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**FRESH PERSPECTIVE ON AN EMERGING
THREAT: PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA'S
GEOPOLITICAL INFLUENCE IN LATIN AMERICA
AND THE CARIBBEAN**

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NAVAL POSTGRADUATE SCHOOL

MONTEREY, CALIFORNIA

THESIS

**FRESH PERSPECTIVE ON AN EMERGING THREAT:
PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA'S GEOPOLITICAL
INFLUENCE IN LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN**

by

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December 2019

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REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGE			<i>Form Approved OMB No. 0704-0188</i>
Public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average 1 hour per response, including the time for reviewing instruction, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information. Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden, to Washington headquarters Services, Directorate for Information Operations and Reports, 1215 Jefferson Davis Highway, Suite 1204, Arlington, VA 22202-4302, and to the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reduction Project (0704-0188) Washington, DC 20503.			
1. AGENCY USE ONLY (Leave blank)	2. REPORT DATE December 2019	3. REPORT TYPE AND DATES COVERED Master's thesis	
4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE FRESH PERSPECTIVE ON AN EMERGING THREAT: PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA'S GEOPOLITICAL INFLUENCE IN LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN			5. FUNDING NUMBERS
6. AUTHOR(S) Andrew "Charlie" Rockwood and Christopher J. Haviley			
7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) Naval Postgraduate School Monterey, CA 93943-5000			8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER
9. SPONSORING / MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) N/A			10. SPONSORING / MONITORING AGENCY REPORT NUMBER
11. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES The views expressed in this thesis are those of the author and do not reflect the official policy or position of the Department of Defense or the U.S. Government.			
12a. DISTRIBUTION / AVAILABILITY STATEMENT Approved for public release. Distribution is unlimited.			12b. DISTRIBUTION CODE A
13. ABSTRACT (maximum 200 words) With the growing discussion on great power competition between the United States and the People's Republic of China (PRC), few studies offer a quantitative analysis of the growing influence of the PRC across the globe. We hypothesized that the various national levers employed by the PRC would be associated with more favorable foreign policies from Latin American and Caribbean (LAC) countries, though not to the extent that some believe. In order to measure influence, United National General Assembly votes (specifically votes relating to human rights issues) were utilized to assess the relationship between the voting patterns of LAC countries and the voting patterns of the PRC. Our statistical analysis finds that many factors thought to be consequential have no consistent relationship to China's geopolitical influence. However, military arms sales were found to be positively related to agreement with China's UN votes. In contrast, recognition of Taiwan and relative trade balance were found to have negative effects. Taken as whole, the available evidence undercuts the claim that the PRC is making significant strides, or hurting America's standing, in the LAC region.			
14. SUBJECT TERMS People's Republic of China (PRC), Latin America, influence, UN voting, S score, regression analysis,			15. NUMBER OF PAGES 103
			16. PRICE CODE
17. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF REPORT Unclassified	18. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF THIS PAGE Unclassified	19. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF ABSTRACT Unclassified	20. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT UU

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OF CHINA'S GEOPOLITICAL INFLUENCE IN LATIN AMERICA AND THE
CARIBBEAN**

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Submitted in partial fulfillment of the
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**MASTER OF SCIENCE IN DEFENSE ANALYSIS
(IRREGULAR WARFARE)**

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ABSTRACT

With the growing discussion on great power competition between the United States and the People's Republic of China (PRC), few studies offer a quantitative analysis of the growing influence of the PRC across the globe. We hypothesized that the various national levers employed by the PRC would be associated with more favorable foreign policies from Latin American and Caribbean (LAC) countries, though not to the extent that some believe. In order to measure influence, United Nations general assembly votes (specifically votes relating to human rights issues) were utilized to assess the relationship between the voting patterns of LAC countries and the voting patterns of the PRC. Our statistical analysis finds that many factors thought to be consequential have no consistent relationship to China's geopolitical influence. However, military arms sales were found to be positively related to agreement with China's UN votes. In contrast, recognition of Taiwan and relative trade balance were found to have negative effects. Taken as whole, the available evidence undercuts the claim that the PRC is making significant strides, or hurting America's standing, in the LAC region.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

AIC	akaike information criterion
AOR	area of responsibility
BRI	belt and road initiative
CCP	Chinese communist party
CELAC	community of Latin America and Caribbean states
CI	Confucius institutes
CRS	congressional research service
DIME	diplomatic, informational, military and economic
DV	dependent variable
FDI	foreign direct investment
FMS	foreign military sales
GCC	global combatant command
GDP	gross domestic product
GPC	great power competition
INSCR	integrated network for societal conflict research
IMET	international military and education training
IMF	international monetary fund
IV	independent variable
LAC	Latin America and the Caribbean
NDS	National Defense Strategy
NDU	National Defense University
NSS	National Security Strategy
OLS	ordinary least squares
OBOR	one belt one road
PLA	People's Liberation Army
PLAN	People's Liberation Army Navy
PRC	People's Republic of China
SIPRI	Stockholm international peace research institute
SOE	state owned enterprise

SOF	special operations forces
TPP	trans-pacific partnership
UNGA	United Nations general assembly
UN	United Nations

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A. BOTTOM LINE

Available open-source data does not support the conclusion that the People’s Republic of China (PRC) is gaining considerable geo-political leverage within Latin American and the Caribbean (LAC).

B. BACKGROUND

Trump Administration documents (National Security Strategy and National Defense Strategy) call for an “America First” grand strategy focused on great power competition, in particular, the growing threat from China.¹ Many well-researched qualitative studies point to the PRC’s growing global influence and influence within LAC, however, very few studies quantitatively address this growing concern.²

C. METHODOLOGY

Using regression analysis, combined with proxy measures derived from human rights voting patterns within the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) from 2000–2017, this study aimed to determine whether increasing PRC activities are yielding increased influence in LAC. The study included various data sources from across the Diplomatic, Information, Military, and Economic (DIME) spectrum as independent

¹ “National Security Strategy of the United States of America” (The White House, December 2017), <https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/NSS-Final-12-18-2017-0905.pdf>; “Summary of the 2018 National Defense Strategy of the United States of America” (United States Department of Defense, 2018), <https://dod.defense.gov/Portals/1/Documents/pubs/2018-National-Defense-Strategy-Summary.pdf>.

² R. Evan Ellis, *China-Latin America Military Engagement: Good Will, Good Business, and Strategic Position* (Carlisle Barracks, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, 2011), <https://ssi.armywarcollege.edu/pubs/display.cfm?pubID=1077>; Harold Trinkunas, “Renminbi Diplomacy? The Limits of China’s Influence on Latin America’s Domestic Politics,” *Foreign Policy at Brookings Order From Chaos: Foreign Policy in a Troubled World*, no. Paper 3 (November 2016); Graham T. Allison, “Destined for War?,” *The National Interest*, no. 149 (2017): 9; Krishnadev Calamur, “‘The Price’ of China’s Influence in Latin America,” *The Atlantic*, February 3, 2018, <https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2018/02/rex-in-latam/552197/>

variables. Population, GDP, previous voting behavior, and political regime type were also included as control variables.³

D. FINDINGS

Our statistical analysis finds that many factors thought to be consequential have no consistent relationship to China's geopolitical influence including diplomatic engagements, economic investment, aid, People's Liberation Army (PLA) military interaction, and the existence of Confucius Institutes. However, military arms sales were found to be positively related to agreement with China's UN votes. In contrast, recognition of Taiwan and relative trade balance were found to have negative effects. The best predictor for future voting behavior remains a country's previous vote score, especially amongst democracies.

E. CONCLUSION

While further research is needed, the data does not support the conclusion that the PRC is gaining significant geo-political influence in the region. Taken as whole, the available evidence undercuts the claim that the PRC is making significant strides, or hurting America's standing, in the LAC region. This is not to say that these actions by the PRC do not gain leverage in other aspects of its relationship with LAC countries; however, the evidence does not support the hypothesized effects for these factors. Caution should be heeded as the more extreme views of nefarious Chinese global activities do not seem to have manifested themselves within LAC. With respect to the PRC in LAC, the best possible course of action for American policy-makers is therefore to maintain and expand current relationships to continue to protect the homeland from localized and third-party threats. It would be a failure of effective decision making and thoughtful foreign policy to assess the PRC as the gravest threat to United States security and stability in the Western Hemisphere without closely considering the quantitative evidence presented in this study.

³ All variables compiled from recognized international agencies and organizations and cited throughout thesis.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The authors would like to thank Dr. Camber Warren and Dr. Christopher Darnton for their guidance, patience, and attention to detail throughout this process. We would also like to thank Professor Daniel Cunningham for his candor and prompt feedback when hurdles were met. Lastly, thanks and appreciation to our wives, Rachel Haviley and Raya Rockwood, to whom we are indebted for their constant understanding over the last 18 months. Without their support during the long hours of research and writing, this thesis would not have been possible.

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I. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

A. INTRODUCING THE STUDY

In December 2017, the Trump administration released an updated National Security Strategy (NSS), which called for a shift in national focus from counter-terrorism to great power competition (GPC). The new administration made it clear that without a realignment of national power, American influence within the international community will shrink and thus, put American interests at risk, home and abroad. The 2017 NSS states that “China and Russia challenge American power, influence, and interests, attempting to erode American security and prosperity.”¹ The 2018 National Defense Strategy (NDS), released one month later, echoes this viewpoint.² “China and Russia are now undermining the international order from within the system by exploiting its benefits while simultaneously undercutting its principles and ‘rules of the road.’”³ The release of the 2017 and 2018 NDSs were a stark departure from previous White House publications. The 2015 NSS, published under the Obama Administration, noted the unprecedented levels of cooperation between the United States and China, a relationship that was not considered adversarial, but friendly.⁴ The 2010 NSS, the only other NSS published under the Obama administration, called for a more cooperative relationship with countries such as China “on the basis of mutual interests and mutual respect.”⁵ To complicate matters, a recent Heritage

¹ “National Security Strategy of the United States of America” (The White House, December 2017), <https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/NSS-Final-12-18-2017-0905.pdf>.

² “Summary of the 2018 National Defense Strategy of the United States of America” (United States Department of Defense, 2018), 2, <https://dod.defense.gov/Portals/1/Documents/pubs/2018-National-Defense-Strategy-Summary.pdf>.

³ “Summary of the 2018 National Defense Strategy of the United States of America,” 2.

⁴ “National Security Strategy” (The White House, February 2015), https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/sites/default/files/docs/2015_national_security_strategy_2.pdf.

⁵ “National Security Strategy” (The White House, May 27, 2010), <http://nssarchive.us/national-security-strategy-2010/>.

Foundation report found that United States military is only “marginally” capable of addressing the threats to America’s vital interests globally.⁶

The United States Southern Command (SOUTHCOM) area of responsibility (AOR) is of significant importance due to the proximity to the United States homeland, and the fact that it is an increasingly competitive arena with global powers like Russia and the People’s Republic of China (PRC). PRC activity within this AOR increased in recent years, but SOUTHCOM has not overtly identified a strategy to evaluate Beijing’s advance into Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC).

B. RISE OF THE PRC

In 1958, A. F. K. Organski predicted that China would become the most powerful nation on earth. “The question is not whether China will become the most powerful nation on earth, but rather how long it will take her to achieve this status.”⁷ Furthering this claim, John Mearsheimer believes that the United States will no longer be the predominant power and that China cannot rise peacefully.⁸ He argues that the United States and China do not have an international governing body to regulate the contentious relationship if aggressive behavior arises. Therefore, in the interests of self-preservation, each country must build up its military capabilities to address these concerns.⁹ This buildup of tensions is on the verge of the ancient “Thucydides’ Trap,” Graham Allison argues.¹⁰ Michael Pillsbury believes that the PRC grand strategy is to replace the United States as the global hegemon by the one-hundred-year anniversary of the Chinese Communist Revolution in 2049. He argues that in this “Hundred Year Marathon,” China’s leaders persuaded the outside world to believe that the PRC’s rise will remain peaceful and is not at the cost of others. The PRC’s

⁶ “2019 Index of Davis Institute for National Security and Foreign Policy United States Military Strength” (Washington, DC: The Heritage Foundation, n.d.), 7, https://www.heritage.org/sites/default/files/2018-09/2019_IndexOfUSMilitaryStrength_WEB.pdf.

⁷ Abramo F. K. Organski, *World Politics* (Knopf, 1958).

⁸ John J. Mearsheimer, “The Gathering Storm: China’s Challenge to United States Power in Asia †,” *The Chinese Journal of International Politics* 3, no. 4 (2010): 381–96, <https://doi.org/10.1093/cjip/poq016>.

⁹ Mearsheimer.

¹⁰ Graham T. Allison, “Destined for War?,” *The National Interest*, no. 149 (2017): 9.

actions, however, seem to point to the contrary.¹¹ One of the main ways the PRC may be gaining global influence is through the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI).

C. BELT AND ROAD INITIATIVE

In 2013, Xi Jinping, president of the People's Republic of China, introduced an initiative known as One Belt One Road (OBOR), today more commonly known as the BRI. The project is an attempt to connect Asia, Europe, and Africa through a network of railways and shipping lanes, with large PRC funded economic undertakings backing the project.¹² Critics of the project point to exploitative and predatory behavior by the PRC in an attempt to gain leverage over other countries to further their interests.¹³ With the expansion of global influence, however, some countries are pushing back and adopting their own policies towards Chinese involvement, potentially positive and negative for United States interests.¹⁴ The BRI is now reaching countries in LAC.

As defined by the China Power Project, “the BRI is an umbrella initiative which covers a multitude of investment projects designed to promote the flow of goods, investment and people.”¹⁵ Many in the PRC's leadership agree that overseas investments could help the country's public pension to an aging population and satisfy the growing middle class.¹⁶ The PRC is using the BRI to gain expansion of Chinese exports, promote the use of Renminbi (RMB) as an international currency, reduce trade frictions like tariffs,

¹¹ Michael Pillsbury, *The Hundred-Year Marathon: China's Secret Strategy to Replace America as the Global Superpower*, First Edition. (New York: Henry Holt and Co., 2015).

¹² “China's ‘One Belt, One Road’ Global Investment Plan Mapped out — RT Business News,” accessed November 19, 2018, <https://www.rt.com/business/444288-china-belt-road-investment-map/>.

¹³ Hong Zhang, “Beyond ‘Debt-Trap Diplomacy’: The Dissemination of PRC State Capitalism,” *China Brief* 19, no. 1 (January 4, 2019); Peter Harrell, Elizabeth Rosenberg, and Edoardo Saravalle, “China's Use of Coercive Economic Measures,” *Center for a New American Security*, June 11, 2018; Cecilia Joy-Perez and Derek Scissors, “Be Wary of Spending on the Belt and Road,” *American Enterprise Institute*, November 14, 2018, <http://www.aei.org/publication/be-wary-of-spending-on-the-belt-and-road/>.

¹⁴ Iain Marlow and Dandan Li, “How Asia Fell Out of Love With China's Belt and Road Initiative,” December 10, 2018, <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2018-12-10/how-asia-fell-out-of-love-with-china-s-belt-and-road-initiative>.

¹⁵ China Power Team, “How Will the Belt and Road Initiative Advance China's Interests?,” *ChinaPower Project* (blog), May 8, 2017, <https://chinapower.csis.org/china-belt-and-road-initiative/>.

¹⁶ David Dollar, “China's Investment in Latin America,” *Foreign Policy at Brookings*, Order from Chaos: Foreign Policy in a Troubled World, no. Paper 4 (January 2017): 8.

and put unused and underutilized state-owned capital and workforce to use.¹⁷ In concept, the BRI makes perfect sense: it is the conduit of a symbiotic relationship between the host country and the PRC.

As BRI proliferation continues, natural pushback is occurring. In the Maldives, the former president, Abdulla Yameen, lost a national election one month after signing a deal to provide PRC funding for a large bridge infrastructure project due to concerns over details of the agreement. In Malaysia, the new prime minister, Mahathir Mohamad, is openly critical of the BRI and suspended and canceled many PRC projects citing “colonialism” by the PRC.¹⁸ Imran Khan’s Pakistani government is under investigation for awarding a dam construction project to a Chinese company after purposefully disqualifying another local bid.¹⁹ Despite repeated statements that the BRI is purely economic in nature, in Pakistan, “China is for the first time explicitly tying a Belt and Road proposal to its military ambitions—and confirming the concerns of a host of nations who suspect the infrastructure initiative is really about helping China project armed might.”²⁰

Now, evidence is pointing to a potential BRI slow-down in global investment. Chinese State-Owned Enterprises (SOEs) investment into the BRI fell considerably in 2018.²¹ This trend could be due to falling foreign exchange reserves, putting more pressure on the Chinese state: “If China ever conceived of implementing a debt trap, it became no longer affordable when its foreign reserves began to fall less than a year after the BRI was announced.”²² This challenge highlights the possibility that the PRC’s program may be

¹⁷ China Power Team, “How Will the Belt and Road Initiative Advance China’s Interests?”

¹⁸ Marlow and Li, “How Asia Fell Out of Love With China’s Belt and Road Initiative.”

¹⁹ June Teufel Dreyer, “The Belt, the Road, and Latin America - Foreign Policy Research Institute,” <https://www.fpri.org/>, 16 JAN 19, <https://www.fpri.org/article/2019/01/the-belt-the-road-and-latin-america/>.

²⁰ Maria Abi-Habib, “China’s ‘Belt and Road’ Plan in Pakistan Takes a Military Turn,” *The New York Times*, December 19, 2018, sec. World, <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/12/19/world/asia/pakistan-china-belt-road-military.html>.

²¹ Derek Scissors, “Chinese Investment: State-Owned Enterprises Stop Globalizing, for the Moment,” American Enterprise Institute, January 17, 2019, <http://www.aei.org/publication/chinese-investment-state-owned-enterprises-stop-globalizing-for-the-moment/>.

²² Joy-Perez and Scissors, “Be Wary of Spending on the Belt and Road.”

slowing down or even failing long-term. The negative impacts of the program could be outweighing the advantages gained by conducting risky investments overseas.

Understanding how best to respond and evaluate PRC's various activities in the Western Hemisphere is essential for SOUTHCOM planners and United States policymakers as the United States increasingly finds itself in a potentially competitive environment with the PRC. In order to construct a pragmatic response to PRC activity in LAC, decisionmakers must first have a clear understanding of LAC reactions to the issue and understand which PRC initiatives are actually gaining influence and which are not. Too often, the United States has intervened in other nations' affairs with little regard to the local population and governments' stance on the matter.²³ This study aims to illuminate LAC reactions to PRC activity in order to educate personnel with a vested interest in the region.

D. SINO-AMERICAN RELATIONS

A recent Congressional Research Service (CRS) report named the United States-China relationship "the world's most consequential bilateral relationship."²⁴ The report published the United States Trade Representative's findings, which lists four distinct PRC policies that call for United States action: "(1) Forced technology transfer requirements, (2) Cyber-theft of United States trade secrets, (3) Discriminatory licensing requirements, and (4) Attempts to acquire United States technology to advance China's industrial policies."²⁵ In 2015, President Xi openly stated that China would no longer support hackers to commit theft of United States intellectual property, clearly admitting previous condonement.²⁶ These predatory actions toward the United States contributed to the

²³ Stephen. Kinzer, *Overthrow: America's Century of Regime Change from Hawaii to Iraq*, 1st paperback ed. (New York: Times Books/Henry Holt, 2007).

²⁴ Susan Lawrence and Wayne Morrison, "US and China Policy," *Congressional Research Service* 7-5700, no. IF10119 (September 18, 2018).

²⁵ Lawrence and Morrison, 1.

