Contexto Internacional
vol. 44(1) Jan/Apr 2022
http://dx.doi.org/10.1590/S0102-8529.20224401e20200124

How Does Gramsci Travel in Latin America? Before and After Critical International Relations Theory

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Abstract: In the last 40 years, Critical International Relations Theory (CIRT) has influenced scholars in the Global North as well as the South. Latin America shows particular features. On the one hand, conceptualisation did not divorce the domestic from the international, as in dependency theory. On the other, Gramsci was widely read much before Robert W. Cox and even before International Relations was constituted as a discipline in its own right. In this context, this article aims to present possible contributions of (neo)Gramscian approaches to the understanding of Latin America as a region. It does so by establishing a dialectical relationship between a few topics that offer insights (and the theoretical reflection they provoke) and some (neo)Gramscian concepts. Hence, we want to re-read, in a dialectical vein, both CIRT and some aspects of how Gramscian thought has travelled in Latin America. We intend to analyse how such thinking is thriving, if at all, and discuss the possible relevance of rescuing Gramscian international thought to think about the region.

Keywords: Gramsci, neo-gramscianism, Critical International Relations Theory, international thought, Latin America.

Introduction

In 1981, in a theoretical landscape of heated debate about the purpose of International Relations (IR) and the dominant paradigms that had managed to ostracise the vibrancy of European Marxist debates, Robert W. Cox published a seminal article: 'Social Forces, States and World Orders' (Cox 1981). In the preceding years, however, soul searching had been wide-ranging, either on the distinction between the domestic and the international spheres or the mutual neglect of IR and Economics (Strange 1970). Everyone was involved or wanted to be involved in what was then known as contemporary theory.

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Cox, particularly, breaking away from Realism, Idealism and Functionalism, turned to Gramsci to comprehend the world order, giving rise to neo-Gramscianism in IR and International Political Economy (IPE) (Ramos 2020). In the same way that Economics was ushered in since that point, social theories began to inspire IR, helping it 'to critique the structural forces of power, authority, and norms in world politics' (Roach 2020: 1). In such a process, Critical IR Theory (CIRT) has influenced scholars in the Global North as well as the South (Wemheuer-Vogelaar et al 2016). Latin America shows particular features. On the one hand, conceptualisation did not divorce the domestic from the international, as in dependency theory. On the other, Gramsci was widely read much before Cox and even before IR was constituted as a discipline in its own right (Helleiner 2015). Forty years after Cox's first incursion into Gramsci, CIRT has become widespread[1], perhaps growing on the naturalised analytical focus on contestedness, but neglecting, however, Latin American sowings. This is an important point to stress – the epistemological domination of our field. In any case, the story of IR as a set of great debates between concepts, theories and paradigms has now become entrenched in Latin America. The interaction between various authors has produced a vibrant community with increasing mutual debate. This special issue (and the fact that we are publishing it in English) is a glaring case in point. Nonetheless, the vibrant debates in the region are deepening an understanding and a reassessment of ignored or marginalised thinkers from the 1950s to the 80s (Tussie 2020).

We do not intend to shed light on the circulation of Gramsci's ideas in Latin America[2], nor do we want to make a mere critique of CIRT. The article intends to present the (neo) Gramscian studies, discussing some of the work developed as well as pointing to possible research agendas and highlighting the understanding of international dynamics in Latin America. Of course, there are important and relevant (neo)Gramscian studies – for example, Adam Morton (2011) on Mexico, Chris Hesketh (2019), Massimo Modonesi (2019), William Robinson (2008), Dora Kanoussi (1999) and Anna Kowalczyk (2019) –, but the purpose here is a different one: we do not want to present a (neo)Gramscian analysis of the region. The aim is to present possible contributions of the (neo)Gramscian approaches to the understanding of the region, establishing a dialectical relationship between a few topics and concepts that offer insights (and the theoretical reflection they provoke) and some (neo)Gramscian concepts. Riding on the present wave, we want to re-read, in a dialectical vein, both CIRT and some aspects of how Gramscian thought has travelled in Latin America. Hence, we intend to analyse how such thinking is thriving, if at all, and discuss the relevance of rescuing Gramscian international thought. As we move along this path, we hope to offer a re-evaluation and contribute to the echoing of a multitude of voices. Implicit in this task is a clear destabilisation of the idea that we can talk about an unproblematic series of voices and traditions. What emerges, instead, are a series of complex narratives that involve a multitude of voices.

The history of international thought is to IR theory what the history of economic thought is to economic theory. Unlike theory, the history of international thought does not primarily judge the validity of theory (it can, and does, but does not have to). Rather, the goal is to understand the context of ideas and thinkers and to comprehend theories as

products of specific moments of time that relate both to the ideas that influence them and later ideas that they have influenced.

This article is an effort in historicising international thought, focusing on Gramsci, CIRT and Latin America. In this sense, it forms a narrative with three main sections: first, we offer a brief presentation of the main aspects of the contribution of Robert W. Cox and his followers to a critical foundation for understanding our field; second, we analyse some aspects of how Gramsci had travelled to Latin America before IR, including the main concepts and interpretations developed here; third, some pointers are fleshed out on possibilities to advance a research agenda, in a dialogue between (neo)Gramscian concepts and the concepts developed in section 2. We are naturally aware that CIRT is more than the inclusion of Gramscian insights. Finally, with this in mind, some concluding remarks are presented.

