

CHINA'S "TRUE MULTILATERALISM" AND THE GLOBAL SOUTH: NEW NON-ALIGNED MOVEMENT OR STRATEGIC FLEXIBILITY? THE CASE OF LATIN AMERICA

Bruno MACCIOTTA PULISCI*

Abstract: Since 2018, the world has been witnessing a confrontation between China and the United States (US), first in the form of a trade war, then a technological war as well. In this competition, the United States does not seem to have gained much. A look at how trade dynamics have changed between 2000 and 2024 shows that China dominates international trade, while the United States has lost influence. That is particularly clear in the Global South, but mainly in Latin America, where China has many very large investments. Despite everything, the US remains a major ally in this region, even if it is not necessarily the main investor. In this context, China has promoted, since 2021, what it has called "True Multilateralism". That is a critical and opposing version of the Western conception of multilateralism, led by the United States, which, according to China, is more inclusive and no longer an instrument of power and domination, but rather an instrument of true cooperation. As in trade, China has won the cooperation of many countries in the Latin American region in terms of its "True Multilateralism". However, such cooperation has not translated into turning its back on the United States. It may seem obvious that the dynamics are no longer based on exclusive and exclusionary areas of political, military, and commercial influence as in the Cold War. This raises the question of whether we are witnessing the birth of a new movement of Non-Aligned countries or whether this is a strategic flexibility in Latin American countries' foreign policy to take advantage of the investment opportunity that this power struggle between the two actors represents for them.

Keywords: China; Latin America; multilateralism; foreign policy; power competition.

* Assistant Professor, Faculty of Insurance, Law and Business Sciences, Pontifical University of Salamanca, Salamanca, Spain; Email: bmacciottapu@upsa.es; ORCID: 0000-0003-1132-8645.

INTRODUCTION

With the 2008 global financial crisis, the United States lost its presence in many spaces in which it had previously dominated. These spaces were well-exploited by an emerging China seeking to position itself as a global power. That worried the West, especially the US, as its main competitor. In response, the Obama administration attempted to address China through a multi-faceted approach that sought to engage China as part of the strategy (Schindler, DiCarlo, & Paudel, 2021). However, China interpreted the US efforts as a way to slow its growth, and Xi Jinping launched his Belt and Road initiative (Biderbost, Boscán, & Calvo, 2018). With the arrival of Donald Trump in the White House, the US administration adopted a more aggressive strategy. That led to the imposition of tariffs in 2018 and started the trade war known today. During the Biden's administration, this trade war was followed by a technological war (Macciotta & Biderbost, 2023).

In this context, Latin America, like many other regions in the world, has found itself amid this competition and had to adopt a strategy that allows it to achieve its objectives and satisfy its own interests without being too affected by the competition between the two powers. Looking back at the 2008 crisis, while Latin America was losing the attention of the US, China was granting extensive lines of credit and writing off unpaid debts to countries such as Guyana and Bolivia. All that ended up embodied in *China's Policy Document for Latin America and the Caribbean*, which established the basis for China-LAC cooperation (Rooney, 2019). In this way, China began to displace the United States in the region; however, this shift towards China seems to have been more pragmatic than ideological, as Latin America has not ceased to be close to the United States (Macciotta & Biderbost, 2023).

Although today's world is not bipolar but multipolar or at least multipolarised, the tense competition between the two powers has led many to refer to these times as the *Second Cold War*¹. However, this is a view that is not shared in this

¹ In this sense, for example, Schindler, DiCarlo, & Paudel (2021) argue that the dynamics of this competition are indeed comparable to those of the Cold War, above all because they seek to establish areas of exclusive influence. This is an argument with which to disagree. While it is true that the United States is still trapped in the Cold War dynamic of containment, which does not allow it to outstrip its competitor and is losing strength, it is also true that neither power seeks exclusive areas of influence to the exclusion of the other. The best example is Latin America,

paper. Indeed, the dynamics of competition today are not the same as those of the Cold War, and the conceptualisation of the Cold War and the competition between the powers seems to have been distorted, not necessarily intentionally, so that it has become a sort of “Cold War 2.0” (Macciotta & Biderbost, 2023; Xing & Bernal-Meza, 2021). However, there is one dynamic that needs to be considered as fundamental to this issue. That is the questioning of the established international order brought about by the rise of China. Particularly relevant to this paper is the challenge to rules-based multilateralism posed by the West, led by the United States, and China’s proposal of a new “True Multilateralism” (Hillman, 2020; Mitić & Stekić, 2025).