²⁶ Jordan Robertson and Michael Riley, "China Used a Tiny Chip in a Hack That Infiltrated United States Companies," *Bloomberg Businessweek*, October 4, 2018, <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/features/2018-10-04/the-big-hack-how-china-used-a-tiny-chip-to-infiltrate-america-s-top-companies>.

ongoing high-profile exchange of tariffs between the United States and the PRC, after which, cyber theft and espionage resumed.²⁷ Militarily, the PRC gained global attention in the construction of man-made islands in the South China Sea, and claiming sole sovereignty over the region. This “nine-dash” line is in direct contradiction of international law, rejecting Filipino and Vietnamese claims to the region.²⁸ However, while the general consensus is that the rise of the PRC is dangerous for the United States, the vote is not unanimous.

Michael Beckley believes that the United States is not in peril from rising Chinese influence and argues that China is economically overextended and will not be able to keep up with the growth of the United States.²⁹ Therefore, he argues that the solution is to engage with China instead of employing an alienating foreign policy.³⁰ Ronald Tammen argues that the best way to deter the PRC’s rise is not through threats, embargos, or sanctions, but rather through “socializing” the growing power into the international system with rules and regulations accepted as normal by the United States and western powers.³¹ Hugh White also argues for a cooperative approach and pushes for mutual concessions during the PRC’s rise in order to prevent a future disaster. White posits that the relationship will always be competitive; the question is whether that competition will lead down a dangerous path to conflict.³²

²⁷ Lorand Laskai and Adam Segal, “A New Old Threat: Countering the Return of Chinese Industrial Cyber Espionage,” Council on Foreign Relations, accessed December 21, 2018, <https://www.cfr.org/report/threat-chinese-espionage>.

²⁸ Shirley V Scott, “China’s Nine-Dash Line, International Law, and the Monroe Doctrine Analogy,” *China Information* 30, no. 3 (2016): 296–311, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0920203X16665054>.

²⁹ Michael Beckley, “Stop Obsessing About China: Why Beijing Will Not Iperil U.S. Hegemony,” *Foreign Affairs*, September 21, 2018, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/china/2018-09-21/stop-obsessing-about-china>.

³⁰ Beckley.

³¹ Ronald L. Tammen, “The Organski Legacy: A Fifty-Year Research Program,” *International Interactions* 34, no. 4 (December 11, 2008): 321, <https://doi.org/10.1080/03050620802561769>.

³² Hugh White, *The China Choice: Why We Should Share Power* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).

II. THE PRC IN LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN

Despite the Indo-Pacific focus of the BRI and other Chinese activities, the PRC is also active in Latin America and the Caribbean. Since 2000, the PRC's engagement in LAC steadily increased. For this study, these activities are described along diplomatic, information, military, and economic (DIME) categories, which are the four instruments of national power as defined by United States joint doctrine.³³ In November 2008, the PRC published a policy paper concerning relations with Latin America calling for "consultation, cooperation, mutual respect, and finding 'win-win' solutions."³⁴ In 2016, the PRC expanded its commitments in Latin America by employing "exchanges and dialogues, trade and investment, agriculture, energy, infrastructure, manufacturing, and technical innovation."³⁵ Evan Ellis, a leading scholar on the PRC influence in Latin America, describes the PRC's engagement as one that "generates a complex mixture of opportunities and threats for the region's countries as well as for the United States"³⁶ Although the DIME model is a framework used by the United States government, it provides useful categories to help explain the power, and therefore influence, of any state by describing the full spectrum of its operations around the world.³⁷ Illuminating PRC interactions with Latin American countries shows the need for further research on the topic and warrants a further discussion on how states compete for power within this space.

³³ Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Joint Doctrine Note 1-18* (Washington, D.C., 2018).

³⁴ Harold Trinkunas, "Renminbi Diplomacy? The Limits of China's Influence on Latin America's Domestic Politics," *Foreign Policy at Brookings* Order From Chaos: Foreign Policy in a Troubled World, no. Paper 3 (November 2016): 8.

³⁵ Mark Sullivan and Thomas Lum, "China's Engagement with Latin America and the Caribbean," *Congressional Research Service*, September 18, 2018, 1, <https://fas.org/sgp/crs/row/IF10982.pdf>.

³⁶ Robert Evan. Ellis, *China in Latin America: The Whats and Wherefores* (Boulder, Colo: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2009).

³⁷ R Hillson, "The DIME/PMESII Model Suite Requirements Project," 2009, 5. ; Shaft (he's A. Bad Mutha' Shut Yo' Mouth), "Defense Statecraft: DIME," *Defense Statecraft* (blog), April 23, 2010, <http://defensestatecraft.blogspot.com/2010/04/dime.html>.

A. DIPLOMATIC

The PRC's diplomatic activities in LAC work hand-in-hand with economic, military and informational initiatives. PRC President Xi and Premier Li Keqiang made four trips to Latin America since 2013, visiting 11 countries. Early in 2018, Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi met in Chile with 33 members of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC) with an intent to join the BRI.³⁸ It is important to note that CELAC does not include the United States or Canada.³⁹ Through these types of diplomatic engagements, many Latin American governments are breaking ties with Taiwan, intensifying the island's isolation diplomatically and economically. Panama, El Salvador, and the Dominican Republic all broke ties with Taiwan in the past three years in response to considerable economic trade and investment packages brokered by mainland China.⁴⁰

In 2017, China participated in the summit of the Americas for the first time, which conversely was the first time the United States president did not attend the summit. Coupled with the United States withdrawal from the Trans Pacific Partnership (TPP), reduction in United States foreign aid to the region, and growing Sino-American trade tensions, this backsliding by the United States provides the PRC a potential opportunity to fill the diplomatic vacuum.⁴¹ Given Latin America's checkered past with the United States, China's style of diplomacy may be seen as a breath of fresh air to a trusting customer. Furthermore, SOUTHCOM has typically had less national emphasis than other Geographic Combatant Commands (GCC) due to their focus on illicit drug trade when compared to other problem sets, such as counter-terrorism in the Middle East and Africa, countering

³⁸ Krishnadev Calamur, "'The Price' of China's Influence in Latin America," *The Atlantic*, February 3, 2018, <https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2018/02/rex-in-latam/552197/>.

³⁹ Juan Pablo Cardenal, "Chapter 1: China in Latin America," in *Sharp Power: Rising Authoritarian Influence* (International Forum for Democratic Studies and National Endowment for Democracy, 2017), 34.

⁴⁰ Yimou Lee and Philip Wen, "Taiwan Says China 'out of Control' as It Loses El Salvador to Beijing | Reuters," August 20, 2018, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-taiwan-diplomacy/taiwan-loses-another-ally-to-china-idUSKCN1L6058>; Josh Horwitz, "Taiwan Now Has Diplomatic Relations with Fewer than 20 Countries," *Quartz* (blog), April 30, 2018, <https://qz.com/1266620/the-dominican-republic-is-switching-diplomatic-ties-from-taiwan-to-china/>; Kent Davis, "China Quietly Dreams Big In Panama," *Panama Equity* (blog), June 12, 2017, <https://www.panamaequity.com/the-real-estate-panama/investment/china-quietly-dreams-big-panama/>; Chris Dalby, "Diplomatic Ties with Panama a Huge Boost for B&R - Global Times," *Global Times*, June 21, 2017, <http://www.globaltimes.cn/content/1052880.shtml>.

⁴¹ Sullivan and Lum, "China's Engagement with Latin America and the Caribbean," 2.

Russia in Europe, and the multitude of issues in the Indo-PACOM AOR. It is relatively easy for China to get its foot in the door and plant the diplomatic seed for future economic exploitation.

B. INFORMATION

While not as distinct or easily described as economic investments or diplomatic visits, PRC efforts in the informational space should not be disregarded. Recognizing the value in accompanying investment and diplomatic exchanges with Chinese values and messaging, Chinese technology and dissemination platforms exist across the region. The CCP currently sponsors 39 Confucius Institutes (CI) and 11 more Confucius Classrooms throughout the region. These educational platforms seek to “shape influential political, media, and other LAC leaders’ opinions” about the PRC’s place in the world and ideals abroad.⁴² Plainly put, these government-funded institutes and classrooms within higher-level education institutions teach classes on Chinese language and culture and are often cited as spreading messages and bolstering support for PRC foreign policy objectives.

Beyond the CIs, media broadcast in the Spanish language is among the key elements in the global expansion of Chinese sponsored media.⁴³ Over the past decade, PRC companies invested heavily in radio stations, television channels, newspapers, and magazines in an effort to compete with western news outlets and control global perceptions of the PRC. Despite this considerable effort, major concerns exist over issues with credibility and trust compared to other news outlets.⁴⁴ In June 2018, the non-profit Global Americans released a report finding that two Chinese state-run media outlets, Xinhua and China Daily, regularly release “misleading articles that are overly positive of China’s economic relations with the region.”⁴⁵ While the exact effects of these media outlets and

⁴² Katherine Koleski and Alec Blivas, “China’s Engagement with Latin America and the Caribbean” (U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission, October 17, 2018), 16, https://www.uscc.gov/sites/default/files/Research/China%27s%20Engagement%20with%20Latin%20America%20and%20the%20Caribbean_.pdf.

⁴³ Pablo Sebastian Morales, “Could Chinese News Channels Have a Future in Latin America?,” *Westminster Papers in Communication and Culture* 13, no. 1 (2018): 60.

⁴⁴ Morales, “Could Chinese News Channels Have a Future in Latin America?”

⁴⁵ Koleski and Blivas, “China’s Engagement with Latin America and the Caribbean,” 16.

Confucius Institutes are hard to gauge, their existence and the CIs deserve to be considered in a holistic evaluation of PRC activities in the region.

C. MILITARY

Over the past decade, the PRC ascended to become the third-largest global producer of military arms behind the United States and Russia.⁴⁶ The PRC expanded past traditional economic interaction with the LAC region. The value of arms imports of LAC countries from China rose steadily between 2000 and 2015 and as the amount of economic investment and diplomatic exchanges increased with Latin American countries, so too did Foreign Military Sales (FMS).⁴⁷ A recent Congressional Research Service (CRS) report concluded:

PRC defense sales and assistance to the region have expanded from small arms to advanced weapons systems. They include military exchanges with various countries, military helicopters and vehicles to Bolivia, rifles and patrol boats to Ecuador, rocket launch vehicles to Peru, and fighter aircraft and armored personnel carriers to Venezuela.⁴⁸

These considerable sales of military arms provide the initial stages for military interaction and relationships between the People's Liberation Army (PLA) and Latin American countries, as the sale of military equipment is not a single action. The purchase of military equipment often comes with the requirement for specialized training and extended maintenance on the units of order, increasing dependency on the originating country.⁴⁹

In addition to FMS, the PRC began a counter-program to the United States's International Military and Education & Training (IMET) program, aggressively courting many military officers from Latin American countries on all-expenses paid education

⁴⁶ George Gurrola, "China-Latin America Arms Sales: Antagonizing the United States in the Western Hemisphere?," *Military Review* 98, no. 4 (2018): 123.

⁴⁷ "Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) Arms Transfers Database," accessed November 13, 2018, <https://www.sipri.org/databases/armstransfers>.

⁴⁸ Sullivan and Lum, "China's Engagement with Latin America and the Caribbean," 1.

⁴⁹ Gurrola, "China-Latin America Arms Sales: Antagonizing the United States in the Western Hemisphere?," 128.

enrollment in China.⁵⁰ At least 18 Latin American countries have participated in this program.⁵¹ In 2010, the PRC conducted its first bilateral military exercise in the region with Peru, a United States ally.⁵² 2018 saw the inaugural visit of the PRC Navy hospital ship, “Peace Ark” to the region.⁵³ In all, the PRC’s military activities include “(1) meetings between senior military officials; (2) lower-level military-to-military interactions; (3) military sales; (4) military-relevant commercial interactions; and, (5) Chinese physical presence within Latin America, all of which have military-strategic implications.”⁵⁴

D. ECONOMIC

Former Secretary of State Rex Tillerson remarked that, “Today, China is gaining a foothold in Latin America. It is using economic statecraft to pull the region into its orbit,” followed by “The question is: at what price?”⁵⁵ Total China-Latin America trade increased from \$17 billion in 2002 to almost \$262 billion in 2014 and was valued at \$257 billion in 2017.⁵⁶ Between 2015 and 2019, the PRC plans to trade with Latin American countries to the tune of \$500 billion and \$250 billion in direct investment.⁵⁷ China has become the top trading partner of Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Paraguay, Peru, and Uruguay and second most-

⁵⁰ Kurt Tidd, “Posture Statement of United States Southern Command before the 115th Congress SASC” (United States Southern Command, February 15, 2018).

⁵¹ R. Evan Ellis, *China-Latin America Military Engagement: Good Will, Good Business, and Strategic Position* (Carlisle Barracks, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, 2011), <https://ssi.armywarcollege.edu/pubs/display.cfm?pubID=1077>.

⁵² Ellis, 20.

⁵³ Manaure Quintero, “China Navy Ship Visits Venezuela for the First Time as Nicolás Maduro Cozies up to Beijing,” *Business Insider*, 23 SEP 18, <https://www.businessinsider.com/r-china-navy-ship-makes-maiden-visit-to-venezuela-after-maduro-visit-2018-9>.

⁵⁴ Ellis, *China-Latin America Military Engagement: Good Will, Good Business, and Strategic Position*.

⁵⁵ Robbie Gramer Johnson Keith, “Tillerson Praises Monroe Doctrine, Warns Latin America of ‘Imperial’ Chinese Ambitions,” *Foreign Policy* (blog), accessed October 15, 2018, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2018/02/02/tillerson-praises-monroe-doctrine-warns-latin-america-off-imperial-chinese-ambitions-mexico-south-america-nafta-diplomacy-trump-trade-venezuela-maduro/>.

⁵⁶ Sullivan and Lum, “China’s Engagement with Latin America and the Caribbean.”

⁵⁷ Dollar, “China’s Investment in Latin America,” 1.

frequent user of the Panama Canal as well.⁵⁸ In June 2017, a company with close ties to the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) purchased the largest container port along the Panama Canal following a pattern of port purchases within the guise of the BRI.⁵⁹ Simply becoming the top trading partner alone is not necessarily a cause for concern because of the overall high global demand for commodities. What is a cause for concern is the BRI eroding hard-fought progress for a Latin American industrial sector, creating strong Chinese competition; backsliding on labor, environmental, and human rights reforms; encroaching on indigenous populations' lands; and displaying negative geo-political ramifications for the United States.⁶⁰

Currently, Chinese banks provide more infrastructure funding and development to Latin America and the Caribbean than the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) combined.⁶¹ This trend is alarming for the United States, as LAC countries with limited access to international institutions due to governance concerns or suspected violations of human rights continue to lean on this kind of support. Particularly within Argentina, Ecuador, and Venezuela, preferential treatment and concessions are made for Chinese companies giving them an unfair advantage over local companies. This pattern is in tension with the PRC's stated principle of "non-interference and respect for sovereignty."⁶² Additionally, as the PRC negotiates infrastructure projects, the vast majority of the negotiated workforce are Chinese, brought in for the specific project. While the economic influence of the United States will not be usurped overnight, further investigation into all of the PRC's actions in the region should be conducted.

⁵⁸ Trinkunas, "Renminbi Diplomacy? The Limits of China's Influence on Latin America's Domestic Politics," 5.

⁵⁹ "Chinese Firm Starts Work on \$1bn Panamanian Megaport - News - GCR," June 12, 2017, <http://www.globalconstructionreview.com/news/chinese-firm-starts-w7rk-1bn-panama7nian-meg7aport/>.

⁶⁰ Trinkunas, "Renminbi Diplomacy? The Limits of China's Influence on Latin America's Domestic Politics."

⁶¹ Dollar, "China's Investment in Latin America," 12.

⁶² Trinkunas, "Renminbi Diplomacy? The Limits of China's Influence on Latin America's Domestic Politics," 22.

The growing PRC global activity is often framed as a symbiotic relationship between China and host countries for the betterment of all by the PRC; however, critics claim Beijing may use the BRI to further its diplomatic and strategic objectives, which often run counter to United States interests and the interests of receiving nations.⁶³ While the PRC slowly and steadily developed inroads in LAC, most attention continues to remain on dramatic events like near-misses between warships in the South China Sea and expensive BRI projects throughout Eurasia.⁶⁴ Although economic expansion and limited military ties seem like innocent affairs, there is a potential for partner countries to align more closely with the PRC and behave in ways that directly counter United States interests. Furthermore, as Sino-Latin American relationships grow, the United States may find freedom of action in the region more and more difficult. This dynamic has the potential to threaten United States access to shared information, freedom of maneuver for operational forces conducting counter-drug or counter-terrorist operations, and access to bases.⁶⁵ In situations such as this, if the United States chooses to enact changes in policies, the potential arises to be perceived as imperialistic or meddling with the sovereign affairs of neighboring countries. Therefore, a deeper examination of the PRC's actions is needed in order to provide a transparent analysis of the situation. A vital element in crafting United States policy is understanding reactions to PRC activity within LAC countries, as opposed to our perception of what their reaction is or should be. Once clearly understood, the United States can then decide what, if any, elements of national power could or should be introduced to exert influence on the situation.

The purpose of this study is to examine the current impact of the PRC's diplomatic, informational, military, and economic (DIME) activities in LAC. Dissenting opinions exist within public policy, government, and academic communities about the current state and

⁶³ Prashanth Parameswaran Diplomat The, "The Real Trouble With China's Belt and Road," The Diplomat, accessed November 19, 2018, <https://thediplomat.com/2017/05/the-real-trouble-with-chinas-belt-and-road/>.

⁶⁴ Steven Lee Myers, "American and Chinese Warships Narrowly Avoid High-Seas Collision," *The New York Times*, October 15, 2018, sec. World, <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/10/02/world/asia/china-us-warships-south-china-sea.html>.

⁶⁵ Ellis, *China-Latin America Military Engagement: Good Will, Good Business, and Strategic Position*.

future role the United States and the PRC will play within the LAC region. Considerable research illuminates these issues as a growing concern and calls for policymakers' attention. By the same token, other analysis found current language to be hyperbolic and exaggerated. This thesis seeks to bolster this research domain by providing quantitative analysis on the efficacy of PRC initiatives based off measurable reactions by LAC countries. Based on the authors' experiences and initial analysis, we find that the threat the PRC poses to the United States in LAC is present, but not nearly as grave as some analysis projects.

This analysis will attempt to determine if the PRC's undertakings are gaining it leverage in LAC. Observable PRC activities within the DIME construct will serve as our main independent variables (IVs) of interest, while we operationalize influence (our dependent variable) with UN Voting data. Not only will this research contribute to academia's continuing investigation into our ever-evolving world, but it will provide additional recommendations to United States policy-makers on the actual effect of increased PRC activity in the Western Hemisphere.

The response to PRC activity is not a one-size-fits-all solution. In order to identify specific measures to maintain United States influence in the region, we must first examine the issue using a measures of influence that reflects the views of LAC countries, as opposed to imposing a Monroe Doctrine 2.0. Attempting to limit as many potential biases in the analysis is also necessary to prevent the cognitive traps of assuming causation of malicious behavior because of increased activity in a region or simply approaching this complicated issue through an exclusively American perspective.⁶⁶

⁶⁶ Zachary. Shore, *Blunder: Why Smart People Make Bad Decisions*, 1st U.S. ed., Why Smart People Make Bad Decisions (New York: Bloomsbury, 2008).

III. LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Considerable research highlights how hard and soft power increases influence and leverage in a target country or region. Joseph Nye summarizes it well, “Power is the ability to affect others to get the outcomes one wants, and that can be done by coercion, payment or attraction.”⁶⁷ Several schools of thought exist on what levers should be used and their utility in different situations. This study relies on the DIME construct to frame this analysis and examine various points of view. Graham Allison has observed, for analyzing the utility of alternative ways to solve a problem, “there is no clear alternative to this basic framework.”⁶⁸ An examination of the prominent literature and thinkers within each instrument of national power will help define the conditions under which a country might be influenced, as well as potential gaps in our understanding of the phenomena occurring currently between the PRC and LAC countries.

A. MILITARY

A military is vital to its nation in the form of securing its own sovereignty as well as interests abroad. In the modern age, this includes considerable discussion on the use of military force outside the traditional bounds of warfare. From GEN Votel’s “UW in the Gray Zone”⁶⁹ to the now infamous Gerasimov Doctrine,⁷⁰ military leaders see the utility and value in the proliferation of the use of military action to gain influence. George Kennan referred to this in 1948, stating that political war is the “the employment of all the means

⁶⁷ Joseph Nye, “China and Soft Power,” *South African Journal of International Affairs* 19, no. 2 (August 2012): 151–55.

⁶⁸ Graham T. Allison and Philip Zelikow, *Essence of Decision: Explaining the Cuban Missile Crisis*, 2nd ed (New York: Longman, 1999).

⁶⁹ Joseph Votel et al., “Unconventional Warfare in the Gray Zone,” *Joint Force Quarterly: JFQ*, no. 80 (2016): 101–9.

⁷⁰ Valery Gerasimov, “The Value of Science in Foresight: New Challenges Require Rethinking the Forms and Methods of Warfare,” VPK News, February 27, 2013, <https://www.vpk-news.ru/articles/14632>.

at a nation's command, short of war, to achieve its national objectives."⁷¹ This domain most certainly involves a nation's military.

Joseph Nye originally coined the distinction between "soft" and "hard power." He defines each as "Hard power is the use of coercion and payment. Soft power is the ability to obtain preferred outcomes through attraction. If a state can set the agenda for others or shape their preferences, it can save a lot on carrots and sticks."⁷² Further explained: "Hard power is a push; soft power is a pull," where a military entity can fulfill both roles as with a naval vessel can blockade a country (hard power) or provide humanitarian relief (soft power).⁷³ Leslie Gelb claims that soft power essentially encompasses everything that a nation does;⁷⁴ however, Nye counters with the distinction that many elements below the threshold of military violence still count as hard power⁷⁵ and for a state to be successful in influencing, it needs to leverage both hard and soft power in concert, or as Nye calls, "smart power."⁷⁶

This "smart" power is how modern leaders can use military force short of violence to further a nation's interests. Carol Atkinson argues that while a nation's diplomatic arm is mostly considered the proponent for soft power within a government, the military is fully capable of contributing to soft power abroad, especially through military exchange programs.⁷⁷ In fact, her empirical study found that military officer exchanges actually contributed to soft power and influence for the United States.⁷⁸

⁷¹ George Kennan, "George F. Kennan on Organizing Political Warfare" (History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive, April 30, 1948), <https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/114320.pdf?v=94>.

⁷² Joseph S. Nye Jr., "Get Smart: Combining Hard and Soft Power," *Foreign Affairs* 88, no. 4 (2009): 160.

⁷³ Joseph S. Nye, "Power and Foreign Policy," *Journal of Political Power* 4, no. 1 (2011): 9–24, <https://doi.org/10.1080/2158379X.2011.555960>.

⁷⁴ Leslie H. Gelb, *Power Rules: How Common Sense Can Rescue American Foreign Policy*, 1st ed. (New York: Harper, 2009).

⁷⁵ Nye, "Power and Foreign Policy."

⁷⁶ Nye, "Get Smart: Combining Hard and Soft Power," 160.

⁷⁷ Carol L. Atkinson, *Military Soft Power: Public Diplomacy Through Military Educational Exchanges* (Lanham, Maryland ; Rowman & Littlefield, 2014), 4.

⁷⁸ Atkinson, 5.

For Yinghong Shi, the Chinese use the “strategic military” to complement the “strategic economy” in order to gain international influence.⁷⁹ Chinese President Xi sees military diplomacy as a “critical element in how China engages with other countries.”⁸⁰ This military diplomacy includes joint military exercises, arms sales, port visits, senior-level meetings, non-traditional security operations, and functional military exchanges.⁸¹ However, Kenneth Allen found that globally, increased PLA diplomatic activity does not always translate into increased Chinese influence over the host country.⁸² This finding may indicate that despite increased military investment in the region, there has yet to manifest a return for the PRC or that the intended gain in influence has yet to be effectively measured.

B. ECONOMIC

Asymmetrical trade relationships are known to lead to potential coercion by the stronger state imposing its will on the smaller state. Here the distinction between economic sensitivity and actual vulnerability is essential. If a state or entity can adjust easily and procure the potential loss in other ways or forms, it is simply a sensitivity; whereas a vulnerability considerably impacts the local market.⁸³ When faced with a potential vulnerability issue, the PRC is able to pit target state actors against each other in competition for slices of the economic market.⁸⁴

⁷⁹ Yinghong Shi, “China’s Complicated Foreign Policy,” *European Council on Foreign Relations*, March 31, 2015, https://www.ecfr.eu/article/commentary_chinas_complicated_foreign_policy311562.

⁸⁰ China Power Team, “How Is China Bolstering Its Military Diplomatic Relations?,” *ChinaPower Project* (blog), October 27, 2017, <https://chinapower.csis.org/china-military-diplomacy/>.

⁸¹ China Power Team.

⁸² Kenneth Allen, Phillip C. Saunders, and John Chen, “Chinese Military Diplomacy, 2003–2016: Trends and Implications,” *Center for the Study of Chinese Military Affairs Institute for National Strategic Studies China Strategic Perspectives* No. 11 (July 2017): 61, <https://inss.ndu.edu/Media/News/Article/1249897/chinese-military-diplomacy-20032016-trends-and-implications/>.

⁸³ Robert O. Keohane (Robert Owen) and Joseph S. Nye, *Power and Interdependence: World Politics in Transition* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1977).

⁸⁴ *Rising China’s Influence in Developing Asia* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 277.

For Beijing, “strategic economy” is the preferred method of gaining global influence as it poses the least risk of producing conflict and is a more effective tool.⁸⁵ David Baldwin shows that the use of economic statecraft has utility in the modern world and cannot be ignored.⁸⁶ This analysis follows Reilly’s definition in which “economic statecraft is the use of economic resources by political leaders to exert influence in pursuit of foreign policy objectives.”⁸⁷ Harris and Blackwill further the distinction by separating geo-economics (soft power) and geo-politics (hard power), arguing that the United States lost its ability to conduct soft power and therefore resorts to military means.⁸⁸ China, on the other hand, leverages economic soft power extremely well, controlling a considerable swath of SOEs, which are better suited to achieve national policy goals compared with western equivalents.⁸⁹ This unique, expanded soft power capability enables the PRC to exert influence and power via more avenues and with fewer restrictions than western counterparts.

The PRC uses cooperative economic efforts (“carrots”) and coercive economic efforts, such as threats of sanctions (“sticks”) to achieve its economic goals and gain support.⁹⁰ In most cases, the PRC rewards favorable behavior and punishes undesirable behavior by a target nation. Eventually, this produces a “political transformation and desirable changes in target behavior.”⁹¹ These cooperative efforts showcase the PRC’s “economic heft” and can have massive effects on smaller nations.⁹² Larger nations are not

⁸⁵ Shi, “China’s Complicated Foreign Policy.”

⁸⁶ David A. (David Allen) Baldwin, *Economic Statecraft* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1985).

⁸⁷ James Reilly, “China’s Economic Statecraft: Turning Wealth into Power” (Sydney, Australia: The Lowy Institute for International Policy, November 2013), 2, <https://www.lowyinstitute.org/publications/chinas-economic-statecraft-turning-wealth-power>.

⁸⁸ Robert Blackwill and Jennifer Harris, *War by Other Means: Geoeconomics and Statecraft* (Cambridge, Mass.: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2016), 1.

⁸⁹ Blackwill and Harris, 87.

⁹⁰ Reilly, “China’s Economic Statecraft: Turning Wealth into Power”; David Fiecoat, “With Strings Attached: China’s Economic Policy in the South China Sea” (Naval Postgraduate School, 2016).

⁹¹ Reilly, “China’s Economic Statecraft: Turning Wealth into Power,” 4.

⁹² Reilly, 2.

exempt. In 2009, after France met with the Dalai Lama, the PRC signed economic deals with other European nations, France not included. Eventually, France recognized Tibet as sovereign Chinese territory, and soon thereafter, a Chinese trade delegation returned to France.⁹³

Cooperative economic efforts can be used in nefarious ways as well. The PRC uses debt as a weapon system in predatory behavior towards weak or unstable nations.⁹⁴ This practice can be seen in the acquisition of Sri Lanka's Hambantota Port and Australia's Port Darwin, amongst many other examples of renegotiation of loans for partial or full ownership of physical infrastructure.⁹⁵ Conventional multilateral lending institutions like the IMF and the World Bank adhere to strict regulations on investment in developing countries due to concerns of corruption, governance issues, and human rights violations. The PRC sidesteps these roadblocks using its own banks for foreign investment.⁹⁶

On the other end of the economic influence spectrum are even more coercive economic measures, such as sanctions. According to Alistair Smith, sanctions are generally only effective when the economic or political benefits outweigh the cost of implementation.⁹⁷ Furthermore, Whang et al. argues that sanctions are effective when the target country is asymmetrically dependent on the sender's trade.⁹⁸ Niou and Lacy take the argument further by asserting that "sanctions that are likely to succeed will do so at the

⁹³ Reilly, 6.

⁹⁴ Maria Abi-Habib, "How China Got Sri Lanka to Cough Up a Port," *The New York Times*, August 7, 2018, sec. World, <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/06/25/world/asia/china-sri-lanka-port.html>.

⁹⁵ Abi-Habib; Ben Smee and Christopher A. Walsh, "How the Sale of Darwin Port to the Chinese Sparked a Geopolitical Brawl," *The Guardian*, December 17, 2016, sec. Australia news, <https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2016/dec/18/how-the-sale-of-darwin-port-to-the-chinese-sparked-a-geopolitical-brawl>.

⁹⁶ Krishnadev Calamur, "'The Price' of China's Influence in Latin America," *The Atlantic*, February 3, 2018, <https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2018/02/rex-in-latam/552197/>.

⁹⁷ Alastair Smith, "The Success and Use of Economic Sanctions," *International Interactions* 21, no. 3 (1995): 229–45, <https://doi.org/10.1080/03050629508434867>.

⁹⁸ Taehee Whang, Elena V. Mclean, and Douglas W. Kuberski, "Coercion, Information, and the Success of Sanction Threats," *American Journal of Political Science* 57, no. 1 (2013): 65–81, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-5907.2012.00629.x>.

mere threat of sanctions.”⁹⁹ However, for the PRC, economic cooperation efforts are more successful than economic coercion as limiting SOEs economic ventures also has adverse domestic effects.¹⁰⁰ To date, research shows the ability of the PRC to leverage considerable economic influence in foreign markets.¹⁰¹

C. INFORMATION

While “hard power” encompasses more direct, aggressive forms of projection like military force, economic sanctions, and coercion, information tends to fall under the “soft power” umbrella, with a few exceptions. The informational spread of a country’s culture, political ideals, and policies is a tool often overlooked by decisionmakers, one that can be extremely effective without loss of life or the use of violence.¹⁰² Additionally, a state’s internal information, and its willingness to listen and take advantage of it is also important for foreign policy and decision-making. While soft power is appealing, it is often vague and hard to grasp. As Joseph Nye explains, “in a global information age...success depends not only on whose army wins, but on whose story wins.”¹⁰³

Information has the potential to bring about great good or great harm. If timed incorrectly, projected to the wrong audience, and de-synchronized, information operations can often do more harm than good. It is imperative to time messaging correctly with diplomatic negotiations in order to be effective. Much like diplomacy, information has the ability to prevent bloodshed and bring about cooperation between states. The Sun Tzu

⁹⁹ Dean Lacy and Emerson M. S. Niou, “A Theory of Economic Sanctions and Issue Linkage: The Roles of Preferences, Information, and Threats,” *Journal of Politics* 66, no. 1 (2004): 25, <https://doi.org/10.1046/j.1468-2508.2004.00140.x>.

¹⁰⁰ Reilly, “China’s Economic Statecraft: Turning Wealth into Power,” 10.

¹⁰¹ James Reilly, “China’s Economic Statecraft: Turning Wealth into Power” (Sydney, Australia: The Lowy Institute for International Policy, November 2013), <https://www.lowyinstitute.org/publications/chinas-economic-statecraft-turning-wealth-power>; Peter Harrell, Elizabeth Rosenberg, and Edoardo Saravalle, “China’s Use of Coercive Economic Measures,” *Center for a New American Security*, June 11, 2018; Jonathan Pearlman, “China’s Overt Coercion,” Text, Australian Foreign Affairs, June 20, 2018, <https://www.australianforeignaffairs.com/afaweekly/chinas-overt-coercion>.

¹⁰² T. Camber Warren, “Not by the Sword Alone: Soft Power, Mass Media, and the Production of State Sovereignty,” *International Organization* 68, no. 1 (January 2014): 111–41, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0020818313000350>.

¹⁰³ Joseph S. Nye Jr, “The Rise of China’s Soft Power,” *Wall Street Journal*, December 29, 2005, sec. Opinion, <https://www.wsj.com/articles/SB113580867242333272>.

dictum, “supreme excellence consists in breaking the enemy’s resistance without fighting,” has often been the battle cry for practitioners attempting to win the “Information Operations” battle.¹⁰⁴ Unfortunately, many countries tend to focus solely on the military and economic tools, often discounting the value and importance of information operations. Following WWII, propaganda and political warfare capabilities diminished within the United States due to rapid demobilization. A dangerous vacuum remained, which led to the Soviet Union freely pushing radical communist policies to receptive countries around the world. Fortunately, the creation of the Central Intelligence Agency in 1947 provided a fresh impetus and organizational vehicle for covert information operations and political action in peacetime.¹⁰⁵

While most literature focuses on the broadcasting and exploitation of information external to a state as a policy lever, this is only part of the equation. Information internal to a state is also critical for making pragmatic policy decisions. Regardless of government type, a population’s desires and attitudes must be considered if a country wants to progress. Internal to a state, the media plays a key role in this regard. Investigative journalism and a free press are critical to the accountability of policymakers and the free flow of information in democratic societies. Disregarding these sentiments can weaken or even make obsolete the other three instruments of national power. An example of this can be seen in the United States involvement in Vietnam. A disconnect between policymakers and constituents, lies from decisionmakers, and a broken relationship between military experts and their civilian counterparts can be counted as failures in the information domain.¹⁰⁶ Authoritarian states are not immune. Venezuela is currently experiencing riots and calls for new leadership as hunger, power cuts, hyperinflation, and medicine shortages have created unrest throughout

¹⁰⁴ Sun Tzu, *The Art of War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1963).

¹⁰⁵ C. Lord, *Political Warfare and Psychological Operations: Rethinking the United States Approach* (DIANE Publishing, 1989), <https://books.google.com/books?id=ygpJhCSUK14C>.

¹⁰⁶ H. R. McMaster, *Dereliction of Duty: Lyndon Johnson, Robert McNamara, the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and the Lies That Led to Vietnam*, First HarperPerennial edition (New York: HarperPerennial, 1998).

the country.¹⁰⁷ These phenomena did not happen overnight. Two decades of corruption, authoritarian policies, and a failure to listen to the masses have slowly eroded the trust the people have in their decisionmakers. Internal information was either disregarded or never heard, and Venezuela currently finds itself in a situation in which military might, economic policies, and diplomatic negotiation have limited utility. With the above conditions in LAC, the PRC has several opportunities to leverage soft power and spread misinformation that furthers their own agendas. The PRC's use of information in conjunction with its economic and military policies with regard to LAC will be an important factor moving forward.

D. DIPLOMATIC

The diplomatic instrument is one that is inextricably linked to the other three instruments of national power, as diplomats will often use information, military, and economic tools as leverage or power in international negotiations. Like the information lever, diplomacy is hard to measure. Both the diplomatic and information instruments deal in the realm of the intellectual, and often emotional, rather than the physical, which makes analysis somewhat difficult.¹⁰⁸ Hans Morgenthau referred to diplomacy as all relations conducted short of war, reducing statecraft down to either diplomacy or violence.¹⁰⁹ While this view is over-simplistic and limiting, it displays the bleed-over between the different foreign policy tools. Diplomatic processes can be defined in terms of power or influence, essentially the ability of one party to change the actions or predispositions of another party in some way.¹¹⁰ Sir Charles Webster believed that successful diplomacy hinges on three things: "providing the right climate of opinion, devising the right forms of agreement, and creating or perceiving the right moment at which the maximum effort can be applied."¹¹¹ Failure to balance and manage these three principles can lead a state down a disastrous

¹⁰⁷ "'This Government Will Fall': See Thousands of Venezuelans Marching Against Maduro's Regime," Time, accessed November 8, 2019, <https://time.com/longform/venezuela-protests-juan-guaido-maduro/>.

¹⁰⁸ Van de Velde, R.W., "Instruments of Statecraft," *Army* 1, no. 5 (1962).

¹⁰⁹ Hans J. Morgenthau, Kenneth W. Thompson, and W. David Clinton, *Politics among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace*, 7th ed (Boston: McGraw-Hill Higher Education, 2006).

¹¹⁰ David A. Baldwin, *Economic Statecraft* (Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 1985).

¹¹¹ Webster, Charles Kingsley, *The Art and Practice of Diplomacy* (Barnes and Noble, 1962).

path, whereas skillful diplomats can wield them successfully to prevent the use of military force or economic coercion to meet an end state. While there are various definitions of successful diplomacy, these three captures the skills a diplomat needs to negotiate successfully on behalf of his or her country. Snyder, Bruck, and Sapin argued that "human agency is fundamental in shaping political outcomes."¹¹² "A leader's propensity to seek consensus or to provoke polarization has repercussions on the consistency of foreign policy and its ability to perform in the medium and long term."¹¹³

If one were to examine diplomatic failures throughout history, that is, negotiations that broke down and led to a security dilemma and possibly bloodshed, each case would reveal a failure of employing at least one of the three principles (e.g., WWII, dollar diplomacy in LAC, Arab uprisings, the Ukraine crisis). On the contrary, successful implementation of the three principles has led to successful negotiations elsewhere (e.g., Camp David accords, the United States opening to China, and the Nuclear Non-Proliferation treaty). Often, diplomatic negotiations fail because states are too rigid and unwavering to compromise, falling into a "flat view" cognition trap and seeing the world as one dimensional.¹¹⁴ The United States was guilty of this often during the Cold War, simplifying others as either with us or against us and refusing to display sufficient empathy or imagination in solving problems. As Winston Churchill observed, "the reason for having diplomatic relations is not to confer a compliment but to secure a convenience." Warren M. Christopher, one of the most successful United States diplomats of our time, wisely stated that "careful listening may be the secret weapon" and that a "wise nation, however powerful, understands the peril it invites in confronting the will of another people. Outside powers have an effect, if any, only on the margins."¹¹⁵ With this in mind, it is important

¹¹² Richard C. Snyder, H.W. Bruck, and Burton Sapin, *Decisionmaking as an Approach to the Study of International Politics* (Princeton University Press, 1954).

¹¹³ Gian Luca Gardini and Peter Lambert, eds., *Latin American Foreign Policies: Between Ideology and Pragmatism*, 1st ed (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011).

¹¹⁴ Zachary. Shore, *Blunder: Why Smart People Make Bad Decisions*, 1st U.S. ed., Why Smart People Make Bad Decisions (New York: Bloomsbury, 2008).