Gramsci and IR/IPE: Robert W. Cox and beyond

Robert W. Cox opened the door to critical IR/IPE and became a source of inspiration for a whole generation of Gramscian-inspired IR/IPE analysis. What Cox brought in is the analysis of how patterns of production relations embed mechanisms of hegemony (Cox 1987). In intimate dialogue with Susan Strange, who gave more emphasis to credit creation than production, and to business than social forces, Cox analyses how power in the social relations of production gives rise to a specific historic bloc. While Strange worked on states and markets (Stopford and Strange 1991), Cox did so with social forces. One must recall that he had spent almost 25 years in the International Labour Organization (ILO) and had witnessed and analysed labour relations (Cox 1977). These social forces thus become the basis of power in state formation, which shapes the world order. Accordingly, there are three spheres of activity that can identify a historical structure: (1) the organization of production and the social forces engendered by the process of production; (2) state formations related to state/civil society complexes; and (3) the world order (Cox 1981). The amalgamation of these spheres is Cox's original contribution.

There is no unidirectional relationship between the three spheres of activity, and they can have varying points of departure to explain the historical process. Furthermore, in each sphere, three other elements may dialectically combine to constitute a historical structure: (1) ideas, understood as intersubjective meaning and collective images of the world order; (2) material capabilities, concerning accumulated resources; and (3) institutions.

Using this framework, Cox analyses the social structures that temporarily existed under the capitalist system of production, demonstrating the primary elements that form the social world. Cox's point of departure, in contrast to Gramsci, is the world order to which he applies the Gramscian notion of hegemony (Cox 1977 and 1981). Taking Gramsci a step further, Cox offers an epistemic turn. Transformations to the world order resemble fundamental changes in social relationships. Moreover, every hegemonic relation surpasses national limits, involving more complex relationships and having its foundations in the world beyond the state apparatus (Gramsci 2002a, Q13§2; Gramsci 2004, Q10§44).

The state is still fundamental to international relations, 'through which capitalism and hegemony are expressed' (Morton 2007: 120). Nevertheless, hegemony includes the social bases of the state; for that reason, although the state is not irrelevant, state-centrism is dethroned (Gramsci 2002a, Q8§130: 279-280).

The construction of a historic bloc has a 'national moment' where a hegemonic class becomes an international phenomenon as it develops a particular form of social relations of production. For Cox, once hegemony is established domestically, it may expand beyond a particular social order, on a world scale (Cox 1987: 149-150). This relationship is also combined with social forces external to the state – on the transnational and global scales –, which means that the construction of hegemony must absorb counterhegemonic projects. Hegemonies can operate on two scales: the construction of a historic bloc and the establishment of social cohesion inside the state and/or the international expansion of a mode of production by its global projection throughout the world order. According to Cox, however, the 'national moment' is the condition *sine qua non*: 'a world hegemony is thus in its beginnings an outward expansion of internal (national) hegemony established by a dominant social class' (Cox 1994: 61). Yet, the 'national moment' is not just the point of departure for the spatial expansion of capitalism (Morton 2007; Agnew 2005), but a 'point of arrival' – once the hegemonic struggle involves transforming particular interests, related to a particular form of state, into something capable of being applied everywhere (Gramsci 2002a, Q14§68: 315).

Building on the debate on transnational relations, which Cox had joined in the early 1970s (Cox 1971; Keohane and Nye, Jr. 1972), he later conceptualised how the internationalisation of production affected the political sphere. The concept of internationalisation of the state breaks away with methodological nationalism to link together international production to the state. The internationalisation of the state is 'the global process whereby national policies and practices have been adjusted to the exigencies of the world economy of international production' (Cox 1987: 253). The state has become part of a complex international political structure. The state does not disappear in this process. As it internationalises, a new sphere of social interaction arises. In truth, highlighting the national moment demonstrates the 'interscalar articulation' (Morton 2007: 138) that exists between the international and national spheres. As fundamental as it is toward noticing the spatial dynamic of the dialectic of globalisation and understanding the structures of political power, it has not been given the appropriate currency in Latin America.

The hegemonic world order established by the *Pax Americana* 'was founded by a country in which social hegemony has been established and in which that hegemony was sufficiently expansive to project itself onto the world scale' (Cox 1987: 266). Fordism as a model of production and a particular form of state became the standard and was exported globally. Behind the *Pax Americana*, there exists a hegemonic vision that is associated with an economic internationalism throughout social groups from the United States and prompts demands of mass consumption. This is a pertinent feature, as it reveals the importance of the spatial dimension of hegemony construction: 'the place that comes to exercise hegemony matters, therefore, in the content and form that hegemony takes' (Agnew

2005: 9). In the case of *Pax Americana*, 'a spatial dialectic between the United States and the rest of the world rather than a conjunctural/universal historical dialectic with only incidental geographical features' is crucial toward understanding the contemporary global political economy (Agnew 2005: 9).