In this sense, and within the context of China’s “True Multilateralism”, Latin America has participated in multiple forums alongside China. However, as mentioned above, without leaving the United States behind, and, in many cases, other powerful states such as Russia.² This raises the question that guides this paper: is this a revival of the Non-Aligned Movement, or is it simply strategic flexibility?

The starting hypothesis is that there is not really a *Second Cold War*, and, given that the dynamics are different, neither is there a resurgence of the Non-Aligned. It would therefore be a matter of strategic flexibility used by Latin American countries to adapt their foreign policies and achieve greater advantage in terms of their objectives and interests. To reach this answer, it is first necessary to answer a previous matter: for there to be a new Non-Aligned Movement, there must be a new Cold War, so the first issue will be to try to discern whether or not a new Cold War is going on. However, it is also necessary to know what is meant by a Non-Aligned Movement, so this first part should also include the delimitation of this concept.

In a second section, it is essential to address the concept of “True Multilateralism” as well as its contrast with the rules-based order. It will also address how China has used this strategy to engage the Global South and particularly Latin America. Finally, a third section will take a look at Latin

which, despite trading more with China, has not distanced itself from the United States, with whom it has always maintained close commercial and political relations (Macciotta & Biderbost, 2023; Xing & Bernal-Meza, 2021).

² Hence, the reluctance of many Latin American countries to condemn the Russian attack on Ukraine.

American foreign policies and how they have adapted to this power dynamic. In this way, having initially set out the concepts clearly, it will be possible to establish whether this is a new movement of the Non-Aligned or simply strategic flexibility.

COLD WAR 2.0 AND THE NEW NON-ALIGNED: REALITY OR NOSTALGIA

To discuss the Non-Aligned Movement and determine whether there is a resurgence of the Non-Aligned Movement, it is first necessary to determine whether the tension between China and the United States can be called a second Cold War or whether it is simply an intra-capitalist trade competition. To do this, it is important to define what the Cold War was and to be able to point out the main differences with the Sino-US rivalry to determine whether we are really witnessing a remake of the Cold War.

The first thing to note is that, as Bernard Baruch³ pointed out, the term Cold War was coined by Herbert Bayard Swope⁴ to describe the tension between the Soviet and American delegations at the United Nations Atomic Energy Commission in 1946 (Neila, Moreno, Alija, Sáenz, & Sanz, 2019). The origin of the term indicates the military background of the tensions. Indeed, with the recent development of atomic energy and weapons of this type, the aim was to create an international authority to control and limit nuclear energy for exclusively civilian uses. The Soviet Union responded by proposing to eliminate all atomic weapons, which would affect the US monopoly. However, none of the powers wanted this, as the United States possessed nuclear weapons and the Soviet Union was already pursuing a programme to develop its own (Neila et al., 2019).

Another insight into the nature of the Cold War is that one of the factors that contributed to it was the disagreements between the powers over the status of the former Reich, its borders, its future status, and the future of Austria (Neila et al., 2019). A major bone of contention was that the Soviet Union insisted on a new international order based on the principle established by Stalin in 1945 that

³ American financier and philanthropist of Jewish origin, advisor to four presidents.

⁴ Journalist collaborator with the US Administration at the United Nations.

anyone who occupied a territory had the right to impose their system on it⁵ (Kissinger, 2016). On the other hand, the United States advocated a democratic system that, at least in theory, respects human rights, favours large-scale free markets, and promotes the private accumulation of wealth (Haass, 2020). This second point shows the ideological element of competition between the two actors. In addition, however, there was also a vocation to seek zones of political, military, and economic exclusivity, as each sought to impose its own model, considered superior by each.

From these insights, it is possible to understand the nature of the Cold War. In this sense, the Cold War can be understood as a bipolar international system characterised by systemic heterogeneity, with two distinct and opposing models of society interacting in competitive and internationalising dynamics. This system will bring with it a world split in two along two axes of tension: a) East-West and b) centre-periphery. It also poses rules in its dynamism in accordance with its nature: a) division into two opposing antagonistic poles; b) impossibility of direct confrontation; c) impossibility of a peace plan due to mistrust; d) the search for exclusive political-military areas; and e) pressures on the peripheries of each bloc or the Non-Aligned (Neila et al., 2019).