¹¹⁵ Bernard and Gwertzman Special To the New York Times, "A Former Diplomat's Thoughts on Diplomacy," *The New York Times*, October 2, 1981, sec. U.S., <https://www.nytimes.com/1981/10/02/us/a-former-diplomat-s-thoughts-on-diplomacy.html>.

to understand that the above principles may not work in every situation. Diplomacy is a complicated art that is dependent on many factors. As Dr. Christopher Darnton argued, “several possible pathways may lead to successful rapprochement.”¹¹⁶ He argues that the problem is often not related to reaching an agreement with a foreign counterpart through diplomatic means. Rather, the issue commonly lies in overcoming internal bureaucratic disagreement and domestic political agendas in reaching a common front with regard to external power. In a democracy, there are several agencies with various responsibilities and associated budgets. Some departments or agencies may not benefit long term from rapprochement and will work to maintain a rivalry in order to reinforce and preserve their relevancy. Dr. Darnton claims that, “these actors will tend to oppose efforts by national leaders to overcome international rivalry.”¹¹⁷ The point in highlighting this alternative point of view is to underscore that diplomacy is a complicated art. No universal answers exist, and at times, the best of intentions end up being counterproductive.

The intent here is to analyze the above attributes to hypothesize which PRC initiatives have a greater chance of success and which ones will most likely falter. Given Latin America’s checkered past with the United States, China’s style of diplomacy may be seen as a breath of fresh air to a trusting customer. The PRC claims that it wants these states to rule as they see fit, with much fewer limits than the United States imposes.¹¹⁸ Further examination is required to determine what the intended effects are for PRC diplomacy in LAC.

E. LATIN AMERICA AND CARIBBEAN FOREIGN POLICY

In order for a state to employ the above tools, it is necessary to understand the recipient’s modus operandi to determine which combination of levers is most practical.

¹¹⁶ Christopher Neil Darnton, *Rivalry and Alliance Politics in Cold War Latin America* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2014).

¹¹⁷ Darnton.

¹¹⁸ Liza Tobin, “Xi’s Vision for Transforming Global Governance: A Strategic Challenge for Washington and Its Allies,” *Texas National Security Review*, November 12, 2018, <https://tnsr.org/2018/11/xis-vision-for-transforming-global-governance-a-strategic-challenge-for-washington-and-its-allies/>.

The same economic statecraft or military coercion that is effective against one country or region may prove to be disastrous in another. A summary of LAC foreign policy and behavior in world politics in the past will assist in understanding how they may behave in the future.

Latin America and the Caribbean is a region that is often viewed as homogenous due to the many shared attributes of each country. While marked differences among these countries exist (and will likely continue to exist) in terms of “national capabilities, foreign policy styles, political regimes and external linkages,” the purpose of this section is to define broadly common LAC foreign policy behavior.¹¹⁹ States in the region share similar histories of colonialism, all have economies that are heavily dependent on export of primary products and natural resources, and many LAC countries share cultural attributes due to a “common experience in which Europeans occupied and colonized indigenous communities.”¹²⁰ Additionally, LAC states all have the common trait of sharing a hemisphere with a global hegemon, the United States, an attribute that clearly influences policy decision-making.

Common goals that drive foreign policy in LAC countries are autonomy, development, and the management of their relationship with the United States.¹²¹ The most frequently cited explanatory factors impacting Latin American foreign policy are “United States influence, poor economic resources, leader and regime ideology, and the global distribution of power and wealth.”¹²² While Latin American foreign policy is essentially about dependence, it is important to understand that this does not mean they will necessarily kowtow to foreign powers. Gian Gardini and Peter Lambert posit that an evident tenet that characterizes almost all LAC administrations is a co-existence between

¹¹⁹ Heraldo Muñoz and Joseph S. Tulchin, eds., *Latin American Nations in World Politics*, The Foreign Relations of the Third World, no. 3 (Boulder, Colo: Westview Press, 1984).

¹²⁰ Jeanne A. K. Hey, “Three Building Blocks of a Theory of Latin American Foreign Policy,” *Third World Quarterly* 18, no. 4 (1997): 631–57.

¹²¹ Hey.

¹²² Hey.

ideology and pragmatism.¹²³ LAC decisionmakers in the past have had a remarkable ability to balance ideological notions (“the desirable”) with pragmatic policy (“the achievable”).¹²⁴ During the Cold War, the Argentine military junta opposed communism and socialist ideals but pragmatically conducted business with the Soviet Union which helped delay economic disaster and prop up the military.¹²⁵ Although Presidents Hugo Chavez and Nicholas Maduro of Venezuela view the United States as imperialistic, it did not stop them from maintaining the United States as a primary trading partner.¹²⁶ This balance of ideology and pragmatism is a concept that deserves attention when attempting to predict how LAC administrations may behave and the true intent behind policy actions.

Hey breaks down LAC foreign policy into three theoretical building blocks: pro-core vs. anti-core; 2) autonomous vs. dependent; and 3) economic vs. political-diplomatic.¹²⁷ For the purpose of this study, the first two will be examined in order to better understand current LAC behavior with regard to the PRC. The “core” is referring to the industrialized world and includes key actors like the United States, the World Bank, and the IMF. The difference in this dichotomy is the notion that the above “core” is either an ally that should be leveraged in achieving foreign policy goals or an inherent enemy to the state. Four factors are common to all anti-core societies according to Hey: 1) "economic dependence and weakness; 2) domestic political turmoil and the desire to consolidate a regime; 3) a leader’s desire for personal and national prestige; and 4) public opinion favoring development."¹²⁸

In the divide between autonomous vs. dependent states, the majority of LAC countries lean to the latter. While countries in LAC tend to be dependent on larger states, this is not to say that there is a clear relation between external reliance and foreign policy

¹²³ Gardini and Lambert, *Latin American Foreign Policies*.

¹²⁴ Gardini and Lambert.

¹²⁵ Gardini and Lambert.

¹²⁶ Miguel Angel Centeno, “Left Behind? Latin America in a Globalized World.,” *The American Interest* 3, no. 3 (2008): 12–20.

¹²⁷ Hey, “Three Building Blocks of a Theory of Latin American Foreign Policy.”

¹²⁸ Hey.

behavior. According to one study, “agreement with the United States position is not a positive function of the extent of a country’s dependence.”¹²⁹ Another work concluded that, “the analyses here clearly support an argument that compliance by Latin American states in the form of voting agreement with the United States in the UN is unlikely to be associated consistently with trade dependence, power disparities, or distance from the United States”¹³⁰

Robert Pape’s concept of “soft balancing” is also important when thinking about LAC foreign policy. Pape’s theory “holds that weaker states confronting a unipolar power may leverage nonmilitary tools, such as international institutions, economic statecraft, and strict interpretations of neutrality,” to constrain the superpower.¹³¹ During much of the 20th century, countries in LAC had no way of checking United States’ “heightened interventionism” and unequalled military power and ability to exert influence in the region, and therefore relied on soft balancing to gain some sort of autonomy.¹³² States that are engaged in balancing seek to limit the ability of a power to “impose its preferences on others.”¹³³ Historical cases show that soft balancing was effective in LAC in countering United States influence in the region.¹³⁴ With the PRC attempting to gain a similar style of influence in the region, it is possible we see a similar strategy employed in order to limit the impact of PRC activity. Further research is needed to see what the extent LAC countries are reacting to rising PRC activity.

¹²⁹ Neil R Richardson, *Foreign Policy and Economic Dependence* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1978).

¹³⁰ Charles W. Kegley and Pat McGowan, eds., *The Political Economy of Foreign Policy Behavior* (Beverly Hills, California: Sage, 1981).

¹³¹ Robert A. Pape, “Soft Balancing against the United States,” *International Security* 30, no. 1 (Summer 2005): 7–45.

¹³² M.P. Friedman, “Soft Balancing in the Americas: Latin American Opposition to U.S. Intervention, 1898–1936” 40, no. 1 (Summer 2015): 39.

¹³³ Stephen M. Walt, “Alliances in a Unipolar World,” *World Politics* 61, no. 1 (January 2009): 86–120.

¹³⁴ M.P. Friedman, “Soft Balancing in the Americas: Latin American Opposition to U.S. Intervention, 1898–1936.”

F. LITERATURE GAP

Despite the considerable investigative research into the PRC's activities within LAC, an important research gap still exists. Most major research efforts describe the current situation through qualitative, descriptive analysis.¹³⁵ Economic analyses outline growing amounts of investment and economic activity and thus equate this with either a growth or reduction in influence within LAC, but often fail to mention other instruments of national power.¹³⁶ The same can be said of evaluations of the PRC's military activities within LAC.¹³⁷ Researchers tend to hone in on one aspect of Chinese activity, which is valuable for those interested in one aspect of the issue. While these efforts are extremely well-researched and comprehensively explained, they are only part of the overall picture when it comes to the PRC's activities. A more holistic optic is needed to better evaluate the situation, one that accounts for multiple perspectives and controls for a variety of factors.

¹³⁵ Sullivan and Lum, "China's Engagement with Latin America and the Caribbean"; Wayne Morrison, "China's Economic Rise: History, Trends, Challenges, and Implications for the United States," *Congressional Research Service*, 7-5700, August 6, 2017, www.crs.gov; Lawrence and Morrison, "US and China Policy."

¹³⁶ Dollar, "China's Investment in Latin America"; David Dollar, "Chinese Investment in Latin America Continues to Expand," *Brookings* (blog), March 20, 2018, <https://www.brookings.edu/research/despite-slowdown-chinese-investment-in-latin-america-continues-to-expand/>; Trinkunas, "Renminbi Diplomacy? The Limits of China's Influence on Latin America's Domestic Politics"; Javier A. Vadell, "China in Latin America: South-South Cooperation with Chinese Characteristics," *Latin American Perspectives*, 30 NOV 18, <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1177/0094582X18815511>; Rhys Jenkins, Enrique Dussel Peters, and Mauricio Mesquita Moreira, "The Impact of China on Latin America and the Caribbean," *World Development* 36, no. 2 (2008): 235–53, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.worlddev.2007.06.012>; Anabel Gonzalez, "Latin America – China Trade and Investment Amid Global Tensions: A Need to Upgrade and Diversify" (Atlantic Council, December 2018), <https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/publications/reports/latin-america-china-trade-and-investment-amid-global-tensions>; Dreyer, "The Belt, the Road, and Latin America - Foreign Policy Research Institute."

¹³⁷ Ellis, *China-Latin America Military Engagement: Good Will, Good Business, and Strategic Position*; Ricardo Barrios and Benjamin Creutzfeldt / Creutzfeldt, "Thinking Strategically about China and the United States in Latin America: A Riposte to Evan Ellis," *Global Americans*, accessed January 10, 2019, <https://theglobalamericans.org/2018/02/thinking-strategically-china-u-s-latin-america-riposte-evan-ellis/>; R. Evan Ellis, "Should the United States Be Worried about Chinese Arms Sales in the Region?," *Global Americans*, May 11, 2015, <https://theglobalamericans.org/2015/05/should-u-s-be-worried-about-chinese-arms-sales-in-the-region/>; Gurrola, "China-Latin America Arms Sales: Antagonizing the United States in the Western Hemisphere?"; Koleski and Blivas, "China's Engagement with Latin America and the Caribbean."

Very few studies have examined this topic through a quantitative lens. The Flores and Kreps piece (2013) shows that increased levels of trade between the PRC and developing countries within LAC and Africa lead to more favorable voting patterns within the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA).¹³⁸ This study, however, includes countries (and potentially varying behavioral patterns) outside of LAC and only investigates the level of trade between countries. This research seeks to contribute to the body of existing research by looking specifically at the LAC region as it pertains to a wider array of PRC activities.

G. MOVING FORWARD

After analyzing existing literature regarding PRC influence within LAC, it is clear that this is now a national policy level concern for the United States. In one of his last addresses to Congress, Admiral Tidd (Former USSOUTHCOM Commander) described the scarce resources a GCC can bring to bear on a problem that is, at this point, primarily economic in nature.¹³⁹ He argued that the strategic challenge posed by the PRC was not yet a military concern and advocated for a more “whole of government approach” to the problem. But will a military response be necessary? Many believe that the best solution to growing PRC activities is not confrontation but cooperation: “[T]he United States would show greatness not by hampering other’s efforts at engaging with the region, but by engaging the region’s members, and China, to construct an economically, socially, politically, and environmentally responsible future for the hemisphere.”¹⁴⁰ While much of the literature tends to be wary of the PRC in LAC, it is important to approach this problem without biases. Given the PRCs issues at home, and large-scale projects abroad much closer to the mainland, it is doubtful the PRC will be able to maintain its high expenditures in a region that is unlikely to supplant a deep-rooted United States partnership for a shaky PRC partnership. We should also note that hyperbolic language regarding PRC activity poses a

¹³⁸ Gustavo A. Flores-Macías and Sarah E. Kreps, “The Foreign Policy Consequences of Trade: China’s Commercial Relations with Africa and Latin America, 1992–2006,” *The Journal of Politics* 75, no. 2 (2013): 357–71, <https://doi.org/10.1017/s0022381613000066>.

¹³⁹ Tidd, “Posture Statement of United States Southern Command before the 115th Congress SASC.”

¹⁴⁰ Barrios and Creutzfeldt, “Thinking Strategically about China and the U.S. in Latin America.”

danger of becoming a self-fulfilling prophecy and leading to impetuous decision-making and counterproductive policies.

While current studies focus on economic development and the associated challenge to United States hegemony in the area, there is currently limited research describing *how* PRC activity affects LAC countries' measurable behavior. This thesis intends to address this gap.¹⁴¹

¹⁴¹ Shore, *Blunder: Why Smart People Make Bad Decisions*.

IV. METHODOLOGY AND DATA

In order to address the research question, we use a quantitative approach to examine the relationship between the PRC's economic activities and measurable behavioral effects in LAC countries.¹⁴² This analysis will leverage a compilation of existing databases that capture PRC diplomatic, informational, military, and economic global activity. This study will help to determine whether there is a relationship between increased PRC activity in LAC and gaining favorable behavior, indicating growing influence within the region. This analysis uses linear regression models to determine the impact of PRC activity (IVs) within LAC on United Nation (UN) voting trends. The dependent variable (DV) of UN voting congruence with China is measured through a continuous index, therefore ordinary least squares (OLS) regression models are used. The unit of analysis is country, by year, from 2000–2017.¹⁴³

A quantitative approach is appropriate because of the need to account for multiple perspectives and aspects, a problem that is difficult to address qualitatively. Existing quantitative studies measuring the PRC's influence are either outside the scope of LAC or only consider one or two independent variables (i.e., only trade).¹⁴⁴ Additionally, the qualitative analysis available only indicates growing PRC activity levels and infers a growing amount of influence. This study aims to establish the actual measurable effects of increased PRC activity across the entire region. This also has the potential to illuminate in which categories the PRC is gaining influence, and in which it is losing.

A. INDEPENDENT VARIABLES

The independent variables will come from a variety of open-source, publicly available databases. Following other quantitative studies, all independent variables were

¹⁴² Regression analysis conducted via R code. For full R code and related data bases, please contact authors.

¹⁴³ During the regression, squared variables were considered but showed no statistical significance. The IVs that showed heavy tailed distribution were logged to adjust for extreme values.

¹⁴⁴ Flores-Macías and Kreps, "The Foreign Policy Consequences of Trade."

lagged (by one year) in order to provide a directional temporal model and to reduce the potential for reverse causation between prior UN voting patterns and subsequent Chinese activities. This approach ensures that only activities which preceded votes by at least a year can be counted as influencing those votes.

1. Diplomatic

The PRC conducts regular diplomatic visits to LAC countries and regularly hosts leaders of those nations in China. The Elite Chinese Diplomacy and Financial Flows¹⁴⁵ online visualization tool compiles the known PRC diplomatic visits globally. This includes high-level leadership such as president and foreign minister, but also lower-level visits. This can be used to record, by country, the number of visits and the reason for each interaction. This database is based on the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace's China Vitae, a tracker of over 500 different Chinese officials' appearance and travel visits annually.¹⁴⁶ This is used because it is the most comprehensive tracker of Chinese foreign and domestic diplomatic engagements.¹⁴⁷

In addition to diplomatic visits, this study considers whether the LAC country officially recognizes Taiwan. Over the past few years, the PRC used economic incentives to further isolate the island nation by convincing LAC countries to break off official diplomatic ties, losing Panama in 2017, and El Salvador and the Dominican Republic in 2018.¹⁴⁸ To capture LAC countries' official ties with Taiwan, the authors manually created

¹⁴⁵ "Elite Chinese Diplomacy and Financial Flows," accessed February 26, 2019, <https://gbwalker.shinyapps.io/chinese-diplomacy-and-financing/>.

¹⁴⁶ "China Vitae," Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2018, <http://www.chinavitae.com/index.php>.

¹⁴⁷ China Vitae does not have an accessible database of all diplomatic visits. Therefore, a scraper was built to extract the number of visits, by year, of PRC diplomats from an unstructured HTML format to a readable, structured spreadsheet

¹⁴⁸ Chris Horton, "El Salvador Recognizes China in Blow to Taiwan," *The New York Times*, August 22, 2018, sec. World, <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/08/21/world/asia/taiwan-el-salvador-diplomatic-ties.html>; Horwitz, "Taiwan Now Has Diplomatic Relations with Fewer than 20 Countries"; Lee and Wen, "Taiwan Says China 'out of Control' as It Loses El Salvador to Beijing | Reuters."

a binary variable tracking recognition by country, by year based on available news and public reports.¹⁴⁹

2. Information

Measuring informational activity within LAC is much more difficult than measuring diplomatic visits. The willingness to accept a certain culture, style, language, or way of life is subjective and rarely measured quantitatively. The most visible and far reaching informational tool employed by the PRC is the establishment of Confucius Institutes (CI) to existing colleges and universities. There are currently 42 institutes in the region, with 39 established between the study's analysis period of 2000–2017.¹⁵⁰ To account for the number of CIs per country, the authors created a tally of the number established by country per year and a running tally of these institutes by country, aggregating institutes throughout the seventeen-year period. This covers both the potential immediate and long-term effects of the institutes.

3. Military

For military activity, the study focused on military events or exercises and foreign military sales to countries in the LAC region. These two activities are the most appropriate measures of military national power as the PRC is not involved in combat operations within SOUTHCOM. Military diplomacy includes non-combat type of interactions by the PLA and PLA Navy (PLAN) in the region and is captured in the PLA Military Diplomacy database sponsored by the National Defense University (NDU).¹⁵¹ Events include joint military exercises, port visits, senior-level meetings, non-traditional security operations, and functional military exchanges.¹⁵² This database is supplemented with the

¹⁴⁹ Diplomatic recognition of Taiwan could be considered an objective of PRC foreign policy in the region. However, diplomatic recognition is mostly constant over time within our time range of years, rendering the IV unsuitable as a potential DV in this or other studies.

¹⁵⁰ “CRICAL // Centro Regional de Institutos Confucio Para América Latina,” accessed June 3, 2019, <https://www.critical.cl/>.

¹⁵¹ Allen, Saunders, and Chen, “Chinese Military Diplomacy, 2003–2016: Trends and Implications.”