US hegemony exhibits some particularities, promoting some types of internationalisation of the state. Under *Pax Americana*, corporate liberalism (van der Pijl 2012) and then neoliberalism was crucial to the internationalisation of states in the global political economy. In Latin American countries, the *Washington Consensus* was the main political expression of such processes, as was the very own internationalisation of Latin American firms (Tussie 2016; Kowalczyk 2019). Such distinct perspectives draw attention to the potential insights of a Gramscian-inspired approach. Particularly, they provide important tools toward understanding the complexities of the transnationalisation of capital and classes, the dialectics of globalisation, the construction of hegemonic and counterhegemonic processes, passive revolutions, and the role of culture in such broader processes (Sassoon 2001). The Coxian turn, in true Polanyian fashion, injected the relationship between civil society and the state within any historic bloc. The relationship embodies both the existing hegemony and the seeds of counter-hegemonies.

While these readings are interesting in their own right as studies on the history of thought, what we want to stress here is the epistemological turn: they have challenged IR's stories about the origins of its ideas, and even called into question many of the assumptions about what should be considered core concepts. But what about the readings, the sowings and the uptake in the Global South, notably Latin America? Has Gramsci reawakened in the region, nearly a century after Mariátegui discovered him and forty years after Cox did?

Gramsci in Latin America before Critical International Relations Theory

The 'discovery' of Gramsci in IR comes mainly from the North. When Cox began to read Gramsci, IR was not a consolidated discipline in Latin America, but Gramsci had been translated into Spanish and his *Cuadernos* circulated widely. José Aricó posed a question that remains relevant and, in fact, has gained relevance after Cox's discovery: 'Who is "our Gramsci"?' (Aricó 1988: 28). Gramsci's landing in Latin America occurs in the 1930s (in Portuguese) and 40s (in Spanish) (Simionatto 1995 and 2019; Secco 2002; Aricó 1985 and 1988). According to Burgos, here there is a first ethical dimension to Gramsci's figure: he is seen as a communist hero, full of will to overcome any (structural) limits to revolution and action[3]. In other words, Gramsci's figure may have been disconnected from that of the critical thinker in this first contact (Burgos 2009; Aricó 1988). Subsequently, a new reading emerges, with the journal of the Communist Party of Argentina. *Cuadernos de la Cultura* flagged him as the 'philosopher of praxis,' a critic of materialism and metaphysical objectivism. A context of radical transformations and social upheavals – as the 20th Congress of the Communist Party of the USSR (1956) and the Cuban Revolution (1959)

illustrate – laid the foundations for a subsequent reading: the Machiavellian-Jacobin one, which can be split into three slants in particular moments:

a) The Gramscianism-Guevarism nexus, in the early 1960s, which had emphasised how the revolutionary party, as the modern prince, would be a key idea to construct a rich dialogue between Gramsci and the Latin American revolutionary path (mainly via *foquismo)*, expressed in Guevara's writings and behaviour.
b) The national-popular slant, in the mid-1960s, which expressed attention to the 'masses.' The Gramscianism-Guevarism nexus also gave attention to the national-popular; but in this subsequent moment, the relevance of rethinking the relationship between intellectuals and workers was stressed (Aricó 1988). In Argentina, for example, the Peronist experience turned it into a central issue to understand the disconnection between socialist thought and workers' practices[4].
c) Finally, the Gramsci from the Turin factory council was central from the middle of the 1960s to the beginning of the 70s in the industrial action in the city of Cordoba, in Argentina.

It was not too different in other parts of Latin America during this period. Carlos Nelson Coutinho highlights that in Brazil particularly Gramsci was

> the 'philosopher of the praxis,' who proposes a humanist and historicist reading of Marxism, different from the soviet *vulgate* (…). Gramsci, in such first Brazilian incursion, [appears] always beside Lukács and Sartre from the *Critique of Dialectical Reason*: all three are presented as (…) instruments of an antidogmatic battle (…) centred in the terrains of philosophy, aesthetics, and sociology of culture (Coutinho 1988: 59).

The Chilean coup in 1973, the political processes in Argentina and Uruguay and the publication of Gramscian works in Spanish – *The Political Writings* of Gramsci in Mexico and Juan Carlos Portantiero's article *Los usos de Gramsci* (1977) – were crucial to upstart the next Gramscian movement in Latin America, which could be seen as the last one before his 'discovery' by IR. From the mid-1970s to the 80s, the concept of hegemony was picked up as a heuristical tool to understand the failure of revolution, in particular for the construction of a new understanding of power. Revolution is transmogrified to 'revolutionary reformism' (Coutinho 1986), and from then on particular attention is given to the subjects of transformation. Structure makes room for processes, in which such historical subjects are constructed and construct themselves in a dialectical way. Henceforth, we see in some sense a tendency that alludes to Mariátegui (Portantiero 1988) and Guevarism (Chomsky 2015). Shedding determinism and economicist conceptions of socialism, democracy gains the renewed status of a legitimate site for progressive political struggle (Portantiero 1977; Aricó 1985; Mouffe 1985; Laclau 1985; Coutinho 1986).