When reading this characterisation of the Cold War, there might be a temptation to locate a priori points of coincidence between US-Russian and Sino-US rivalry. However, as Brands and Gaddis (2021) argue, the issues over which Cold War tensions arose are not perceived as great today, and where similarities are found, the context is very different. Indeed, there are issues that, while overlapping to some degree, do not seem right to draw a real parallel with the Cold War. The world is indeed polarised; however, it seems to be heading more towards multipolarism rather than bipolarity. Similarly, both actors indeed exert pressure on what might be considered peripheries, but the pressure does not seek exclusive alignment with one or the other; that is, exclusive spheres of influence are not sought.

⁵ It is pertinent to make a distinction between the concept of system and that of order, as they are terms that can be confused. A system is made up of a set of actors whose relations generate a certain configuration of power (structure) in which a network of interactions (processes) is produced according to certain rules. Meanwhile, international order is the set of rules through which international functioning, stability and equilibrium are sought (Barbé, 2020; Pereira, 2009; Sakwa, 2024).

Perhaps the argument that we are in a new Cold War has been best countered by Nye (2021) and Christensen (2021). As for the latter, he argues very well that this period of tension lacks three fundamental elements to be equated with the Cold War: a) neither China nor the US is engaged in an ideological struggle; b) today's highly globalised world is impossible to divide perfectly into two economic blocs; and c) neither the US nor China leads opposing alliances willing to fight bloody proxy wars like those of the Cold War (Christensen, 2021). Moreover, it should be added that this would imply accepting that the world today is bipolar, which would be a mistake.

On the other hand, Nye comments that the Cold War was a two-dimensional chess game, while tensions with China are three-dimensional. That is, while the confrontation with the USSR was military and ideological, the competition with China is military, economic, and social. That made containment possible in the case of the Cold War, in which neither could be trusted to pull the trigger. This makes equating this moment with the Cold War lazy and dangerous (Nye, 2021). In other words, the fundamental difference for this author lies in the ties, especially social and economic ones, that exist with China and did not exist with the Soviet Union. Namely, economic interdependence and social connections (students and tourists, for example).

In the context of the Cold War, a movement of countries emerged, mainly from Asia and Africa, that did not agree with alignment, driven above all by anti-colonialist sentiment and a refusal to form military alliances with the great powers. The first step of this group of countries was to meet in Bandung in 1955 and agree to hold the first conference of non-aligned countries in Belgrade in 1961. To better understand the concept of non-alignment, it is necessary to divide it into two aspects: a positive and a negative one. The negative aspect consists fundamentally of rejecting any military alignment with any of the blocs (Alam, 1977). In this sense, certain authors reduce non-alignment to this aspect alone. For Brecher, for example, non-alignment consisted of nothing more than declaring oneself outside of any conflict between blocs and free of any a priori alliance (Brecher, 1962). However, the concept would be incomplete without considering the second, positive element. In this sense, the positive element is the prioritisation of one's own interests. Thus, the preservation of the national interest is one of the foundations of non-alignment (Alam, 1977).

In this sense, the IBSA⁶s or BRICS+⁷ have been referred to as a kind of resurgence of non-alignment. That is usually based on the fact that, like the Non-Aligned Movement,⁸ these are groups that are opposed to taking a position and tying themselves to one side or the other; they are also groups of cooperation but not of coordination in international affairs, as the non-aligned groups were (Dayan & Weinberg, 2024). However, taking into account the changes in the current international context, it would seem to be misguided to affirm the rebirth of a movement with such an approach. In fact, non-alignment seems impossible today given the interdependence that prevents the choice of a bloc, which, as mentioned above, is impossible in the current context (Nafey, 2005). Similarly, the aforementioned countries tend to engage in cooperation, especially in trade and development cooperation; however, they maintain trade ties with both competing powers, and some of them also maintain military ties with one of them.

“TRUE MULTILATERALISM”: CHINA’S ALTERNATIVE WORLD ORDER?