¹⁵² Allen, Saunders, and Chen.

internationally recognized Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) Arms Transfers Database which provides trackable FMS transactions.¹⁵³

4. Economic

Tracking the PRC's global investment is a difficult task as the disclosed CCP investments often conflict with open-source data on the same activities. However, there are two databases that provide a compilation of the PRC's economic activities abroad. First is the Chinese Global Investment Data, sponsored by the Heritage Foundation and the American Enterprise Institute.¹⁵⁴ This database tracks global PRC foreign investment, both from private and SOEs, spanning from the 1990s to 2018. The drawbacks of this database include the lack of PRC aid, grants, and loans. Therefore, the data is augmented with the AidData database, sponsored by the College of William and Mary.¹⁵⁵ This database includes aid, grants, and loans. Unfortunately, AidData only covers the years 2000–2014, creating a three-year gap in our study. In order to account for this gap, any regression models that included the variable of economic aid did not include the 2015–2017 timeframe. This allowed the regression to take into account all eighteen years of data only if the limiting variable (economic aid) was not included.

In addition to economic investment projects and economic aid, total trade volume was gathered from the UN Comtrade Database.¹⁵⁶ This provides total trade and exports by year, which can also determine trade deficit and trade balance for consideration in analysis.¹⁵⁷

¹⁵³ “Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) Arms Transfers Database.”

¹⁵⁴ Derek Scissors, “China Global Investment Tracker” (Washington DC: The Heritage Foundation and The American Enterprise Institute, 2018), <http://www.aei.org/china-global-investment-tracker/>.

¹⁵⁵ Axel Dreher et al., “Aid, China, and Growth: Evidence from a New Global Development Finance Dataset” (Williamsburg, VA: William & Mary, 2017), <https://www.aiddata.org/data/chinese-global-official-finance-dataset>.

¹⁵⁶ “UN Comtrade: International Trade Statistics,” accessed June 28, 2019, <https://comtrade.un.org/Data/>.

¹⁵⁷ To mitigate issues of multicollinearity, PRC imports and total trade as a percent of GDP are not included

B. DEPENDENT VARIABLE

The dependent variable used for this study was derived from United Nations voting patterns, specifically in the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA), from 2000 to 2017. The database used is the United Nations General Assembly Voting Data from Harvard University.¹⁵⁸ For decades, UNGA votes have been used to measure states' general orientations and preferences. Throughout the 1980s, Congress produced an annual report to the president assessing the "attitudes, policies, and decisions of member states."¹⁵⁹ The first academic report to apply a scoring matrix was in 1969 by Edward Rowe, with several modifications throughout the decades.¹⁶⁰ Granted, relying on UNGA votes to provide feedback on a country's stance is an inexact art and comes with important caveats. There are a multitude of dependent variables that have been used when measuring influence in international relations. The University of Edinburgh published a study in 2018 that used a combination of UN voting, the number of incoming international students and tourists, and levels of FDI (Foreign Direct Investment) to measure the efficacy of soft power.¹⁶¹ However, UN voting is the most common variable used across various studies and is the most applicable and wide-ranging metric for the target countries of this study.

For this report, we have adopted the technique used in 2013 by Flores-Macias and Kreps in their study to identify the importance of trade with Africa and Latin America.¹⁶² This method puts a different value on abstentions, as it is generally agreed that an abstention should not weigh as heavily as a disagreement between two countries (Yes/No) or an agreement (Yes/Yes or No/No). This scoring technique measures voting coincidence between all LAC countries and China by year and was subsequently plotted, allowing us

¹⁵⁸ Erik Voeten, Anton Strezhnev, and Michael Bailey, "United Nations General Assembly Voting Data," ed. Erik Voeten (Harvard Dataverse, 2009), <https://doi.org/10.7910/DVN/LEJUQZ>.

¹⁵⁹ United States. Department of State, "Report to Congress on Voting Practices in the United Nations," Dept. of State publication, 1985, 4.

¹⁶⁰ Edward T. Rowe, "Changing Patterns in the Voting Success of Member States in the United Nations General Assembly: 1945-1966," *International Organization* 23, no. 2 (1969): 231-53.

¹⁶¹ J.P. Singh and Stuart MacDonald, "Soft Power Today Measuring the Influences and Effects" (Edinburgh, United Kingdom: University of Edinburgh, January 15, 2018).

¹⁶² Flores-Macías and Kreps, "The Foreign Policy Consequences of Trade."

to depict visually how the region aligned with PRC throughout 2000–2017 (see Figure 1). Each vote received a 1 if the country aligned with the PRC, 0 if it disagreed, and a value of 0.5 if one country voted yes or no, but the other abstained. Next, each country’s “S-Score” was calculated by summing its vote scores for that year, and dividing by its total number of votes that year, in order to determine an annual mean score capturing the degree of congruence between a country’s votes and the votes of China. While this method is not exact, it has the advantage of providing a reliable measurable representation over time of LAC country behavior.

One potential drawback to this method is that some votes are largely procedural, some are more important to the PRC, and some are more important to LAC countries. Since this research is attempting to determine when LAC countries were successfully influenced by the PRC, it is important only to include votes that matter to China. If every vote were to be included, it would be impossible to determine when LAC countries converge with the PRC, as votes that have nothing to do with PRCs influence would give a skewed overall picture. A method used by Flores-Macías and Kreps to “distinguish directionality of convergence” was to only include votes that are important to the PRC.¹⁶³ Here, only resolutions dealing with human rights issues are included in order to accurately predict when LAC countries were lining up with PRC interests. Human rights votes are a great proxy for PRC influence as the PRC generally always votes and seeks votes in favor of a state’s sovereignty and against external intervention. China’s Foreign Ministry stated, “the issue of human rights is, in essence, an internal affair of a country.”¹⁶⁴ Therefore, analyzing only human rights votes, per year, within the UNGA provides a more representative look at PRC gaining or losing influence in the region.

A graph that displays a downward trend in LAC voting coincidence with the PRC is displayed in Figure 1. It is important to recognize the differences in voting behavior between the two models (see Figures 1 and 2) and to understand how this study could be skewed if all votes were taken into account as opposed to human rights votes. Figure 1

¹⁶³ Flores-Macías and Kreps.

¹⁶⁴ Flores-Macías and Kreps, 361.

includes all UNGA votes for each year, while Figure 2 only reflects HR votes. The difference demonstrates further the robustness of using only human right resolutions when determining PRC influence in LAC.

UN votes, by their nature, are non-binding and countries are not obligated to participate in every action. However, the PRC now participates more in international organizations than it has in the past and many believe that the UN is an outlet for the PRC to continue to gain influence and spread authoritarian rule as a legitimate form of government.¹⁶⁵ Additionally, more complicated methods for evaluating states' influence in the UNGA exist using dynamic ordinal spatial models to estimate state ideal points,¹⁶⁶ however, for simplicity of the models, only S-Score is used here.

¹⁶⁵ Kristine Lee and Alexander Sullivan, "People's Republic of the United Nations: China's Emerging Revisionism in International Organizations" (Washington, DC: Center for a New American Security (CNAS), April 2019).

¹⁶⁶ Michael A Bailey, Anton Strezhnev, and Erik Voeten, "Estimating Dynamic State Preferences from United Nations Voting Data," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 61, no. 2 (2017): 430–56, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0022002715595700>.

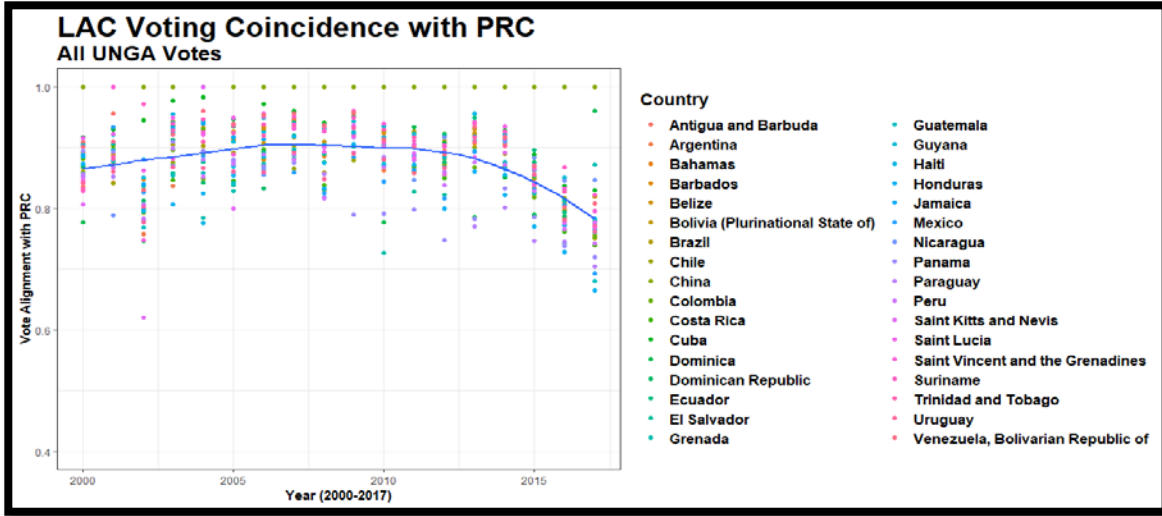


Figure 1. All UNGA Votes for LAC Countries from 2000–2017.¹⁶⁷

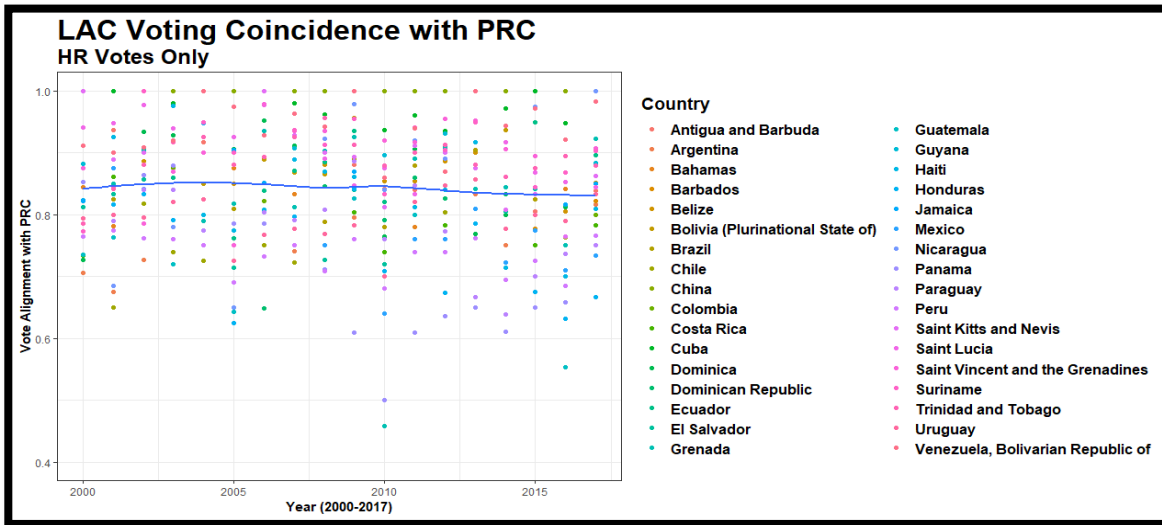


Figure 2. UN Vote Score (HR Votes Only) for LAC Countries from 2000–2017.¹⁶⁸

¹⁶⁷ Adapted from Erik Voeten, Anton Strezhnev, and Michael Bailey, “United Nations General Assembly Voting Data,” August 13, 2019, <https://dataverse.harvard.edu/dataset.xhtml?persistentId=doi:10.7910/DVN/LEJUQZ>.

¹⁶⁸ Adapted from Voeten, Strezhnev, and Bailey.

As we see from Figures 1 and 2, most countries have some degree of positive overlap in their voting patterns, however, within these values, there are still substantial variations between countries to use for regression analysis. Generally speaking, most countries are more likely to vote with China than against them in human rights-related votes. Regardless, changes from year to year provide the opportunity to determine if the IVs directly affect vote scores.

It is important to note the generalized voting patterns within LAC countries, averaged across all years of the study. Some countries almost always vote with China, and thus we do not expect to see major impacts on their scores throughout the years. Likewise, some countries have a much lower voting score and thus have differing vote scores compared to other nations in the region. Countries with the highest average vote score for all years include Cuba (0.98), Venezuela (0.94), St. Lucia, Guyana, and Suriname (all at 0.91). On the other hand, some countries hold much lower average vote scores, indicating a more distant relationship with the PRC. These include Panama (0.72), Peru, Guatemala, and Honduras (all at 0.74). It is important to note the influence of the United States in this calculation, as generally, these same countries are considered adversarial and friendly, respectively, towards the United States. This gives us some confidence that our metric successfully captures differing levels of geopolitical influence between these powers.

C. CONTROL VARIABLES

Three additional variables are included as controls, given that these IVs are not the only potential sources of influence to the LAC region. The models controlled for the level of democracy by using the polity score from the Integrated Network for Societal Conflict Research (INSCR), which measures the level of democracy in each country, ranging from -10 (absolute dictatorship) to +10 (consolidated democracy).¹⁶⁹ Countries across the polity spectrum will likely exhibit different behaviors, including their UN voting. One limitation to note with respect to polity is that generally, the INSCR does not provide evaluations of

¹⁶⁹ “Integrated Network for Societal Conflict Research (INSCR) Data Page,” Center for Systemic Peace, accessed March 12, 2019, <http://www.systemicpeace.org/inscrdata.html>.

polity for many Caribbean nations. Therefore, any model that includes the polity variable will not include many of the smaller Caribbean nations.¹⁷⁰

Additionally, two World Development Indicators of country population and Gross Domestic Product (GDP) from the World Bank were used to increase the reliability of the results.¹⁷¹ The inclusion of the population size and the size of its respective economy will help offset increased PRC activity/investments as a proportion, rather than raw numbers taken out of context. Large investments or arms sales can seem considerable but may be rendered insignificant by the size of a country's population and economy.¹⁷²

D. HYPOTHESIS

We hypothesize that the various national levers employed by the PRC will be associated with more favorable foreign policies from LAC countries, but not nearly to the extent that some believe. While PRC intervention is a cause for concern for United States policymakers, we expect that the influence the PRC has been able to gain through economic, military, diplomatic and informational campaigns has been only marginally successful to date.

¹⁷⁰ This study included models with squared versions of polity to account for potential non-linear effects, however these variables did not produce statistical significance.

¹⁷¹ "Population, Total | Data," The World Bank, accessed May 15, 2019, <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.POP.TOTL?end=2017&start=2000>; "GDP (Current US\$) | Data," The World Bank, accessed February 26, 2019, <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.MKTP.CD>.

¹⁷² All independent variables that showed heavy tailed distribution were logged to adjust for extreme values. Full listing of logged and non-logged variables are included in Table 1.

V. REGRESSION RESULTS

The results are presented in Table 1 with a selection of our main regression models and the respective variable coefficients with standard errors. IVs with statistical significance are marked with asterisks based on the p-value. Additionally, from this table, the corresponding relationship between the IVs and UN Human Rights voting can be seen as indicated by the positive or negative coefficient. Model 9 was selected as the best overall regression model for further discussion and analysis. We developed this model by starting with all IVs and control variables in a regression, removing statistically insignificant IVs, and exploring interactive variables, aiming to decrease the Akaike Information Criterion (AIC) score throughout while maintaining logical controls in the analysis.¹⁷³ Where no results are present, those particular IVs were not included in the respective model due to a lack of statistical significance. From this, we see that Model 9 does not include many IVs that were originally thought to be extremely influential in the PRC's foreign affairs.

¹⁷³ The AIC serves as an evaluation metric for the strength of each of the various regression models, where the lower score is a more accurate model.

Table 1. Regression Results

	<i>Dependent variable:</i>								
	Human Rights UN Vote Score (Continuous)								
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
Recognize Taiwan	-0.037***	-0.037***	-0.035***	-0.020**	-0.022***	-0.023***	-0.022***	-0.023***	-0.033***
(Binary)	(0.011)	(0.011)	(0.010)	(0.009)	(0.008)	(0.008)	(0.008)	(0.008)	(0.009)
PRC Trade Balance	-0.022**	-0.022**	-0.020**	-0.014**	-0.013*	-0.013*	-0.012*	-0.013*	-0.021***
(From PRC to LAC)	(0.010)	(0.010)	(0.009)	(0.007)	(0.007)	(0.007)	(0.007)	(0.007)	(0.008)
PRC Exports	0.018	0.019*	0.018*	-0.011**	-0.008**	-0.009**	-0.008**	-0.009**	0.014
(Logged)	(0.011)	(0.010)	(0.010)	(0.004)	(0.004)	(0.004)	(0.004)	(0.004)	(0.010)
Military Arms Sales	0.009	0.010*	0.010*	0.006		0.006	0.008*	0.006	0.008*
(Logged)	(0.006)	(0.005)	(0.005)	(0.005)		(0.005)	(0.005)	(0.005)	(0.005)
Total Trade (USD)	-0.028***	-0.030***	-0.029***						-0.024***
(Logged)	(0.010)	(0.009)	(0.009)						(0.009)
Diplomatic Engagements	-0.002								
(Logged)	(0.007)								
Economic Investment	0.002	0.002	0.002						
(Logged)	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.001)						
Aid, Loans, and Grants	-0.007	-0.007	-0.007						
(Logged)	(0.007)	(0.007)	(0.007)						
PLA Military Events	-0.002	-0.003							
(Logged)	(0.009)	(0.008)							
Confucius Institutes	-0.009	-0.008		-0.005					
(Established per year)	(0.011)	(0.010)		(0.010)					
Confucius Institutes	0.001			0.003					
(Running Total)	(0.004)			(0.003)					
Population	-0.012	-0.010	-0.011*	-0.019**	-0.012**	-0.018***	-0.011*	-0.018***	-0.016**
(Logged)	(0.009)	(0.007)	(0.007)	(0.008)	(0.006)	(0.007)	(0.006)	(0.007)	(0.007)
Gross Domestic Product	0.011	0.009	0.010	0.015*	0.009	0.013*	0.007	0.013*	0.014*
(Logged)	(0.009)	(0.008)	(0.008)	(0.009)	(0.007)	(0.008)	(0.007)	(0.008)	(0.008)
Democracy (Polity)	-0.004***	-0.004***	-0.004***	-0.003***	-0.004***	-0.033***	-0.004***	-0.033***	-0.025**
	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.012)	(0.001)	(0.012)	(0.012)
Democracy (Polity)	-0.0001			-0.0003					
(Squared)	(0.0003)			(0.0002)					
Previous Vote Score	0.515***	0.515***	0.518***	0.571***	0.592***	0.342***	0.583***	0.342***	0.379***
(Human Rights)	(0.049)	(0.049)	(0.049)	(0.044)	(0.043)	(0.106)	(0.043)	(0.106)	(0.106)
Polity & Previous Vote Score						0.030**		0.030**	0.022*
(Interaction)						(0.012)		(0.012)	(0.013)
Constant	0.459***	0.462***	0.459***	0.421***	0.410***	0.631***	0.431***	0.631***	0.564***
	(0.107)	(0.106)	(0.106)	(0.100)	(0.100)	(0.128)	(0.100)	(0.128)	(0.129)
Observations	345	345	345	389	389	389	389	389	389
Log Likelihood	497.398	497.308	496.856	554.271	551.006	555.764	552.615	555.764	559.223
Akaike Inf. Crit.	-960.79	-966.61	-969.71	-1,084.54	-1,086.01	-1,091.52	-1,087.23	-1,091.52	-1,096.44

*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

A comparison of the various selected models' coefficients is presented in Figure 3, with each model displayed as a different color. Where each model contained a specific IV, the coefficient is displayed as a point with the rectangle representing standard errors, and the lines representing 95% confidence intervals. The main conclusions to be drawn from Figure 3 are whether the IVs are positively or negatively associated with changes in the voting score. We see from Figure 3 that the model with the lowest AIC score (Model 9, displayed in red) shows with high confidence that recognition of Taiwan, PRC trade balance, total trade, polity, and population are negatively correlated with LAC UN vote scores. In contrast, PRC exports, arms sales, and GDP are considered unreliable because the 95% confidence interval crosses the 0 line, indicating uncertainty as to the direction of the effect.¹⁷⁴ However, the previous year's vote scores are strongly positively associated with the current year's vote scores.