An ethical figure, a philosopher of praxis, or an inspiration to analyse the masses and adherence to Peronism, and the relationship between hegemony and democracy: in all corners of this brief mapping of Gramsci's ideas in Latin America the running thread is

the importance of the state. José Aricó has argued that Marxian and Marxist difficulties to understand Latin American specificities rest upon the necessity to comprehend the distinct relationship between state construction and nationhood in the region. Top-down processes led nation-building, often with an active role of the army; 'semi-states modelling themselves and, at the same time, modelling society' (Portantiero 1988: 52).

With this in mind, Tzeiman (2019) highlights how statehood has held a kind of transcendent status in the history of critical political thought in the Latin American region, manifested in two main senses. First, opening important discussions and analyses about the state that had not been sufficiently problematised – here, Gramscian concepts of hegemony, historic bloc, national-popular and the extended or integral state, for example, were crucial[5] (Portantiero 1988). Second, exploring and extending such problems that are intrinsically related to Latin American specificities concerning state formation and development. Hence, the extended state – or the 'social equation' (Zavaleta 1990) – is a crucial concept to such reflections, once the main problem is twofold (and dialectically intertwined): on the one hand, to understand the particularities of Latin America's state formations; and, on the other, the pitfalls and potentialities for the international insertion of such state formations.

Despite the importance of such reflections, methodological nationalism remains embedded – of course, an emphasis on the state that had its reasons: starting from a national-popular key means refusing both cosmopolitism and particularism (Portantiero 1988). The international dimension of state formation retained a residual aspect. In fact, once we delve into such literature, we note that the national level is of paramount importance, with the international level and its dialectical connections with the national becoming more diffuse, except for the solidarity links between activists across the globe. This is a gap which neo-Gramscianism has tried to close – a point we will explore further in the next section.

Gramsci and Latin America: still dialoguing

The first diffusion of Gramsci in Latin America hardly placed his thought in an international dimension, except when using Gramscian warnings against economicism. Staying away from economicism, Gramscians took up the turn to democracy in Latin America with gusto and marched in support of the wave. We must note that Gramsci's own thinking on international hegemony seems to have downplayed the role of ideas and ideology in the exercise of hegemony at the international level and focused more on 'hard power'[6]. International hegemony must be fulfilled as politico-military power (Fusaro 2013: 89). At the international level force rather than consensus ruled. It was the Coxian turn that ushered in the role played by ideas. This drive was inspired by Cox's experience at the ILO and his book with Jacobson, *The Anatomy of Influence,* where the authors were asked to flesh out how influence is played out in supposedly low profile, conflict-free international organisations (Cox and Jacobson 1973). The exception was Susan Strange's research on the IMF, in which influence means a disbursement of credits. From there on, Strange also

stressed the role of explanatory variables other than material interests, as ideas or shared beliefs, to explain why certain decisions took place, differing dramatically from Marxist and Gramscian approaches. In her eclectic approach, she worked with four structures: production, credit, security, and knowledge (Strange 1988).

Taking a step back now to Gramsci himself, Gramsci paid little attention to Latin America in the *Prison Notebooks,* with few notes mentioning the region. However, it is interesting to note that, when it does come up, the national dimension is highlighted, with the relationship between state formation and modernity being the focus in a kind of internationalisation of the 'Southern Question' (Gramsci 1987 and Baratta 2017): 'The main theme that emerges from such notes is national state formation and the appropriated intellectual groups regarding modern life' (Bianchi 2018: 209). In one of these notes, Gramsci affirms: 'It is interesting to observe this contradiction that exists in South America between the modern world of the great commercial coastal cities and the primitivism of the interior' (Gramsci 1992 Q1§107: 195).

It is as though Latin America lacking politico-military power is bound to be an object of capitalist expansion. Only *en passant*, an international perspective is present, with Latin America seen in Trotskyist fashion as 'a society of unequal and combined development, in which the old lives alongside the new, the modern with the archaic, in a contradictory way' (Bianchi 2018: 209). Of course, such notes should not be seen as a 'lost treasure' that we finally found and with which we would be able to finally comprehend Latin America from a critical perspective. Alternatively, they could point out ways to analyse regional idiosyncrasies. Here is where the Coxian turn comes in, rescuing the role of ideas and consensus in the act of ruling and building hegemony.

At this point, we ask ourselves what the Coxian turn has brought and what it can have in store. Hence, in the following section, we elaborate on some possibilities in areas in which research has made some advances. We do this in a parsimonious way, not fully convinced that a paradigmised agenda needs to advance or that a unitary monopoly is a healthy development.

