned subordination and direct confrontation. Such disagreement among analysts is not unexpected; in fact, it seems to be very much in the spirit of the project. As the editors explain, ANA is a 'work in progress' (p. 272). One clear construction site that emerges from the volume is the unresolved tension between authors' attention to external forces and constraints on the one hand, and oftentimes voluntaristic policy prescriptions on the other (for an exception, see Esteban Actis and Nicolás Creus).

For one, there is ambiguity about the conditions under which ANA is expected to prosper. Individual chapters emphasise the importance of regional cooperation and the diversification of relations beyond the traditional 'core' in Europe and the United States. However, chapters are at times ambiguous whether these factors are preconditions for ANA to succeed or indicative of its success. For example, if geopolitical forces render regionalism increasingly difficult, how can regional cooperation allow states to manoeuvre structural pressures in the first place (see, for example, Diana Tussie on pp. 206 and 211)?

For another, the volume gives little attention to great powers' perception of Latin American foreign policies. ANA is meant to steer the region clear of great power rivalry and to trace an 'equidistant' line between China and the United States, as Juan Gabriel Tokatlian suggests (pp. 33-35). Yet, one may wonder whether the invocation of 'non-alignment' will have the desired effect. It is a missed opportunity that the chapters by Robert Savio and José Miguel Insulza, both personal and somewhat nostalgic reflections on their experience with the non-alignment movement, eschew discussion of US responses to past attempts at 'diversification' at the height of the Cold War. Surely, as former OAS Secretary General, Insulza is no stranger to US political pressure. Yet he considers Chile under the Unidad Popular exemplary of 'non-alignment that is also active' (p. 229), whose 'extensive multilateral links would provide it with a badly needed cover to fend off unwelcome pressure' (p. 224). In hindsight, whether the Allende government succeeded in its balancing act seems questionable. Here, Stuenkel provides a much-needed counterpoint, noting that non-alignment and neutrality can mean quite different things to different audiences (p. 131). A policy's success is not independent of how it is presented and framed. Non-alignment may appeal to a specific target audience in Latin America and the non-Western world, but it will hardly be perceived as impartial in Europe and the United States.

Despite these critical observations, the volume will be essential reading for anyone interested in Latin America's place in a changing world. Numerous chapters excel on their own. Barbara Stallings provides a lucid and accessible discussion on Latin America's relations with China. Her chapter, along with Jorge

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Castañeda's analysis of subregional differences, will be especially useful in the classroom. Esteban Actis and Nicolás Creus contribute an insightful account of the international order's 'entropy' in which great power rivalry undermines the effectiveness of multilateral fora. Taken together, the volume should serve policymakers as a reminder that smaller states are not at the mercy of the sea in their dealings with major powers. Relations need to be managed, and it is here where concepts such as ANA can provide guidance. For international relations scholars, the volume raises important questions about the conditions under which Latin American states have agency, even in a rapidly changing world.

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