“True Multilateralism” was launched by China in 2021 as an alternative to the rules-based order prevailing. To understand how this “new order” is proposed as an alternative to the existing one, it is necessary to understand what China is referring to when it speaks of “True Multilateralism”. It is necessary to begin by noting that this is mostly a product of the decline of multilateralism that started in 2008 as a consequence of unilateralist US policies and the widespread loss of confidence in existing multilateral institutions. Added to this is the shift from a post-Cold War unipolar world in which the concern was not with power but with how to solve joint problems to a world in which the focus is on the competition of and for power, which has led, on the one hand, to the neglect of

⁶ India, Brazil, South Africa

⁷ Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa, Egypt, Ethiopia, Indonesia, Iran, United Arab Emirates

⁸ This paper speaks of a ‘new non-aligned movement’ in an attempt to draw a parallel with the original non-aligned movement that emerged during the Cold War and now comprises 120 countries. With the end of the Cold War, the movement did not disappear; it continued to meet every three years. The truth is that the movement has lost its relevance and media coverage, and fewer and fewer members attend its summits. Moreover, it has been displaced by other, more relevant groups, such as the BRICS, for example.

multilateralism and, on the other, to the emergence of alternative orders to the Western one (Barbé, 2020).

In the context of Donald Trump's trade war and Joe Biden's subsequent technology war, a narrative has been building that a struggle is being waged between democracy and authoritarianism in which the rules-based liberal order must win. In this contest, the US has sought to build alliances against China. The Asian giant's response was to adapt its grand strategy and push for what it called "True Multilateralism". In this sense, China sought to expand initiatives such as the Belt and Road, the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation, and the BRICS, as well as to promote new ones such as the Global Development Initiative and the Global Security Initiative (Mitić & Stekić, 2025).

Kissinger, when referring to the rules-based order, says it is an order of states that cooperate, observe common rules and norms, adopt liberal economic systems, renounce territorial conquest, respect national sovereignty, embrace democracy, and urge other governments to respect human rights. If attention is paid to the division outlined by Barbé (2020) between international order and world order, the former as a Hobbesian or Grotian conception and the latter as a Kantian one,⁹ it is clear that Kissinger refers to the latter. In this sense, what characterises the world order is that it is people-centred and its dynamics are determined by common values and ethical purposes to address people's needs and rights (Barbé, 2020; Kissinger, 2016; Kundnani, 2017).

Kissinger (2016) says that US presidents have very often vehemently (one might add perhaps too vehemently) urged other governments to preserve and maintain the liberal order. Certainly, on behalf of this world order and its elements, many abuses have been committed by Western states, particularly the United States. For this reason, China has questioned this order, calling it "pseudo-multilateralism". This order, according to the Chinese approach, has been used by certain states to serve their interests and agendas, significantly diminishing the effectiveness of multilateral institutions. This rules-based order has jeopardised the authority of the United Nations through the imposition of small circles of exclusive states within international society, leaving equity and justice to one side. In this sense, it would be evident that the rules of the

⁹ The Hobbesian or Grotian conceptions describe an order based on international law and its observation, while the Kantian conception perceives an order based on the respect of human rights and human centred.

“pseudo-order” have been used to favour these small exclusive circles, adhering to or ignoring the most basic norms of international relations set out in the purposes and principles of the UN Charter. In addition, this order promotes universal values that disregard the diversity of civilisations (China Institute of International Studies, 2024; Mitić & Stekić, 2025).

Facing this, in 2021, Xi Jinping formulated for the first time the concept of “True Multilateralism”, presenting it as an inevitable option for all humanity to address global challenges and promote global governance (China Institute of International Studies, 2024). Hence, “True Multilateralism” is based on the principles contained in the Charter of the United Nations as its cornerstone and its guide in constant joint consultation for shared benefits and adaptation to change, particularly focused on the rise of the Global South and world development (China Institute of International Studies, 2024; Mitić & Stekić, 2025). In this way, international affairs will be discussed jointly by all states, the global future will not be imposed by a few, and powerful states will demonstrate a greater sense of responsibility and dedication (China Institute of International Studies, 2024).

As mentioned above, China’s way of promoting “True Multilateralism” is, on the one hand, to strengthen and expand its well-known projects such as the Belt and Road or the BRICS. On the other hand, however, it has also formulated several other projects called “Global Initiatives”. Among these is, for example, the “Global Development Initiative”, a programme supported by 100 countries and international organisations to accelerate the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. There is also the “Global Security Initiative”, a proposal to address today’s international security issues through an equitable and sustainable security system based on indivisible security, common security, sustainable security, respect for sovereignty, non-intervention, and dialogue and cooperation (China Institute of International Studies, 2024).