Regions as ideational creations and arenas for consensus building

The true pioneers of the idea of regionalism were not European, but Latin Americans. 'Latin Americans promoted the idea of regionalism as an arena for consensus building at least 100 years before the creation of the European Economic Community' (Acharya 2014: 654). In her recent analysis of Latin American IR, Deciancio (2016) reinforces this argument, noting that the idea dated back to Simon Bolivar and then was developed with a more economic focus by structuralist and dependency thinkers in the post-war period. Here, it is important to distinguish between the region as an actor, and the region in neo-Gramscian fashion as a means through which ideas resist hegemony and promote interests. Put another way, does a region have an interest and/or ability to act? There is no straightforward answer to this question. It is time- and issue- specific. The point to make is that for hegemonic powers the region is the globe. One could think of a model in which

the higher the position a region occupies in the international political economy – i.e., the more it approaches or becomes the core itself –, the more its type of regionalism is likely to be about the world outside and its global ambitions, such as ideas for rule setting. Conversely, the lower a region scores in the international economic pecking order, the more regionalism within this region is likely to be an instrument for better dealing with the extra-regional world, to which it is usually more vulnerable.

The region is thus a distinctive space of politics. In South America, regional projects shaped and have been shaped by competing development models as well as a constant search for autonomous development and sovereignty. As Deciancio (2016: 11) argues, Latin American countries thought of themselves as a distinctive entity facing a common legacy of foreign interventions since the nineteenth century. This shared self-perception in the pecking order did not unite the newly born nations. The idea of regionalism can also have an important domestic function as a tool for legitimising state activities in specific domains. Regionalism has been important not only for accruing international legitimacy but also for bolstering the domestic agendas of governments. The key, then, is not effective hard implementation or strong institutions, but coalescing to share ideas and set an agenda and gaining voice through intergovernmental cooperation. Regionalism is a well-researched agenda in Latin America.

Existing accounts identify a series of waves – periods in which states create or redefine institutions according to shared ideas – that have defined the agenda for regional cooperation. Dabène (2012) observes three features that determine a wave's nature and duration. First, each wave is path-dependent in the sense that it builds on and is constrained by previous waves. Second, waves are characterised by the regional diffusion of ideas resulting in broad consensus among a group of states and shaping their interests. Lastly, waves are influenced by external actors who advocate specific models of cooperation and provide incentives. Despite disagreement about the number and timing of these waves most accept that the first began in the early 1950s and lasted until the early 1970s, during which Latin American states pursued the idea of developmentalism through import substitution industrialisation and state-led national development. Advocated by Raul Prebisch from the United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), the Interamerican Development Bank (Tussie 1995) and the Latin American Free Trade Association (LAFTA) emerged, endorsed by ideological convergence on state-led development. Latin American governments continued to use the regional and the global stage to hone in civil society agendas and centre-periphery demands. One must bear in mind that civil society connects the economic structure with the institutional level.

Regional cooperation in the mid-1960s endorsed the creation of UNCTAD, the reform of the GATT and remained a means to negotiate the United States' role in Latin America with minimal pooling of sovereignty. The turbulent international economic environment and domestic political strife of the 1970s complicated integration schemes, leading to more flexible arrangements such as the Latin American Integration Association (LAIA). Following the debt crises of the 1980s, another wave took place under the *Washington Consensus* that saw the promotion of the idea of free trade and a sharp decline in state

interference in economic and social affairs. For some, this shift marks a critical separation between the 'old regionalism' and a 'new' version that was deliberately 'open' and non-exclusive (see Bianculli 2016: 156-158). The Common Market of the South (MERCOSUR) was launched in this context. Meanwhile, the United States promoted a neoliberal agenda, establishing the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) in 1994 and pushing negotiations for a hemisphere-wide Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA). Economic crises in the late 1990s and early 2000s led to strident domestic opposition to these plans, exhausting neoliberalism and bringing new dimensions to the table. The new wave has been characterized in multiple ways: 'defensive' (Tussie 2009), 'post-liberal' (Sanahuja 2009), or 'post-hegemonic' (Riggirozzi and Tussie 2012). Riggirozzi and Tussie (2012: 12) emphasize the partial displacement of dominant forms of US trade-led neoliberal ideas and the building of a new consensus. The initial impetus for the creation of the *Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of Our America* (ALBA) came from Venezuela with explicitly anti-US strategies. Similarly, Brazil promoted the Union of South American Nations (UNASUR) as part of its global leadership ambitions. Each in their way tried to knit a web to keep out hegemonic interference. Although the idea of regionalism has shifted from period to period, it has demonstrated considerable lasting power, calling attention to the pertinence of hegemony as a tool to understand such transformation of ideas in a close relationship with material changes.

(Emerging) middle powers

Although regionalism is a longstanding idea, emerging countries have pulled it together in new ways with a socio-economic understanding of hegemony. Over the past decade, they have come together in coalitions to have a voice in international economic governance and enable reform on issues dear to them, such as voting power in the Bretton Woods institutions and the WTO (Tussie 2018). But in contrast to realist assumptions of inexorable great power conflict, they showed strong incentives to *reform and build around* rather than frontally *oppose rules*. Nevertheless, they hold different ideas and preferences about how global governance should proceed. Coalition building such as the BRICS, IBSA and the G-20 – among others – are examples of such initiatives (Giaccaglia 2017 and van der Pijl 2017).

Such a topic is very close to the discussion that emerged in the 1970s concerning the New International Economic Order, an offshoot of the centre-periphery theory and theories of dependency (Tzeiman 2019; Kvangraven 2020). Latin American states sought to reform the unequal structures of the prevailing international order through an activist foreign policy and idea-sharing in the Third World. In contrast to modernisation theory, which identified internal barriers to development, the underlying message of the structuralist ideas attributed countries' lack of development to external causes and showed how a new economic order would enable their insertion on more favourable terms into an international system that did not at the time work for these countries. They also brought in ideas, institutions, policies, and practices to govern international life.