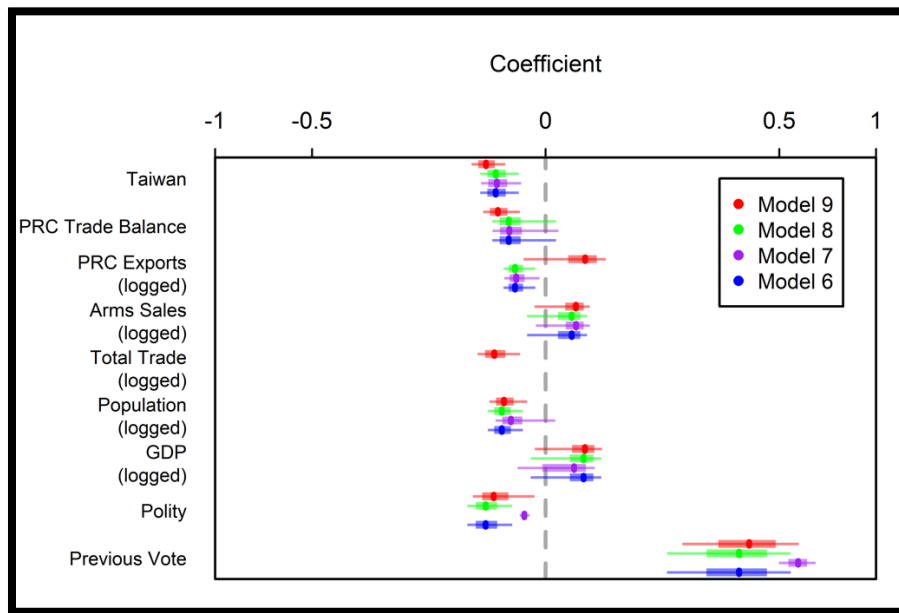


Figure 3. Regression Coefficients Across Top Four Models based on AIC Score

¹⁷⁴ The apparent insignificance of PRC exports in Model 9 may be due to multi-collinearity between PRC exports and total trade. In this study, we chose to proceed with the specification in Model 9 because it generated the lowest AIC score and maintained logical control variables.

After exploring many different regression models, this analysis found that trade related IVs, diplomatic recognition of Taiwan, and military arms sales to be most substantively significant as drivers of change in UN vote score. Diplomatic recognition of Taiwan, PRC trade balance, and total trade are negatively associated with UN vote score, and military arms sales are positively related. Simply put, as total trade between the PRC and LAC countries increases, the vote score decreases. However, as the trade surplus increases from LAC countries to the PRC, so does the vote score. As a country recognizes Taiwan, their respective vote score decreases. Finally, as arms sales increase, so does the LAC country's vote score.

Most of the control variables remained statistically significant throughout the various models. The results indicate that as polity and population increase, the vote score decreases, and as the LAC countries' GDP increases, so does their vote score. One of the most substantively significant variables throughout the study remained the LAC countries' previous year's vote score. Also, we find variations within this depending on the type of government (polity) indicating varying political audience costs for different countries in the region. While exports are included in the final model, it is not sufficiently statistically significant to draw any useful conclusions. As previously mentioned, many original IVs were not found to be statistically significant. This includes diplomatic engagements, economic investment, aid, military visits, and Confucius Institutes.

Table 2 displays a comparative percent change in the dependent variable, when a given independent variable is shifted from its minimum to its maximum value. This provides context with regard to which IVs are most associated with significant changes in the voting score while holding all other IVs at their mean value. For instance, if trade balance shifts from -2.38 to 2.37 million USD (logged), we expect to see an 11% drop in voting score with China. In contrast, when arms sales move from 0 to 4.57 million USD (logged), we see a positive 5% change in voting score. A comparison and assessment of minimum to maximum values allow us to create a consistent score to compare the effectiveness of each IV across the full range of values seen in the available data.

Table 2. Comparative Percent Changes Across Range of Values (2000–2017)

Independent Variable	Min. Value	Max. Value	Changes in Vote Score	Percent Change
Taiwan ***	0	1	-0.0326	- 4%
Trade Balance ***	-2.38	2.37	-0.0997	- 11 %
Exports	1.73	10.48	0.1247	17 %
Arms Sales *	0	4.57	0.0382	5 %
Total Trade ***	2.70	11.40	-0.2101	- 23 %
Population **	13.55	19.15	-0.0903	- 10 %
GDP *	20.38	28.59	0.1152	15 %
Polity **	-7	10	-0.1178	- 13 %
Previous Voting ***	0.50	1	0.2658	41 %
Previous Voting (High Polity) ***	0.50	1	0.2983	49 %
Previous Voting (Mid Polity) ***	0.50	1	0.2057	29 %
Previous Voting (Low Polity) ***	0.50	1	0.112	13 %
Statistical Significance: <i>*$p < 0.1$; **$p < 0.05$; ***$p < 0.01$</i>				

Here, we see that among democratic countries, shifting the previous year’s vote score generates an expected increase of 49% in the current year’s vote score, indicating the strong impact of previous voting behavior, particularly in countries with strong democratic constraints. Less impactful, however still significant, are trade balance and total trade. Previous voting patterns, trade balance, and total trade will now be discussed in more detail.

The following three plots display the three most substantively significant IVs and their specific predicted values of UN voting score at different levels of the given IV. All other variables not displayed were held at their mean for these visualizations. The dark line represents the predicted value of the dependent variable, and the shaded bands represent the 95% confidence interval. Figure 4 displays the relationship between the current year’s vote score and the previous year’s vote score. Here, across all types of government, as previous year’s vote score increased, so did the current year’s vote score. However, differences are seen between the types of governments both in the slopes and the confidence intervals. In more autocratic countries (low polity), we see that the confidence interval is quite large below a previous vote score of 0.9. This indicates the high probability

of more autocratic governments changing their vote with the PRC from year to year. Conversely, in more democratic countries (high polity), the confidence interval is much smaller, and the model can predict with higher confidence a democratic country's projected vote, based on previous voting behavior. Put simply, democracies are much more likely to vote as they have previously, whereas autocratic countries are more unpredictable in voting behavior in line with the PRC. Furthermore, for democratic countries, the change in vote score from minimum to maximum values is much higher (49%) compared to autocratic countries (13%). This indicates that across democracies, variations, although predictable, can vary considerably in range throughout the region. Despite the varying range of democratic voting patterns across the range of data, overall, autocratic countries still vote more with the PRC than democratic countries.

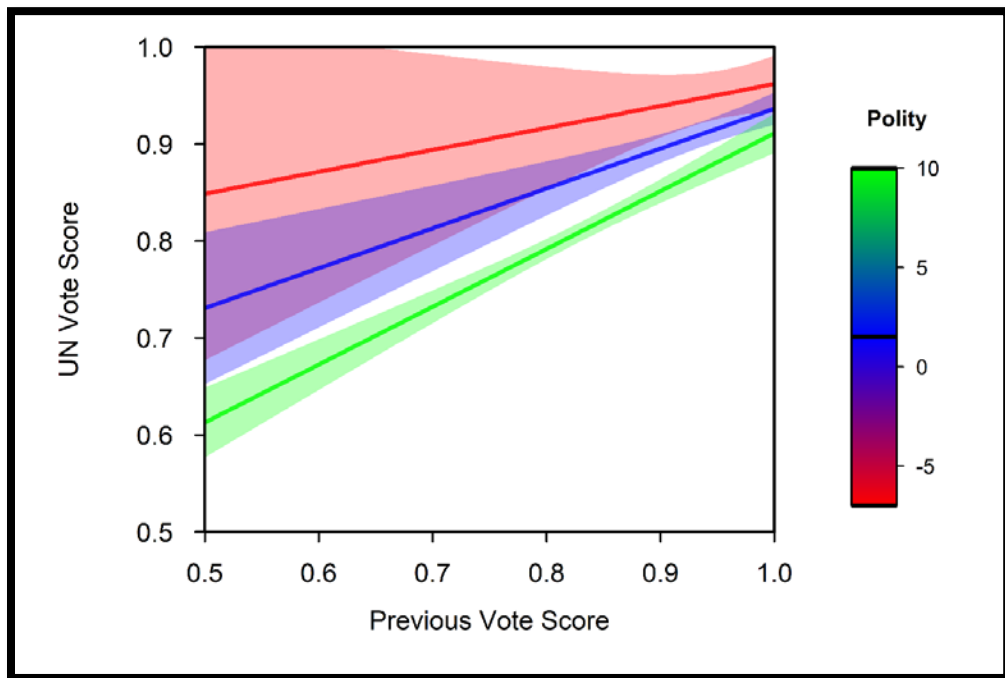


Figure 4. Current Vote Score by Previous Year's Vote Score displayed by Level of Democracy

The conclusions to be drawn from Figure 4 are substantial. The main conclusion this research suggests is a clear difference in voting behaviors between democracies and

autocratic regimes within LAC when dealing with the PRC. This data seems to support Fearon's original conclusions with respect to audience costs where in high-stakes political negotiations and deterrence, democracies are more beholden to public opinion compared to authoritarian governments.¹⁷⁵ While the academic debate continues as to whether this theory operates in practice, the main focus of the research on democratic audience costs is escalating international crisis and comparative leadership decisions to back down or not.¹⁷⁶ The research presented here seems to augment these arguments by adding another perspective when it comes to variations with respect to LAC country voting behavior. Granted, in 2017, only Venezuela and Cuba scored a negative polity rating, thus the sample size is low. However, there remains a significant difference between authoritarian regimes (-10 to -6), anocracies (-5 to 5), and democracies (6 to 10). While the variations we see here may not actually be due to domestic audience costs, the differences are clear: as polity increases, so does the predictability of voting patterns and their expected divergence from China's voting patterns.

In the next two visualizations, we look at the two most significant non-control variables within this study: trade balance and total trade. Figure 5 displays the trade balance relationship between the PRC and LAC countries, classified by the LAC countries' GDP. It is important to note here that the trade balance is considered from the PRC perspective, not the LAC country perspective. That is, that a positive trade balance is a trade surplus for the PRC and a negative trade balance is a trade deficit for the PRC. Across all economy sizes within LAC, as the trade balance increases for the PRC, the LAC vote score decreases. However, it is important to note that the larger economies (green line) within LAC have a higher average vote score than do smaller countries (red line). Here, shifting from minimum to maximum amount of trade balance seen in the data, and holding all other

¹⁷⁵ James D. Fearon, "Domestic Political Audiences and the Escalation of International Disputes," *American Political Science Review* 88, no. 3 (1994): 577–92, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2944796>.

¹⁷⁶ Michael Tomz, "Domestic Audience Costs in International Relations: An Experimental Approach," *International Organization* 61, no. 4 (2007): 821–40, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0020818307070282>; Kenneth A. Schultz, "Looking for Audience Costs," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 45, no. 1 (2001): 32–60, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0022002701045001002>; Jessica L. Weeks, "Autocratic Audience Costs: Regime Type and Signaling Resolve," *International Organization* 62, no. 1 (2008): 35–64, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0020818308080028>.

variables at their mean, there is an 11% drop in average vote score across all years. These results show that when LAC countries hold a trade surplus with the PRC, they are more likely to vote in line with the PRC's preferences.

Shifting slightly, Figure 6 displays total trade between the PRC and LAC countries. Here, the same type of relationship is seen, that as total trade increases, the vote score decreases. This is consistent across all economy sizes where, generally, larger economies (green line) have a higher vote score. With both trade balance and total trade, the highest confidence of prediction is in the middle ranges of data. As trade and trade balance move to the extremes of the data range, the confidence intervals are larger.

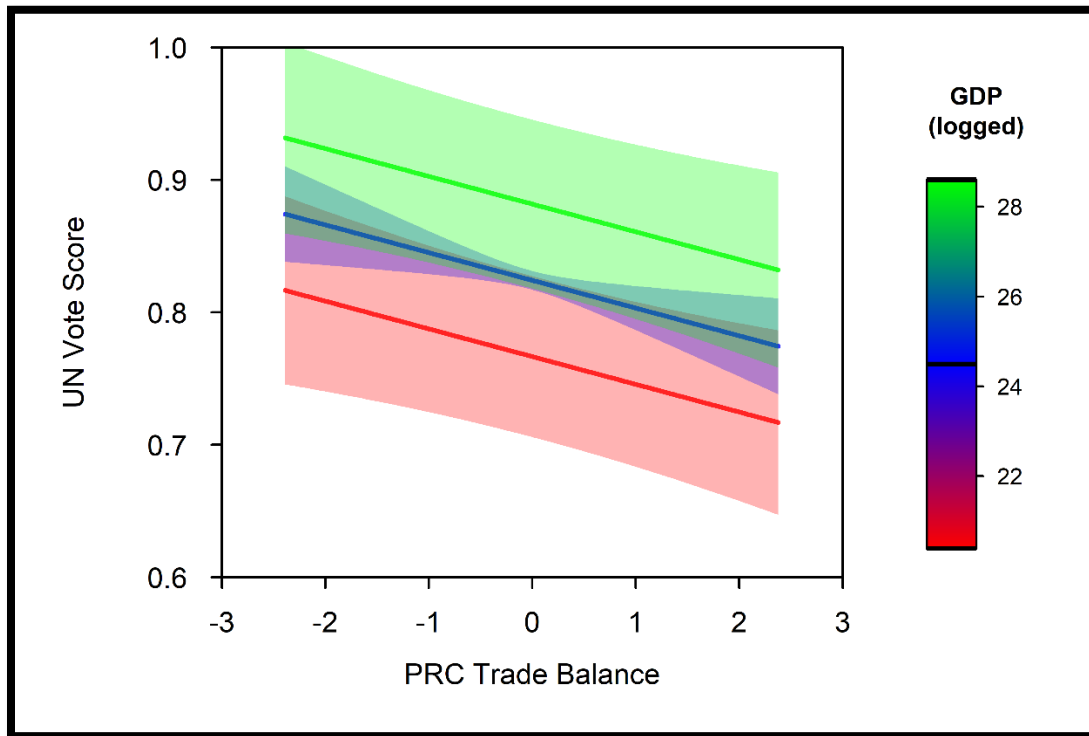


Figure 5. UN Vote Score by Trade Balance displayed by GDP of LAC Economies

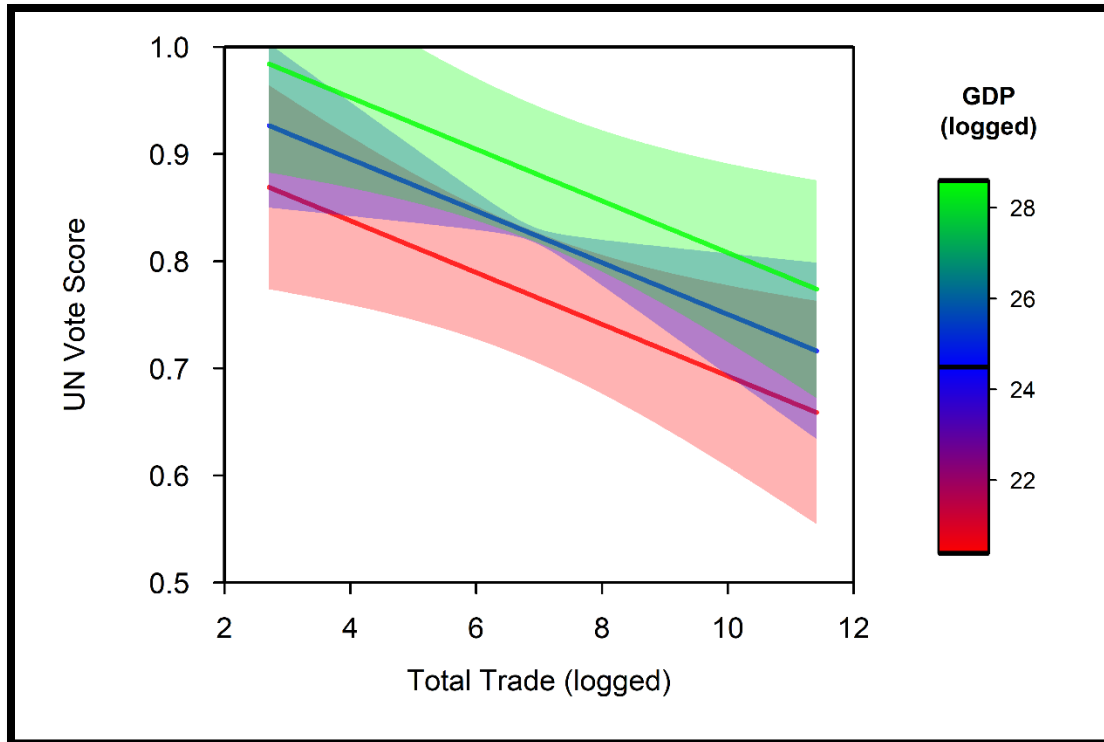


Figure 6. UN Vote Score by Total Trade displayed by GDP of LAC Economies

The results for both the trade balance and total trade are unexpected. The consequences of these results are surprising in the fact that generally, emerging nations tend to seek out a trade deficit in order to gain foreign investment.¹⁷⁷ Here, the indications are the opposite; that when LAC countries hold a trade surplus with the PRC, they are more likely to vote similarly. These results indicate that despite the considerable documented amount of Chinese trade and economic presence,¹⁷⁸ the data shows that this trade is not gaining influence within UN human rights voting. These results seem to be in line with a

¹⁷⁷ Kimberly Amadeo, “The Danger When Imports Exceed Exports,” *The Balance*, accessed July 14, 2019, <https://www.thebalance.com/balance-of-trade-definition-favorable-vs-unfavorable-3306261>.

¹⁷⁸ Jenkins, Peters, and Moreira, “The Impact of China on Latin America and the Caribbean”; Margaret Myers and Kevin Gallagher, “Down But Not Out: Chinese Development Finance in LAC, 2017,” *The Dialogue*, no. China-Latin America Report (March 2018); Margaret Myers, Kevin Gallagher, and Fei Yuan, “Chinese Finance to LAC in 2015” (Washington: Inter-American Dialogue, February 10, 2016), <https://www.thedialogue.org/analysis/chinese-finance-to-lac-in-2015/>; Dollar, “China’s Investment in Latin America”; Dollar, “Chinese Investment in Latin America Continues to Expand.”

different camp of scholars that believe the increased PRC economic presence is not gaining strategic concessions.¹⁷⁹

The results of trade and trade balance are also counter to the only other quantitative study comparing trade to UN voting. The 2013 Flores-Macias study “China’s Commercial Relations with Africa and Latin America” found high levels of trade and trade dependence produce foreign policy convergence in UN human rights voting.¹⁸⁰ One explanation is that the 2013 study also included African countries whereas this research is solely based on the LAC region. Secondly, this research includes many other variables across the DIME spectrum that were not included in the Flores study. Lastly, the date in the Flores study range from 1996–2006 and data for this research covers 2000–2017.

Arms sales are also worth mentioning as one of the PRC activities positively associated with favorable voting patterns. While not as statistically significant as the previous variables, shifting from the minimum to maximum observed values of military arms sales, the model predicts an increase of 5% in voting score. While these arms sales may not have specific political or diplomatic intentions, they are apparently influencing voting behavior. This finding seems to support previous studies by Ellis and Gurrola.¹⁸¹

While the results reported above provide important insights into the PRC’s influence in LAC, it is important to recognize the limitations of the methods used to analyze the data available. First, our models are based on a small number of observations. This limited amount of data observations stems from the data sources available. For example, many Caribbean nations do not receive a polity score. Future research efforts would benefit from more in-depth data sources and/or creative ways to supplement missing data. Additionally, the 5% level to assess statistical significance represents an arbitrary threshold

¹⁷⁹ Néstor Castañeda, “New Dependency?: Economic Links between China and Latin America,” *Issues and Studies* 53, no. 1 (2017): 1–33, <https://doi.org/10.1142/S101325111740001X>.