Looking at Latin America, China has not required great efforts, for since 2008, when the region began to lose the interest of the United States, China, as mentioned above, offered countries in the region extensive lines of credit and wrote off some debts (Rooney, 2019). That was the first step in replacing the US and involving Latin America in its grand strategy. A few years later, in 2013, China launched its Belt and Road Initiative, a long-term plan to develop infrastructure, in which many Latin American countries are included. In 2014, the Forum for East Asian Latin America Cooperation (FEALAC) was formed, which began a new

chapter in relations between China and Latin America. In addition, China’s participation in the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) had already allowed it to increase its presence in the region through free trade agreements with countries such as Chile (2005) and Peru (2009), which also allowed it to negotiate an agreement with Costa Rica in 2011. Another important forum has been China-CELAC, which was promoted by China in 2015 and served to deepen relations with Latin American and Caribbean countries (Rodríguez & Rüländ, 2022). Another important aspect to mention, which further boosted relations between the region and China, is the cooperation on vaccines during the COVID-19 pandemic. While the United States focused on itself, China was at the forefront of cooperation and readily supplied vaccines. Therefore, in many Latin American countries, at least the first dose was supplied by Sinopharm (Macciotta & Biderbost, 2023).

Table 1. The Main Differences between True Multilateralism and Rules-Based Order

True Multilateralism	Rules-Based Order
Strengthen UN, focusing on sovereignty and non-intervention	Focus on democracy, human rights, and free market
Inclusive consensus, no powerful closed circles	Rules defined by powerful States
global security cooperation without ideological blocs	Cooperation through alliances (e.g., NATO, QUAD, etc.)
Build own networks (e.g., BRICS)	Uses traditional Western institutions (e.g., WB, IMF, and WTO)
Southern leadership and broad and open alliances	Western principles and alliances with access limited to those
New values open to everyone reinforcing sovereignty, territorial integrity, and non-intervention	Universal and universalisable Western values (Monroe doctrine)

Source: Author’s own work, 2025

LATIN AMERICA'S ADAPTATION: NON-ALIGNMENT OR STRATEGIC FLEXIBILITY?

In the face of competition between the United States and China and their proposals for multilateralism, Latin America has had to adapt its foreign policy in such a way that being caught in the middle is not a loss but a gain. In this sense, Latin America has been able to take advantage of and move flexibly between China's "True Multilateralism" without abandoning the Western rules-based order. Although some preliminary answers to the guiding question have already been provided, it comes up again at this point: is this a revival of the Non-Aligned Movement, or is it simply strategic flexibility?¹⁰ To provide a better answer, it is first necessary to look at how some countries in the Latin American region have adapted their foreign policies to move in between these two models of world order.

In the case of Brazil, the United States has traditionally been one of its main partners. Moreover, Brazil has consistently shown a preference for a liberal order based on rules that apply to all (Brigagão, 2011). However, the relationship between the two suffered a certain deterioration as a consequence of the protectionist policies adopted by the United States after September 11, 2001. That led China to replace the US as Brazil's main partner, with trade with China surpassing that with the US from 2008 onwards (Ramos, Guapo da Costa, & Gaio, 2023). Yet Brazil has opted for what it called autonomy through diversification. In doing so, it has tried to extend its interests to different countries and regions of the world (Brigagão, 2011). Thus, while this did not mean neglecting or abandoning relations with the United States, it preferred to focus its foreign policy on South-South cooperation, particularly through the BRICS and IBSA (Ramos, Guapo da Costa, & Gaio, 2023). Despite this, in 2020, the US Embassy in Brazil announced that relations with Brazil were stronger than ever and proclaimed itself "partners for a prosperous Hemisphere" (US Embassy & Consulates in Brazil, 2020). As can be seen, Brazil has seized the opportunity and established good ties with China without neglecting its relationship with the United States. In fact, Brazil's trade with both countries is different: with China, it is mainly in raw materials, while with the United States, it is in intermediate products (Ramos,

¹⁰ This strategic flexibility can also be referred to as hedging, understood as being willing to compromise on substantive agreements involving fundamental issues, but guarding against too open-ended or permanent a commitment (Mitić, 2024).