The rise of radical approaches (Marxism, Dependency theory) that became the structuralist paradigm in the 1980s had been fuelled by theorists located in the Global South. When these initiatives were buried in the rubble of the post-Cold War, important critiques related to dependency conception of the state came to the fore. Lechner, for example, highlighted the lack of clear comprehension of dependency theories on the relationship between state and civil society: for dependency, the state used to be seen as the political society, with consequences to the understanding of the relationship between the political and the economic in Latin American countries (Lechner 2006: 82-83). In this sense, state must be understood in its extended sense, as a social relation embedded in global structures of capitalist relations of production. In this process, LA states are weak and strong at the same time: 'state "intervention" is preponderant and has great autonomy. If dependency of the world market shows us a "weak state," the structural heterogeneity shows us a "strong state"' (Lechner 2006: 104-105).

Following such perspective, the coalition-building which characterised emerging powers is not a seamless web doctrinally and discursively. However, in Gramscian terms, discourse and agenda-building are part of configuring a consensus and part of the counterhegemony path. Of course, it is not only a contested concept in theoretical terms but also a highly internally differentiated concept, made up of a range of linked but discrete subcategories and dimensions. These subcategories and dimensions can be manipulated and orchestrated in different ways by political actors, leading to a much larger spectrum of strategic options, policy prescriptions and de facto practices. The global political economy itself is opening up to a much wider range of political, economic and social actors. These include economic actors involved in transnationalising firms, market structures and networks, along with state actors (Tussie 2016).

The concept of internationalisation of the state that overcomes the dichotomy between the national and the international levels of analysis remains underexplored. It can be a useful tool to understand not only the connections of Latin American social forces with US hegemony and the *Pax Americana* – through the *Washington Consensus* and neoliberalism, for example – but also how emerging powers *emerge*. Coalition building shows a strong policy commitment to distilling the idea of development and economic justice along North-South lines – not quite full revolutionary transformation. They can be seen as development processes that occurred inside a structure of passive revolution – with all the limits intrinsic to the passive revolution processes. The limits of such emergence and the form of development, its limits and potential could also be dissected.

Education and language

So long as critical theory emphasises the primary role of ideas and shared beliefs, it challenges the pervasive and barren distinction between low and high politics. On this note, if social reality is not a *datum* (something which is given), it is a *factum* (something which has been 'constructed'), and critical theory should see that it has a pre-existent agenda in how the internationalisation of education creates, resists, or amplifies hegemony in the

international realm. The idea of civil society as proposed by Gramsci and its role in modifying consolidated institutional arrangements has been used to explain how neoliberalism created a hegemonic socio-economic bloc – a globalist historic bloc – and how globalisation framed the analysis. A historic bloc is far more than a mere coalition. It implies an amalgamation of structure and superstructure that rests on the pillar of ideology. Whereas education could be seen as a crucial moment in the pedagogical process of constructing a historic bloc, it is important to highlight the current neglect of the relationship between the construction of hegemony in the international realm and the internationalisation of education[7] – which is perplexing at least, since Gramsci paid very close attention to education –, as well as hegemony as a pedagogical process (see, for example, Gramsci 2001b, Q1§123, Q1§127 and Q12§2; and 2002c, Q19§27). In this case, it would be very fruitful to rescue the concept of *intellectual* and its pedagogical role in the construction of hegemony on national and world scales.

There are important studies on the regionalism of higher education in MERCOSUR that bring together the topics of internationalisation of education and regionalism. Another important initiative that deals with it in a non-hegemonic way is UNILA (the Federal University of Latin American Integration – *Universidade Federal da Integração Latino-Americana*), created in 2010 in Brazil to promote academic exchange and educational cooperation with MERCOSUR and Latin American countries. Perrotta (2014) introduces a very interesting perspective on this topic.

Important questions in this vein could be: how does international cooperation between intellectuals on education occur? Is there any exchange of different discourses or the affirmation of certain dominant discourses? If, following Gramsci, language is seen as the terrain upon which the political struggle is defined and takes place, what is the role of the global English as the common idiom to the politics of contestation from below (Ives 2009)? Particularly, what are the consequences of global English to contemporary LA politics of resistance? Writing this very piece in English is more than just a pity.

What is the impact of the relationship between intellectuals and education in the definition, perpetuation (or transformation) of a given worldview? In more concrete terms, what are the implications for the definition of science: What is legitimised as scientific knowledge or what defines a particular science? Questions like these are important because they touch upon important topics mainly in social sciences and humanities as, for example, the limits and possibilities of alternative discourses about what development is, notably those that are closely related to Latin American experiences and reality – such as the idea of *buen vivir* (good living or well living). More generally, what does our field refer to? What are the epistemological paths? Connecting education and regionalism topics, how can we think of the international as a site of our own?

