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Editor's Note

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Editor's Note

S&D recruits more international contributors and opens its aperture to welcome articles on the political economy of space.

This issue of the journal begins our editorial push to feature more peer-reviewed contributions from international authors. Last summer, I had the opportunity to attend the ISA-FLACSO joint meeting in Buenos Aires, Argentina. The exchange brought together members of the largest international studies association in the United States with social sciences faculty from prestigious universities in Latin America. Not only did this journal receive two papers from the meeting (on cyber war from Brazil and on developing launcher programs from Argentina), it also became clear that implications of the “3 C’s” for space—the domain becoming more congested, competitive, and contested—reach well beyond arms control and traditional international security of the great powers.

Rapidly growing political consensus that American leadership in the world faces enormous challenges after large-scale military disappointments in Iraq and Afghanistan along with ongoing fiscal crises at home is bound to push national security and questions of political economy, after a long hiatus, back together. A recent chairman of the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff identified spiraling national debt as the most dangerous threat to the United States, and his successor, General Martin Dempsey, last year articulated the most pressing challenge for the military as adapting operations, “the bend of power,” in order to make do with less—i.e., fewer personnel and scarcer dollars for technology modernization—while doing just as well.

Of course, one of the few ways to do more with less, if this is even possible at the grand strategic level, is to pull from some other shelf, or draw from another resource that has fallen into disuse. The wherewithal to bend steel, to reorganize a restricted defense budget in order to produce a more effective military under changing international conditions, has to come from somewhere, and a natural field to explore, given

previous interaction with International Security, is Political Economy.

As U.S. military presence and actions in the world subside how do international flows in trade, investment, and information bear upon national development policies? Where are the points of contact within transnational, regional, national, or subnational institutions at which smart, low-intensity or nonviolent military intervention could make a difference? During the Cold War, political economy was addressed, problematically, by cultivating militarized methods for eliminating recalcitrant factions or toppling rogue regimes in the Third World. One difference between then and now is the United States does not face implacable ideological adversaries backed by economic and military resources of a superpower patron, so there may be more room for cooperation with incumbent governments, the sort of relationship that could lead to mutual learning on critical security issues rather than naked subordination to priorities of American national defense.

According to the most recent Quadrennial Defense Review (2014), and with the same sentiment permeating the 2015 National Security Strategy and national space policy documents, the United States needs new and renewed partnerships, now. Presumably, the ailing unipole needs them more than it did during troubled times of the late Cold War when Kenneth Waltz wrote about stability of bipolarity and superpower status against allied defections or flirtations like, in those days, West German *Ostpolitik*. At the same time, potential interlocutors, today, have less need for the United States.

In the wake of the ISA-FLACSO conference, Brazilian diplomacy, including relevant aspects of space policy, is a case in point. On major international questions—Western agricultural subsidies haunting the Doha Round of world trade talks; nuclear sanctions on Iran; lease agreements with foreign tech giants to exploit massive

petroleum reserves in the *pre-sál* layer off the coast of São Paulo; sanctioning Russia for military aggression against Ukraine; or supporting Israeli reprisals against Hamas militants in Gaza, Brazil's voice has cut across U.S. policy, making it harder for the United States to attain strategic goals. Added to the crowded field calling America's global leadership into question, Brazil's demonstrated independence complicates scholars' notions—scholars ranging from John Mearsheimer to Barry Buzan—of U.S. *regional* hegemony. Brazil, it turns out, is relatively free to drive a hard bargain, to partner with the United States or compete against “the last remaining superpower,” as Brazil's interests demand.

The same sort of mixed-motive game is playing out in space. Space policy both reflects the global dynamic of a struggling hegemon and helps shape it. While the United States holds a technological lead, Brazil is eager to cooperate, and there has been significant cooperation from the training of a Brazilian astronaut to design of satellite platforms for oceanographic observation. Yet, the Brazilian pioneer in question ended up flying to low-earth orbit on a Russian ship, and with respect to a parallel attempt to develop indigenous launch capability, Brazil forged agreements with U.S. competitors such as China and Ukraine.

The advent of competitive and congested space places U.S. defense institutions in a dilemma unlike those they faced for much of the Cold War. They must continue to guard a precious technological advantage from potential rivals, but now they are obliged to huckster as well. Increasingly, many would-be partners have attractive alternative options. One technical manager in Latin America described a trend for space operations that captures a conundrum for the United States, generally. Emerging space nations want to work with the United States because of the financial capital and state-of-the-art technology the incumbent leader in space brings to the table, but when it comes to institutional cooperation, the United States decides which technologies are dual-use. In order to prevent diffusion and erosion of its military advantage in space technology, the United States imposes restrictions on personnel and parts that are

permitted in joint projects, causing unexpected delays and extra production costs.