Guapo da Costa, & Gaio, 2023). However, as mentioned above, priority has been given to South-South cooperation, notably through the BRICS, a forum that could be said to be part of China's "True Multilateralism".

In the case of Argentina, the country has considered the relationship with China a priority for many years, as it is an irreplaceable strategic partner with a focus on the relationship, above all in terms of trade (Rubiolo & Telias, 2023). Accordingly, in 2018, Argentina signed the Memorandum to become part of the Belt and Road, which was a high point in the growing bilateral and multilateral partnerships with China (Lewis, 2007). In fact, between 2016 and 2019, 44 instruments were signed between China and Argentina on trade and cooperation issues. Later on, during the government of Alberto Fernández, Argentina acceded to two important Chinese initiatives: the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank and its definitive entry into the Belt and Road Initiative. The Bank has been one of Argentina's main foreign policy priorities because of its development potential and flexibility; however, it has not made much of a difference to what was developed in the past, nor has it made much of a difference to what will be developed in the future. While Argentina seems to have sidelined the United States, its foreign policy has been based on trying to strike a beneficial balance between the two powers that allows it to make the most of trade with both, participating in various multilateral fora, balancing between "True Multilateralism" and a rules-based order (Rubiolo & Telias, 2023).

The case of Panama is particular, as the country maintained its recognition of the Republic of China (Taiwan) until 2016. That year, the expansion of the Panama Canal involved the investment of 900 million dollars by the Chinese company Landbridge Group, which prompted Panama to change its recognition of the People's Republic of China in 2017 (Portada, Lem, & Paudel, 2020). That reflects Panama's traditional rapprochement with the United States. However, Panama has also benefited from the opportunities of participating in the Belt and Road, as it has been a major boost to the logistics sector due to Chinese investment in infrastructure, such as the Canal expansion. However, it is important to mention that the expansion of the Canal also had the approval and support of the United States, and it is clear that its modernisation and expansion were also highly beneficial for the US (Guevara Mann, 2011). In this sense, it is worth noting the benefit of US ships, not only commercial but also military, being able to pass through and connect both coasts. In this sense, the Canal gives Panama an advantage that few countries in the region have: it sparks the interest

of the United States, not only for commercial aspects but above all for security aspects. It is not surprising, therefore, that the relationship with China has led the United States to once again take a closer look at Panama (Martín & Boscán, 2023).

In the case of Peru, it is interesting how it has traditionally been a very close ally of the United States. In fact, it was so close at one point that it was the first Latin American country to break off relations with the Axis countries and declare war on Germany when the United States decided to enter World War II. Despite what has been said, the relationship with China is very good, and it is today a bigger trading partner than the United States. In fact, China invests a lot of capital in infrastructure and energy in Peru. In 2018 alone, it invested 1.3 billion dollars in the purchase of one of the largest hydroelectric plants. In 2020, it invested 3.5 billion dollars in the purchase of Luz del Sur, one of the main electricity distributors, which, until then, belonged to the American company Semptra Energy. In terms of infrastructure, perhaps the highlight is the construction of the Port of Chancay, one of the largest works of its kind. However, Peru, despite having China as its main partner, is a country that remains and actively participates in the multilateral institutions of the Western rules-based order. Its participation in the OAS, for example, has been remarkable in many areas, as well as in the UN (Macciotta & Biderbost, 2023).

In the case of Mexico, it is important to bear in mind that its proximity to the United States has meant that it has always had a close but cautious relationship with this power. However, since the early 1990s, together with Canada and the United States, it began negotiations to establish the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA). This step positioned it as an ally of the United States. In addition, Mexico initially refused to allow China to join the WTO. Despite the suspicious beginning of relations between Mexico and China, today China is Mexico's second-largest trading partner after the United States. It should be added to these considerations that, with the entry into force of the T-MEC, China's difficulties in approaching Mexico increased. Likewise, Mexico did not consider joining the BRICS group as an option. In this sense, Mexico maintains a position closer to the United States than to China and participates more in the forums of rules-based multilateralism than in Chinese true multilateralism (Bravo & Preciado, 2024; Ramírez, Hernández, & Rochín, 2023).