Foreign policy and diplomacy

Gearóid O'Tuathail and John Agnew have introduced the idea of 'intellectuals of statecraft' in order to comprehend 'a whole community of state bureaucrats, leaders, foreign-policy

experts and advisors throughout the world who comment upon, influence and conduct the activities of statecraft' (O'Tuathail and Agnew 1992: 193). Focusing on the discourse of geopolitics, they emphasized that such intellectuals have been present in statecraft practices since the development of the modern state system, being a product of such practices. In this sense, they have been a constitutive aspect of statecraft, offering 'normative and imperative rules for the conduct of strategy and statecraft by the rulers of the state' (O' Tuathail 1998: 8).

Such a concept has been developed by Bieler and Morton (2015) to understand the social role of some specific individuals in the formation of United States foreign policy discourses. The Gramscian notion of organic intellectual could be mobilized here, once the problem of autonomy of a social group is Gramsci's starting point to discuss the category of intellectuals in notebook 12: 'Are intellectuals an autonomous and independent social group, or does every social group have its own particular specialized category of intellectuals?' (Gramsci 1971, Q12§1: 5).

So, what about other places and regions beyond the United States? The road is open to investigate the relationship between diplomacy and its institutionalisation. In the case of Brazil, for example, it could be very fruitful to explore possible connections between Itamaraty's institutionalisation processes and the concept of traditional intellectual (Ramos 2012). There is a very particular *ethos* partaken by the Brazilian diplomats, characterized by self-conscience – 'an "*esprit de corps*"' – that they 'represent a historical continuity uninterrupted even by the most complicated and radical changes in political and social forms, (…) [with a] special qualification [which] thus put themselves forward as autonomous and independent of the dominant social group' (Gramsci 1971, Q12§1: 7).

Religion

The role of religion has deserved scant enquiry in our field, despite the foundational role the Catholic church has had in creating a Latin American identity. Ever since colonial times, and later in the context of national governments, the political and social support of the Church has been paramount for the maintenance of a status quo favouring the elite. The Church freely offered religious capital to ultimately capture the hands, hearts, and minds of the people in return for financial assistance in maintaining Catholic schools and thus religious hegemony, a hegemony that was only challenged in Mexico after the revolution. By the end of the 1950s, clerics, religious and laypersons began to question the Church's political role as a defender of privilege. Some even became active in support of change-oriented social movements and programmes designed to improve the lot of the poor. Moreover, sanctioned by the concerted action of bishops a number of national churches went so far as to commit themselves institutionally to an oppositional role in favour of those most disadvantaged by military rule. During the age of bloody dictatorships, Christian communities became a particularly important force for institutional activism.

> Based upon a conflict-orientated understanding of society (and as often as not referring explicitly to the work of Marx and/or Gramsci)

> liberation theologians, among them Gutierrez, Betto and Leonardo Boff have tended to see Church innovations in the political sphere as prompted by base level activism rooted in popular dissatisfaction with the politico-socioeconomic status quo (Daudelin and Hewitt 1995: 224).

Of course, this is not to deny or even minimise the support of notorious bishops to murderous governments in defence of 'western civilisation and Christianity.' Indeed, we are highlighting one aspect of how religion and politics have been interconnected in complex ways in Latin America (Löwy 1996).

Of late, the emergence of political movements of evangelical nature has acquired considerable heft in the political affairs of their countries and have even become a phenomenon of wider regional significance. Much evidence suggests that evangelical Protestantism is allied with conservative interests. Guatemala was headed by an evangelical President, Jimmy Morales, despite the little-to-no political experience he had at the time of being elected. In 2018, particularly striking developments in this respect include the victory of Jair Bolsonaro in Brazil, Fabricio Alvarado's progress to a run-off vote in Costa Rica and the role played by the Social Encounter Party in Mexico, which has allied itself with Andrés Manuel López Obrador and helped his election as president. The violent downfall of Evo Morales in Bolivia also counted with evangelical support. Jeanine Añez claimed Bolivia's presidency, appearing on the palace balcony with a large Bible. 'The Bible has returned to the government palace,' she told supporters.

If one were to pick the concept of organic intellectual and a vision for Latin America, Alberto Methol Ferre, Uruguayan, layman and theologian, with influence on grassroots and Pope Francis, stands out. His originality is the defence of the contribution of populism to regional construction, as an underlying element to the persistence of integrationist efforts throughout decades, regardless of whether such efforts are from the left or the right (Hernandez Nilson 2010).

Against this broad-brush picture, the scant attention to religion in configuring hegemony to moral and intellectual reform to common sense is, to say the least, a task to take up. Gramsci problematized the relationship between religion, power, and politics and saw religion as an active mode of experiencing social reality. In this sense, following some important exceptions in this issue, as Worth (2013), Murray and Worth (2013) and Semeraro (2017), one needs to question how many of the contemporary religious movements have emerged 'as forms of resistance to the contemporary global order' (Worth 2013: 7) and, at the same time, have presented connections with neoliberalism, with some global evangelical religious groups having an important role in the maintenance of neoliberal hegemony in a global scale. Such distinct and even contradictory role of religion in politics is a very rich insight of Gramsci, mainly when we look at the relationship between common sense and religion (Gramsci 2004, Q11§13). In line with it, prolific insights may be developed about the historical progressive role of Liberation Theology in Latin American politics (Semeraro 2017); the potential critique brought by some traditional and indigenous Latin American religious worldviews to capitalist environmental politics – and how it could

be part of a counter-hegemonic discourse in the region; as well as the reactionary role of some evangelical (and catholic) contemporary movements, closely related to far-right parties and neoliberal discourse.