¹⁸⁰ Gustavo A. Flores-Macias and Sarah E. Kreps, “The Foreign Policy Consequences of Trade: China’s Commercial Relations with Africa and Latin America, 1992–2006,” *The Journal of Politics* 75, no. 2 (2013): 357–71, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0022381613000066>.

¹⁸¹ R. Evan Ellis, “Should the United States Be Worried about Chinese Arms Sales in the Region?,” *Global Americans*, May 11, 2015, <https://theglobalamericans.org/2015/05/should-u-s-be-worried-about-chinese-arms-sales-in-the-region/>; George Gurrola, “China-Latin America Arms Sales: Antagonizing the United States in the Western Hemisphere?,” *Military Review* 98, no. 4 (2018): 123.

based on normal statistical analysis. This implies that one cannot be fully certain of the magnitude of the effects reported above based on the data available and the large number of covariates.

The use of lagged IVs and DVs allows us to partially address the potential for endogenous and spurious associations, however, it remains possible that additional factors that can influence UN voting were omitted from the final model. Such examples include the long-term effects of United States foreign policy in the region, domestic ideology, or third-party trade with countries external to the region. Here, only PRC activities are considered to isolate the potential effects and ramifications considering the claims of a growing threat to national security. Future research could expand on these with additional control variables and longer lag periods.

A. IMPLICATIONS

While there are bound to be exceptions, the findings indicate that the PRC is not gaining considerable concessions when it comes to the voting tendencies of LAC countries. Within the data presented, above all else, the best indicator for future voting is previous voting behavior for all types of governments. This pattern should be reassuring for policy-makers as previous vote score is a very measurable and observable act by both LAC countries and the PRC within the UNGA. Slight changes in voting behavior over time can be measured and with a high degree of confidence (combined with other inputs into the model), and anticipated future voting scores can thereby be predicted. Here it is important to consider that democracies are more likely to vote in line with previous behavior than more authoritarian governments, especially at the lower ranges of voting scores.

One of the most surprising implications of this study was how many IVs were not found to be statistically significant. The IVs not found to have statistical significance were diplomatic visits, aid, economic investment, PLA military events, and Confucius Institutes. This is not to say that these actions by the PRC do not gain leverage in other aspects of its relationship with LAC countries; however, when considering UN human rights voting, the evidence does not support the hypothesized effects for these factors. Until more comprehensive data sources are included in the study, no definitive answer can be drawn

on the effects, or lack thereof, for the statically insignificant variables. In this case, the absence of evidence is not the same as evidence of absence.

This conclusion seems to be in line with Evan Ellis's assessment of PLA military activity in LAC that the PRC "does not seek to achieve formal alliances or permanent military presence in the region but rather to advance commercial and political objectives."¹⁸² If this remains true, the referenced commercial and political objectives are likely outside the purview of gaining influence within the UN. Additionally, despite the PRC's \$90 billion in investment between 2005 and 2016 to LAC,¹⁸³ there does not appear to be much observable return on investment in terms of gaining geopolitical influence. This conclusion seems to be contrary to many experts' opinions on PRC investment and aid practices in the region¹⁸⁴ and more in line with Harold Trinkunas' argument that "China's trade, investment, and loans are not large enough to enable Chinese authorities to directly pressure Latin American counterparts into changing domestic policy."¹⁸⁵ In the end, these results present opportunities for extremely interesting conclusions in the on-going great power competition space. The broader implications of the results, limitations of this study, and the need for further research are addressed in the following chapter.

¹⁸² Ellis, *China-Latin America Military Engagement: Good Will, Good Business, and Strategic Position*.

¹⁸³ Gonzalez, "Latin America – China Trade and Investment Amid Global Tensions: A Need to Upgrade and Diversify," 5.

¹⁸⁴ Myers and Gallagher, "Down But Not Out: Chinese Development Finance in LAC, 2017," 5; Vadell, "China in Latin America: South-South Cooperation with Chinese Characteristics."

¹⁸⁵ Trinkunas, "Renminbi Diplomacy? The Limits of China's Influence on Latin America's Domestic Politics," 3.

VI. CONCLUSION

A. NO SIMPLE ANSWERS

Throughout this research, the answer to whether or not PRC's undertakings are gaining it leverage in LAC revealed itself to be extremely nuanced and not as straight forward as originally hoped. Various levers have different effects on different countries, so applying a regional answer to individual countries can be misleading and often incorrect. It is possible to give a broad answer across the region, but it is important to note that while the LAC region is homogenous in many aspects, individual countries are fiercely independent and respond to PRC activities in different ways, just as American influence is accepted or rejected across the region. A given variable may be extremely effective in influencing one country's UN voting in favor of the PRC, but might have the opposite effect on a country that it borders. Accepting the complexity of the question is key when conceptualizing the final results of the study. Regardless, policy-makers and planners can use this initial research to tailor current United States positions in the region and to more closely monitor certain PRC activities as a strong indicator of shifting voting patterns. At the same time, it may be important to accept that other variables, previously thought to be extremely influential, are not as impactful as once thought.

B. PROBLEM IS BIGGER THAN SOF

Admiral Tidd understood clearly the gravity of the problem and the importance of understanding PRC activity through more than just a military lens.¹⁸⁶ SOF play a major role in complementing regional partnerships, supporting country team efforts in various countries, and maintaining key partnerships at the tactical, operational, and strategic levels. While understanding SOF capabilities is important, it is also vital to understand what the limitations and areas that SOF are unable to affect. This analysis examined several

¹⁸⁶ Tidd, "Posture Statement of United States Southern Command before the 115th Congress SASC."

independent variables with an intent to understand where the PRC is prioritizing its energy in LAC as well as which initiatives are gaining influence within the region. China's objectives in the region are likely economic in nature, as military arms sales, port visits, and exercises make up a tiny fraction of the overall expenditures compared to economic investment, aid, and total bi-lateral trade.

Some PRC projects could be leveraged in the future (ports, airports, railways) for military operations and various telecommunications industries for intelligence support. However, this argument could be made for any country's efforts abroad, and the United States should be careful not to exaggerate the intent of PRC projects beyond their stated purpose. China's pursuit in LAC provides a challenge to the influence of the United States in the region, but viewing every PRC project through a lens of hostile intent and as precursors to military action is shortsighted and counterproductive. Evan Ellis explains that "[It] is important to emphasize that none (of the PRC objectives) implies the inherent rejection by the PRC of coexistence with the United States, nor a disposition to act against it..."¹⁸⁷ Even though growing PRC activity is mostly economic in nature, SOF still has a vital role to play in the region.

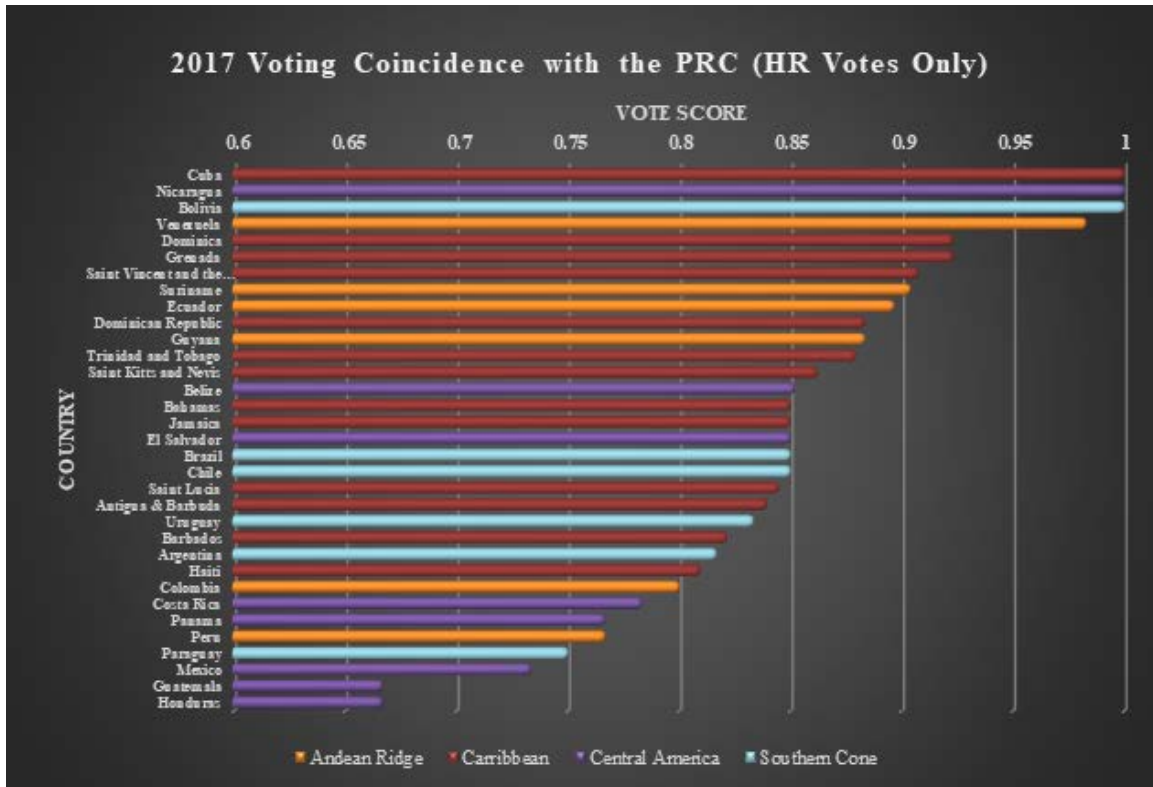
There is no question that the PLA expanded its military activity in LAC, with an intent to gain influence with partner nations and undermine hard-earned United States partnerships. However, it is important to continue spending energy on maintaining our status as the "partner of choice" as opposed to blocking PRC military activity and potentially be seen as inhibiting the freedom of choice for LAC countries. Many of the PRC activities that United States forces could effectively monitor and report on were found to be statistically insignificant as drivers of growing PRC influence. This is not to say that activities such as port visits, military exchanges, aid projects, and economic investment should not be monitored, nor that those activities are not gaining concessions for the PRC.

¹⁸⁷ David Denoon, ed., *China, the United States, and the Future of Latin America*, U.S.-China Relations, volume III (New York: New York University Press, 2017).

However, from the perspective of evidence presented here, it would be a wasted effort to re-mission SOF to specifically monitor and assess PRC activities. While it makes sense for SOF to monitor PRC military activity passively, this should not come at the expense of maintaining invaluable partnerships and access and placement for SOF sensors throughout the region. SOF manpower is best still utilized in other efforts in the region, such as counter-narco terrorism and Foreign Internal Defense. Put simply, our evidence indicates that the best thing SOUTHCOM can do in the region is maintain, and if possible, expand security cooperation with various forces and not be seen as aggressively intervening into PRC activity. If LAC countries are allowed to decide on their own, the partner of choice for most will continue to be the United States.

C. FUTURE RESEARCH

While the goal here was to determine whether the PRC is gaining leverage in the SOUTHCOM region, it is important to note that these findings are limited to UN voting patterns. The PRC's intentions within the region are likely not limited to gaining concessions and a friendlier voting atmosphere within the UN. While this study takes an important step in attempting to quantify aspects of the problem, future research would benefit from the construction of broader measures of the causes and consequences foreign influence. A comparative study examining efforts by both the United States and PRC could also prove very telling and assist in producing a more robust influence model.



Only displayed countries with 2017 voted in the UN HR votes.

Figure 7. 2017 LAC Voting Coincidence with the PRC

Furthermore, qualitative studies that focus on single countries or regions within LAC to complement the quantitative analysis would provide a more holistic picture of both the PRC activity within the area and various reactions to it. Figure 7 is a visualization and ranking of LAC countries' human rights voting coincidence with the PRC in 2017. Graphics like this can assist planners with prioritization efforts and country metrics. Tracking this year to year is a technique to monitor specific countries' aversion or inclination to vote in line with the PRC. This bar graph also illuminates potential qualitative studies as some nations listed towards the top of the chart are considered friendly nations to the U.S, namely Brazil, Trinidad and Tobago, and Jamaica.

At present, it is extremely difficult to measure PRC and United States influence in the region. Policymakers and planners do not have a complete “matrix” to monitor PRC activity and the LAC reactions associated with growing external influences. The model presented here provides an example of how to quantitatively compare the two, but an expansion of this research with additional dependent variables to measure LAC responses would also have the potential to assist in developing a more complete scoring system. Developing a system to score the population’s response on various social media platforms, various media coverage, backlash (or praise) to PRC projects, and influential personalities opinions would provide a more holistic answer to whether or not PRC initiatives are gaining traction or falling on deaf ears.

D. STOP THE EXAGGERATION

These initial results are surprising given the alarming literature thus far regarding PRC and LAC. The overwhelming majority of academic research to date cites growing PRC activity and investment in LAC as leading to inevitable influence. The initial conclusion of this thesis is contrary to these findings and concludes that the factors underlying the PRC’s growing influence in the UN are limited to PRC trade balance, total trade, and to a lesser extent, military arms sales.

Another key factor that supports the above findings is the uniqueness of the relationship between the United States and LAC. Unlike most regions of the world, the United States has long been the sole hegemon in the region, and it will be much harder for an outside power to supersede that relationship. David Denoon explains that “China has made major commitments of trade, aid, and direct investments, but these initiatives have produced limited results.”¹⁸⁸ Furthermore, given the political changes and economic hardships in countries such as Venezuela, Brazil, and Bolivia, “Chinese investment may be seen as a disappointment.”¹⁸⁹ Kenneth Lieberthal and Wang Jisi address the danger of strategic distrust between the PRC and the United States, and how it has become a “central

¹⁸⁸ Denoon.

¹⁸⁹ Denoon.

concern in US-China relations.”¹⁹⁰ Caution should be heeded as the more extreme views of nefarious Chinese global activities do not seem to have manifested themselves within Latin America and the Caribbean. This research suggests that “eroding the bases for deep distrust over long-term intentions and facilitating greater mutual understanding and cooperation” is a more pragmatic approach than one of hostility and fear.¹⁹¹ In the end, the best possible course of action for American policy-makers with respect to the PRC in LAC is to maintain and expand current relationships to continue to protect the homeland from localized and third-party threats. It would be a failure of effective decision making and thoughtful foreign policy to assess the PRC as the gravest threat to United States security and stability in the Western Hemisphere without considering the quantitative evidence presented here.

¹⁹⁰ Kenneth Lieberthal and Wang Jisi, “Addressing U.S.-China Strategic Distrust,” n.d., 65.

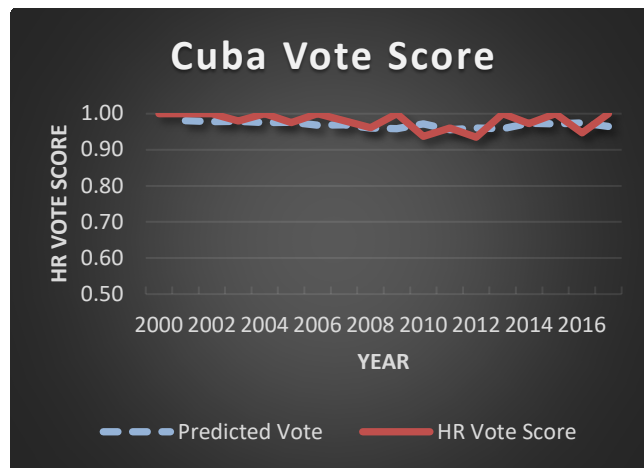
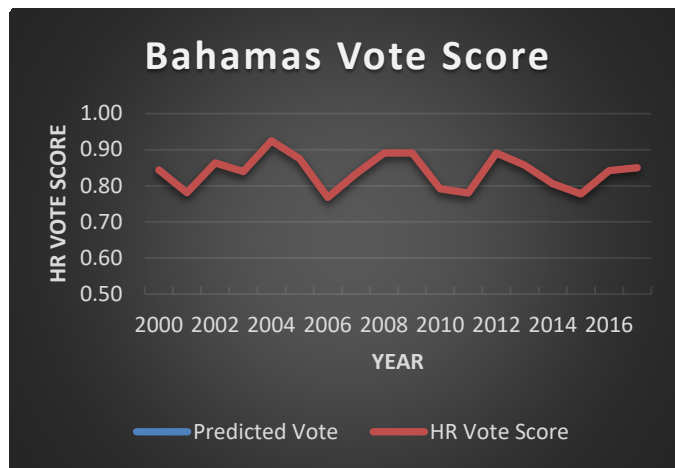
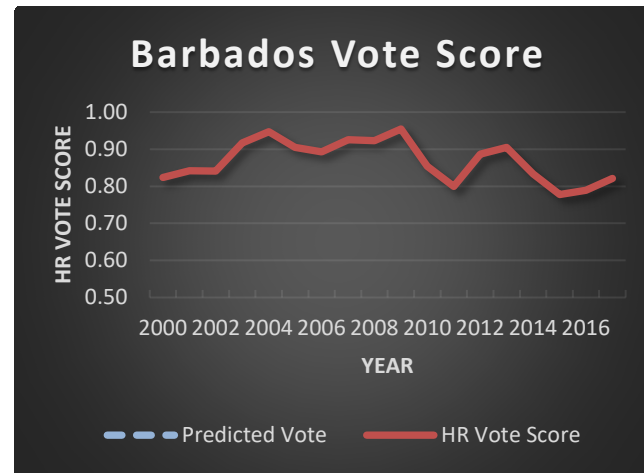
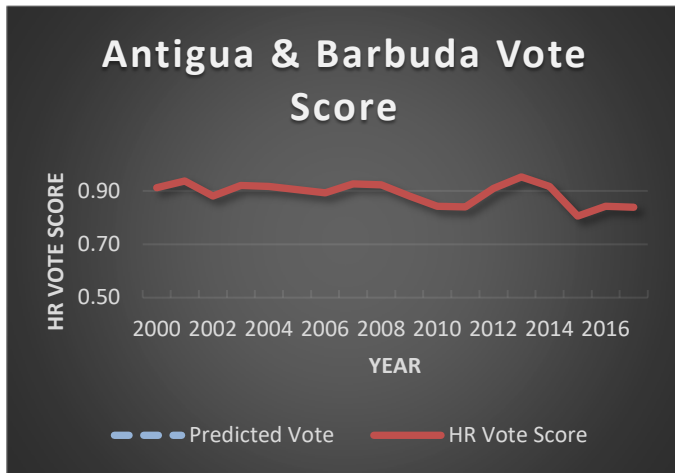
¹⁹¹ Lieberthal and Jisi.