CONCLUSIONS

In conclusion, it is necessary to briefly recapitulate what has been said throughout this paper to arrive at the answer to the guiding question. The first thing that needs to be said is that, although there are authors, and it is a fairly common expression nowadays, it does not seem correct to say that we are facing a new Cold War. As Nye (2021) rightly pointed out, that is a lazy and dangerous parallel. The characteristics of the current context make it impossible to have a Cold War-like dynamic that would allow us to call this confrontation in this way. Many things could be listed as to why it is argued that there is no second Cold War, perhaps the strongest reasons being the impossibility of dividing the world into blocs due to interdependence. It is also important to note that in the current competition between China and the United States, the ideological component is almost non-existent, if not non-existent. There is no competition between two different models of society. Nor is there competition for exclusive spheres of influence as there was during the Cold War, and there are no proxy wars either, as neither partner of the competing powers would be willing to do so (Macciotta & Biderbost, 2023; Nye, 2021; King & Bernal-Meza, 2021). Secondly, it does not seem possible to speak of a non-alignment either, since it is not possible to speak of an alignment. Interdependence, the product of globalisation, makes it impossible not only to divide the world into blocs but also to take sides with any power.

As can be seen in this section, Latin American countries move very flexibly and skilfully between the United States and China. They participate in each other's forums without affecting the relationship with either. In this sense, many of the region's countries seem to have given preference to the commercial aspect in the management of their foreign policies in the face of competition between the two powers. While this might appear to be a non-alignment, if attention is paid to detail, it does not seem correct to draw this parallel (Nye, 2021). First, to speak of non-alignment implies speaking of these countries as a third bloc, and, as has been said, in the current context, partitioning into blocs is really impossible. Secondly, the interdependence that exists today makes it impossible to take sides or not to take sides at all; in other words, in the current globalised context, it is only possible to interrelate with all actors (Nafey, 2005). In this sense, Latin America has been able to prioritise its interests, not taking sides and benefiting from the best of both orders. However, it is necessary to understand that, above all, given Latin America's history, these are Western countries that

tend to prefer the rule-based liberal order (Brigagão, 2011; Macciotta & Biderbost, 2023). All in all, it could be said that, in reality, this is not a new non-alignment but rather flexible and pragmatic foreign policies in an interdependent world; in other words, strategic flexibility.

REFERENCES

- Alam, M. B. (1977). The Concept of Non-Alignment: A Critical Analysis, *World Affairs*, 40(2), pp. 166-185.
- Barbé, E. (2020). *Relaciones Internacionales*. Madrid, Tecnos.
- Biderbost, P., Boscán, G., & Calvo, B. (2018). Las relaciones entre Estados Unidos y América Latina en el periodo 2009-2018. Algunos aspectos centrales, *UNISCI*(48), pp. 343-368.
- Brands, H., & Gaddis, J. L. (2021). The New Cold War. America, China, and the Echoes of History, *Foreign Affairs*, 100(6), pp. 10-21.
- Bravo, J. J., & Preciado, N. E. (2024). México como país pivote en la competencia geopolítica de la relación sino-estadounidense, in: P. Wong, & V. E. Mota (Eds.), *Nuevas dinámicas internacionales y reconfiguración regional del turismo* (pp. 19-38), Ciudad de México, Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México.
- Brecher, M. (1962). Neutralism: An Analysis, *International Journal*, 17(3), pp. 224-236.
- Brigagão, C. (2011). Brasil: Relações internacionais com os Estados Unidos e a América do Sul, *Relações Internacionais* (29), pp. 83-90.
- China Institute of International Studies. (2024). *True Multilateralism. Conceptual Development, Core Essence, and China's Practice*. China Institute of International Studies.
- Christensen, T. (2021, March 24). *There Will Not Be a New Cold War. The Limits of U.S.-Chinese Competition*, retrieved from https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/united-states/2021-03-24/there-will-not-be-new-cold-war?check_logged_in=1. Accessed 12 May 2025.
- Dayan, O., & Weinberg, J. (2024). *BRICS+: The Awakening of the Non-Aligned States*. Institute for National Security Studies.
- Guevara Mann, C. (2011). National Security or Special Interests? US Support for the Panama Canal Expansion Programme, *Global Society*, 25(2), pp. 181-204.