Concluding remarks

The objective of this article has been to dispel the idea of timeless truths that established a single foundation to the understanding of international relations. In other words, to interrogate. We are in the midst of enjoying a clear destabilisation of the idea that we can talk about an unproblematic series of voices and traditions within IR history. In this context, the opening to Gramsci is in full swing in Latin America. This is a very welcome development because it liberates our field from intellectual prisons and brings in new foundations. Moreover, it involves engagements with history and a wealth of approaches and research projects. What is emerging is a series of complex narratives that involve a multitude of voices, all of which merit a warning against inaugurating yet another discipline defining so-called 'great debate'.

Another paradigm gaining ascendancy these days is constructivism. Constructivism has brought in heuristic tools such as normative power and the ideational dimension in our field. Despite some affinity of the Gramscian paradigm with constructivism, the economic dimension is not always central in neoconstructivist narratives, rendering it sometimes difficult to define them as political economy theories, although they have contributed to softening the rough edges of Latin American determinism and enabled the study of agency. This is clearly not the case with (neo)Gramscian approaches to IR/IPE, in which primacy is attributed to relations of production as underpinning social relations shaping both the political and the ideological superstructures (Ramos 2020). Moreover, with Cox's heuristic concept of internationalisation of the state, the tension of the dichotomy between national and international levels of analysis is overcome by referring to international/transnational production. Actors and, in particular social groupings arising from the underlying relations of production, are transnational, that is, both national and international, and act in both arenas to further their economic interests. Gramscian inspiration also gives more primacy to contestedness, a concept that feminist theories also develop and today is occupying the very centre of our field (Loza 2021). Critical theory overall problematises socio-economic and political structures. It considers them potentially transitory and subject to change.

To close, the point to make is that conceptualisation is neither true nor untrue. The use that is made of it, the aid that it gives, the light that it throws give the possibility of evaluating its usefulness. Diverse conceptualisations, nevertheless, sometimes raise heated controversies. Between conceptualisation and ideology, a subtle affinity can be glanced. Yet, since we are not advocating paradigmatisation, we understand there is room for diverse interpretations and continued dialogue. The reference to historical situations answers the demands of all schools for situated knowledge.

Notes

1 See, for example, the TRIP Faculty Survey in Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia and Mexico in TRIP Data Dashboard 2014.

2 For an interesting discussion on the circulation of Gramsci's ideas, see Santoro, Gallelli and Gerli 2020.

3 In the Brazilian case, such 'ethical interpretation' is related to the fact that Gramsci did not arrive in Brazil through the Brazilian Communist Party (PCB), but from exiled Italians, Trotskyists, and other antifascists (Secco 2002).

4 As Aricó stresses, 'if Gramsci sought in the complex structures of the past the premises and conditions of the fascist present, shall we not make the same in order to understand the reasons of Peronism consolidation?' (Aricó 1988: 34). But even more: the consolidation and success of populist practices in Latin America in tandem with the defeat of socialism presented an opportunity and necessity to better understand national-popular construction processes in the region (Portantiero 1988).

5 'In a word, Gramsci permitted us to penetrate the great questions of national history' (Aricó 1988: 43).

6 For an interesting discussion on the idea of a 'hegemonic nation,' see Medici 2003.

7 An important exception is Hartmann 2015.

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Como Gramsci viaja na América Latina? Antes e depois da Teoria Crítica das Relações Internacionais.

Resumo: Nos últimos 40 anos, a Teoria Crítica das Relações Internacionais (TCRI) influenciou os estudiosos tanto no Norte como no Sul Global. Entretanto, em relação à América Latina, a trajetória é ligeiramente diferente. Por um lado, a conceitualização não havia divorciado o nacional do internacional, como na teoria da dependência. Por outro lado, Gramsci foi muito lido antes de Robert W. Cox e até mesmo antes das Relações Internacionais terem sido constituídas como uma disciplina por direito próprio. Neste contexto, o objetivo do artigo é apresentar possíveis contribuições das abordagens (neo)gramscianas para a compreensão da região da AL, estabelecendo uma relação dialética entre alguns tópicos e conceitos que oferecem *insights* (e a reflexão teórica a respeito) e alguns conceitos (neo)gramscianos. Portanto, queremos reler, em uma via dialética, tanto a TCRI como alguns aspectos de como o pensamento gramsciano tem viajado em AL. Pretendemos analisar como esse pensamento está prosperando, se é que está prosperando, e discutir a relevância de resgatar o pensamento internacional de Gramsci para pensar a região.

Palavras-chave: Gramsci, neo-gramscianismo, Teoria Crítica das Relações Internacionais, pensamento internacional, América Latina.

Received on 18 September 2020 and approved for publication on 25 March 2021.