Junior partners tolerate these while U.S. equipment and know-how reigns supreme, but the technology gap with other suppliers such as Europe, China, Russia, and Brazil is closing. If Brazil, for example, can fulfill a simpler and more efficient cooperation agreement to assist a smaller economy with modern earth observation satellites, Brazilian companies may capture business, developing with junior partners their own market niche that excludes the United States. If the United States does not share more, its lead will deteriorate in commercial space technology; yet, if it does sweeten offers of cooperation with new partners by lowering restrictions, its military advantage could disappear.

The United States cannot resolve its grand strategic dilemma by declaring simply that it will play the benign hegemon, providing global goods, including space knowledge and services for national development, at the same time it retards other states by starving them of dual-use technology. The window for a strategy of uncompromising space dominance is closing along with America's technological margin. In order to extend its influence, and thereby secure its defense, the United States will have to share more and exclude less to retain the best international partners. Finding the right balance between enlightened service to the global system and classic controls for national security will demand tailored negotiations, based upon extensive knowledge of *comparative* political economy. This is “actor-specific” knowledge that Alexander George famously touted in *Bridging the Gap* (1993), and it reflects an antecedent intellectual movement when International Political Economy merged with comparative politics to better identify favorable conditions, applicable to various states in different regions of the world, for development and successful integration into the global system.

Observing the discussion at ISA-FLACSO and speaking with experts on the sidelines of the meeting, it was clear that foreign policy in Latin America remains attuned to ideas percolating at the intersection of International Security, IPE, and

Comparative Politics. The theme of the meeting was “Global and Regional Powers in a Changing World,” and several speakers anticipated historic shifts in the international distribution of power not from class warfare or revolution in leading states but from diffusion of technology and asymmetric gains in labor productivity for rising powers.

A changing of the guard for international political economy was thought to create a raft of new opportunities for midsize economies like Argentina’s and those even smaller. Information-age industries did not require huge military complexes or enormous capital reserves but smart investments by governments in education and communications in order to attract foreign capital and boost the private sector. Excitement over emerging technologies and historic shifts on the horizon for global order moved discourse to the right. There was less talk about resisting hegemonic exploitation and more on how to prepare states in the wings of global competition to thrive during the fresh economic and political challenges to come, encompassing planetary not just national defense.

In contrast to the buzz surrounding high technology, there was surprisingly little talk about roles civil or commercial space might play in upcoming global and regional power shifts. This silence belied the growth in long-distance telecommunications and demand for terrestrial information derived from space imagery. It also introduced the United States, seeking to strengthen national defense through new partnerships and deepening cooperation, to a new variant of a familiar strategic puzzle. The solution on how to approach developing space nations, even as the domain becomes more “congested, competitive, and contested,” will require actor-specific information as well as grand strategic thinking.

Argentina and Brazil, for example, relative to the United States occupy roughly similar structural positions in the international political economy of space activity. Brazil may spend five to ten times

more money than Argentina on space, but both Latin American powers spend less than one percent of the U.S. budget. Nevertheless, in spite of their similar positions and parallel ambitions to build a complete national program—adding launch and design to satellite operation capacity—Brazil and Argentina manage their national efforts with respect to civil-military relations very differently. Lacking actor-specific information contextualized within a broad strategic framework, the United States risks unnecessary blunders, aggravating political sensitivities and ruining investments, as it competes with Russia and China to win the business and forge cooperative networks with emerging space actors.

This journal, *Space & Defense*, and its host, the Eisenhower Center at the United States Air Force Academy, can contribute to policy by promoting and disseminating systematic research, both theoretical and empirical, on the new political economy of space services. Decision makers might then draw upon the best possible expert knowledge when negotiating—with a diverse range of partners—accords at once mutually beneficial and consistent with United States defense strategy in a changing world. As a uniquely powerful state within the global system, the United States, while continuing to counter adversaries and reassure allies, supports a progressive international order that reflects its own Constitutional principles, facilitates productive compromises, and, frankly, reduces the costs of wielding influence. In the daily rush of events, national security and foreign policy bureaucracies are hard-pressed to study either general principles or critical idiosyncrasies of emerging space powers. Whenever ethical policy making and social science method combine, *Space & Defense* would like to nurture practical knowledge of political economy at the nexus of government, industry, and academia.

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