- Haass, R. (2020). *The World*. New York, Penguin .
- Hillman, J. E. (2020). *A 'China Model?': Beijing's Promotion of Alternative Global Norms and Standards*. Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS).
- Kissinger, H. (2016). *Orden Mundial*. México, Debate.
- Kundnani, H. (2017). *What is the Liberal International Order?* German Marshall Fund of the United States.
- Lewis, P. (2007). La presencia de China en América Latina. Un tema controvertido, *Estudios Internacionales*, 39(156), pp. 27-53.
- Macciotta, B., & Biderbost, P. (2023). Perú entre Estados Unidos y China: Adaptación de la política exterior peruana de cara a las divergencias chino-estadounidenses. *UNISCI*(61), pp. 169-194.
- Martín, R., & Boscán, G. (2023). La puerta de Latinoamérica: Las relaciones de Panamá con Estados Unidos y China, oportunidades y desafíos. *UNISCI*(61), pp. 243-265.
- Mitić, A. (2024). *Global Strategic Narrative Wars: The Battle for Serbia*. Belgrade, Institute of International Politics and Economics.
- Mitić, A., & Stekić, N. (2025). The Recalibration of China's Grand Strategy During the Biden Administration, *Serbian Political Thought*, 90(2), pp. 1-26.
- Nafey, A. (2005). IBSA Forum: The Rise of 'New' Non-Alignment, *India Quarterly*, 61(1), pp. 1-78.
- Neila, J. L., Moreno, A., Alija, A. M., Sáenz, J. M., & Sanz, C. (2019). *Historia de las relaciones internacionales*. Madrid, Alianza editorial.
- Nye, J. (2021, November 2). *With China, a 'Cold War' Analogy Is Lazy and Dangerous*, retrieved from <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/11/02/opinion/biden-china-cold-war.html>. Accessed 13 May 2025.
- Pereira, J. C. (2009). El estudio de la sociedad internacional contemporánea, in: J. C. Pereira (Ed.), *Historia de las relaciones internacionales contemporáneas* (pp. 37-64), Barcelona, Ariel.
- Portada, R., Lem, S., & Paudel, U. (2020). The Final Frontier: China, Taiwan, and the United States in Strategic Competition for Central America, *Journal of Chinese Political Science*, 25(4), pp. 551-573.
- Ramírez, K. M., Hernández, Y., & Rochín, N. M. (2023). México en la rivalidad China-Estados Unidos: Las limitaciones de China en la competición comercial, *UNISCI*(61), pp. 267-279.

- Ramos, M. L., Guapo da Costa, C., & Gaio, G. (2023). Brasil-Estados Unidos-China en el orden global a principios del siglo XXI: Un análisis desde la perspectiva de la política exterior brasileña, *UNISCI*(61), pp. 15-55.
- Rodríguez, F., & Rüländ, J. (2022). Cooperative counter hegemony, interregionalism and 'diminished multilateralism': the Belt and Road Initiative and China's relations with Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC), *Journal of International Relations and Development*, 25(2), pp. 476–496.
- Rooney, M. (2019). China en Sudamérica: el componente financiero de una relación en ascenso, in: J. Alcalde, C. Alden, A. Guerra-Barón, & Á. Méndez (Eds.), *La conexión china en la política exterior del Perú en el siglo XXI* (pp. 229-252). Bogotá, Escuela de Gobierno y Políticas Públicas PUCP, LSE Global South Unit, Instituto de Estudios Internacionales de la PUCP.
- Rubiolo, F., & Telias, D. (2023). La política exterior argentina: Equilibrios y continuidades entre China y Estados Unidos, *UNISCI*(61), pp. 57-87.
- Sakwa, R. (2024). The Great Unravelling: The International System and World Orders, in: D. Proroković, P. Sellari, & R. Mifsud (Eds.), *Global Security and International Relations After the Escalation of the Ukrainian Crisis* (pp. 21-40). Belgrade, Institute of International Politics and Economics.
- Schindler, S., DiCarlo, J., & Paudel, D. (2021). The new cold war and the rise of the 21st-century infrastructure state, *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, 47(1), pp. 1-16.
- US Embassy & Consulates in Brazil. (2020, March 6). Fact Sheet: The United States and Brazil: Partners for a Prosperous Hemisphere, retrieved from <https://br.usembassy.gov/fact-sheet-the-united-states-and-brazil-partners-for-a-prosperous-hemisphere/>. Accessed 12 May 2025.
- Xing, L., & Bernal-Meza, R. (2021). China-US rivalry: a new Cold War or capitalism's intra-core competition?, *Revista Brasileira de Política Internacional*, 64(1), pp. 1-20.