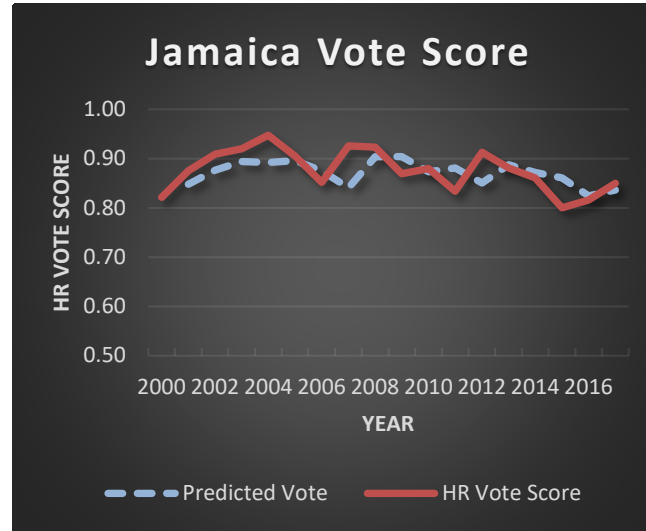
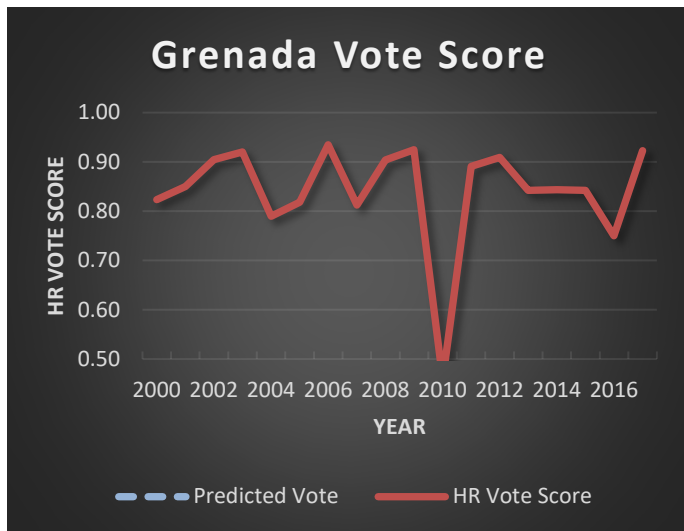
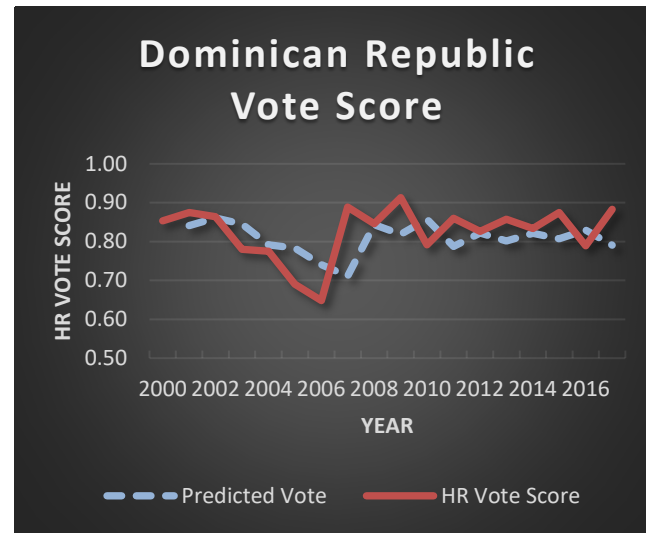
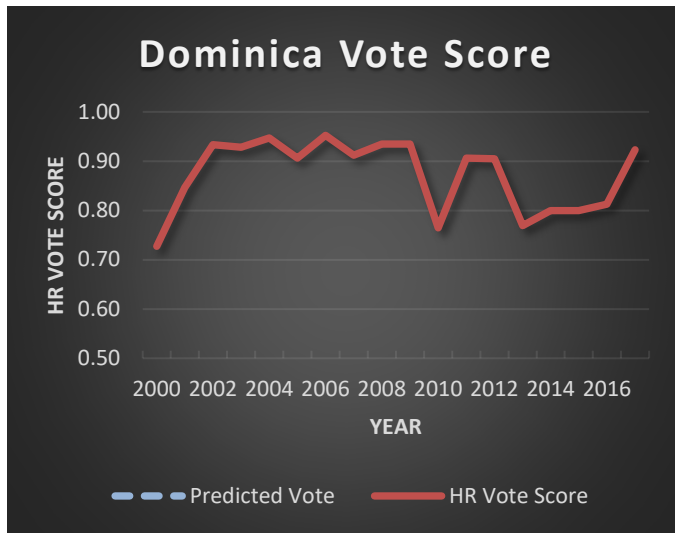
APPENDIX A. COUNTRY LIST OF LAC COUNTRIES

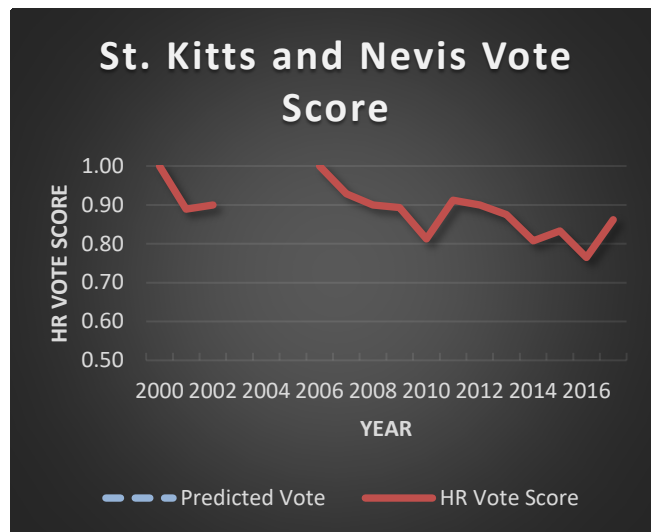
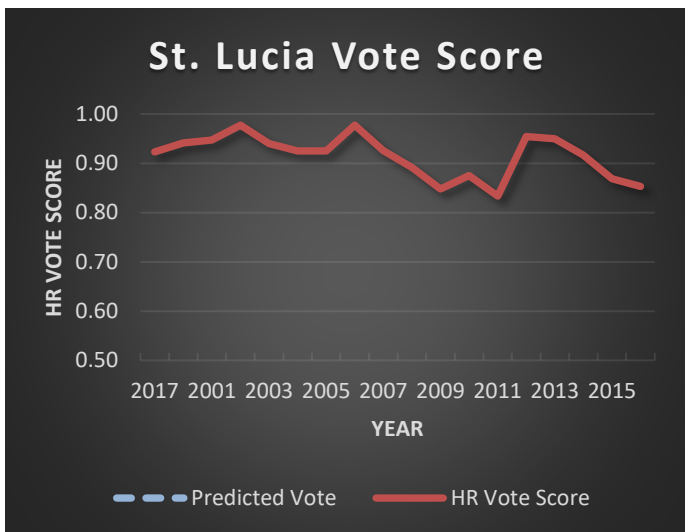
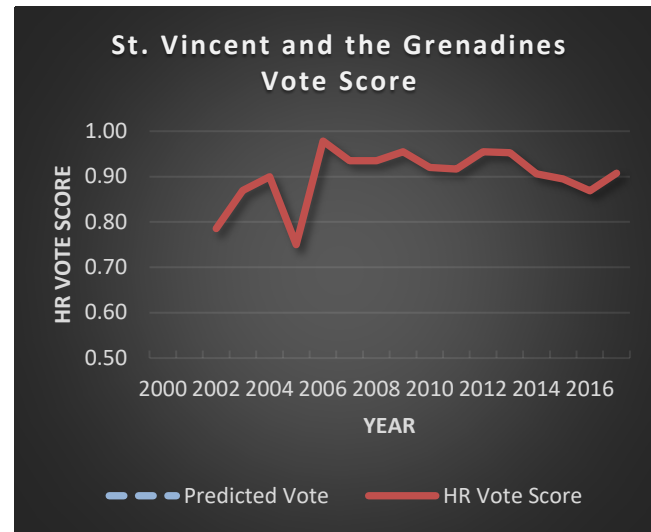
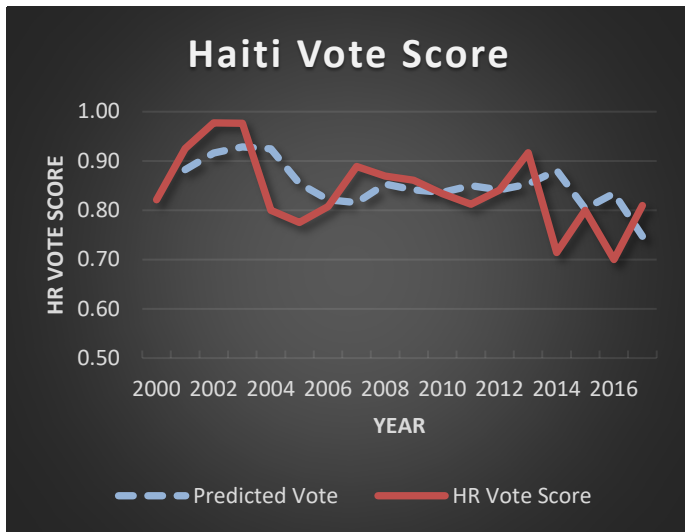
1. Antigua and Barbuda
2. Bahamas
3. Barbados
4. Cuba
5. Dominica
6. Dominican Republic
7. Grenada
8. Guatemala
9. Haiti
10. Jamaica
11. Saint Kitts and Nevis
12. Saint Lucia
13. Saint Vincent and the Grenadines
14. Trinidad and Tobago
15. Belize
16. Costa Rica
17. El Salvador
18. Honduras
19. Mexico
20. Nicaragua
21. Panama
22. Argentina
23. Bolivia (Plurinational State of)
24. Brazil
25. Chile
26. Colombia
27. Ecuador
28. Guyana
29. Paraguay
30. Peru
31. Suriname
32. Uruguay
33. Venezuela, Bolivarian Republic

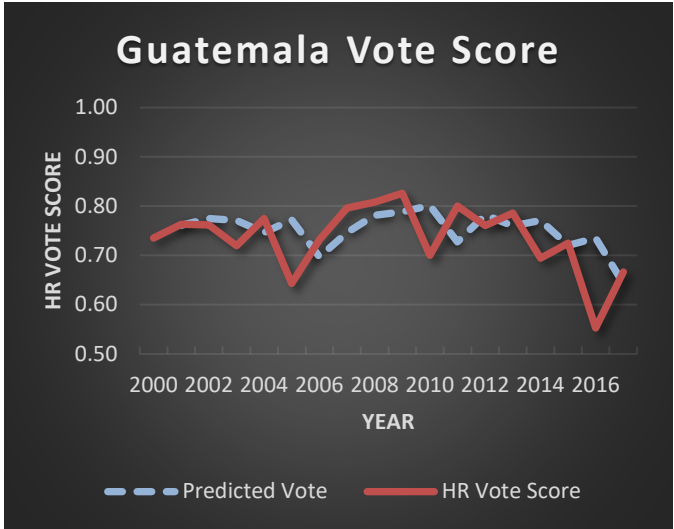
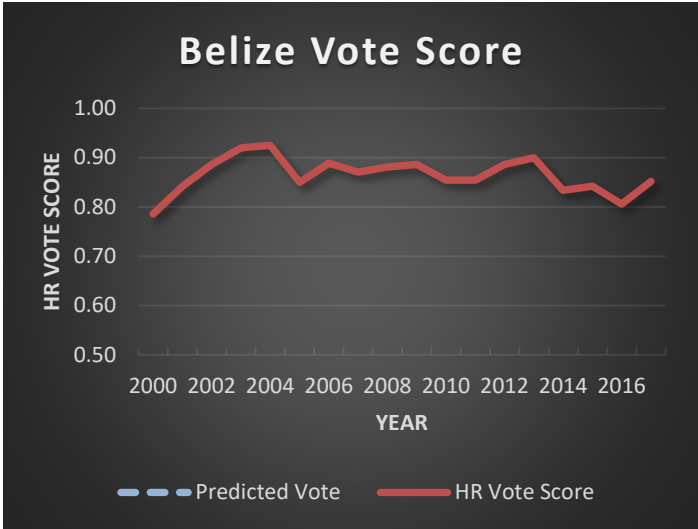
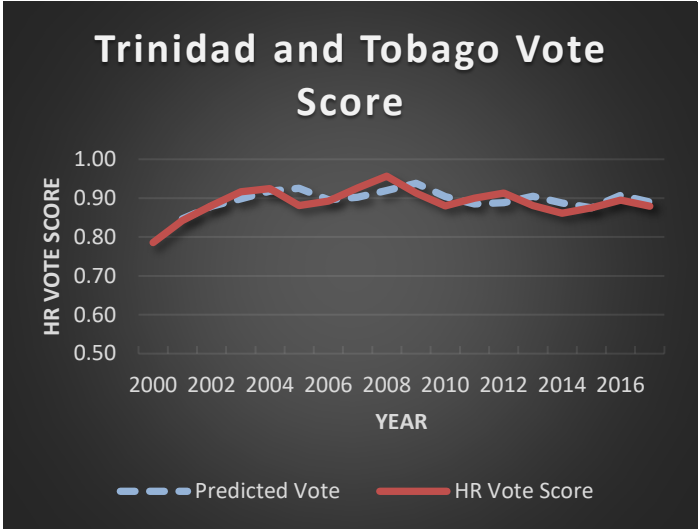
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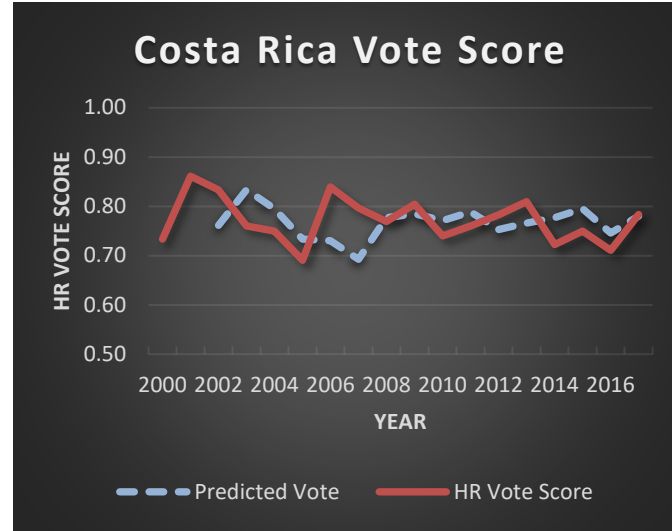
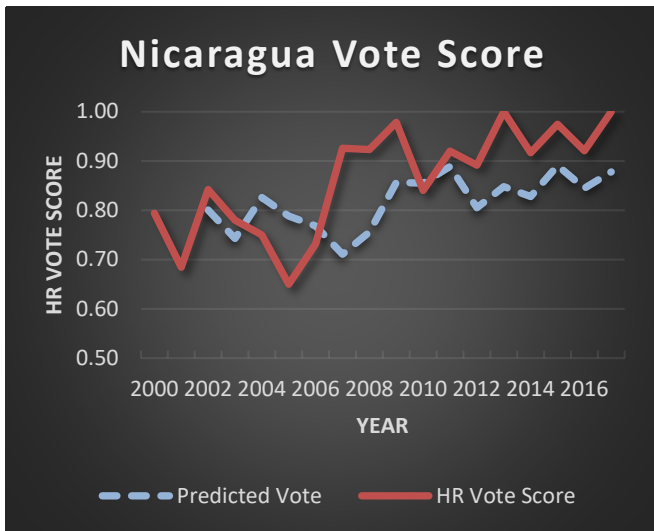
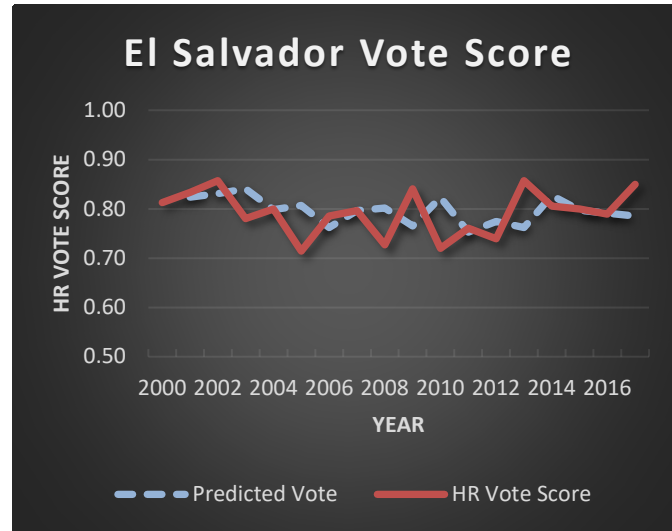
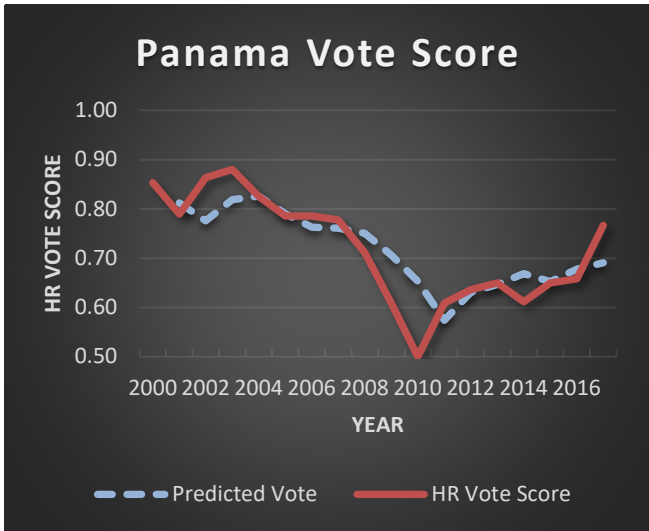
APPENDIX B. HR VOTING BY COUNTRY VS. PREDICTED VALUE

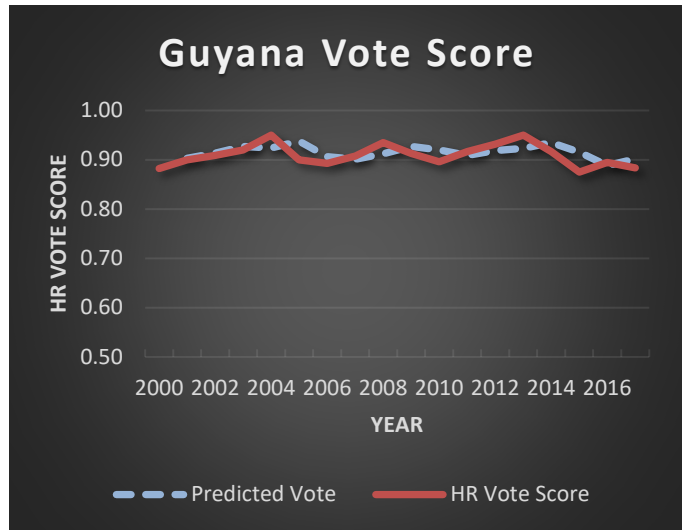
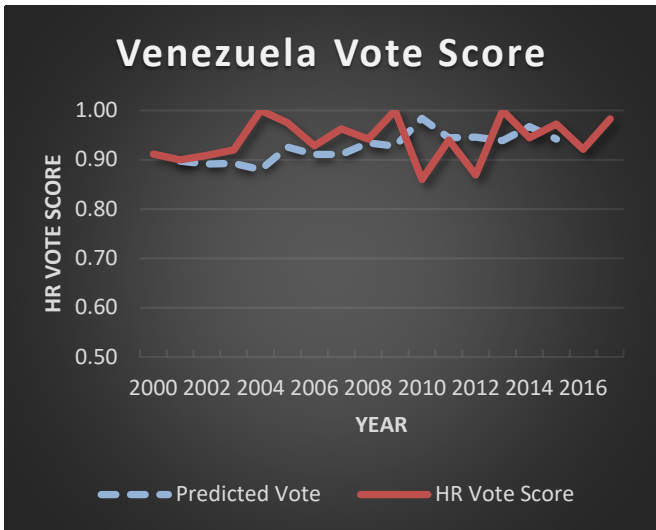
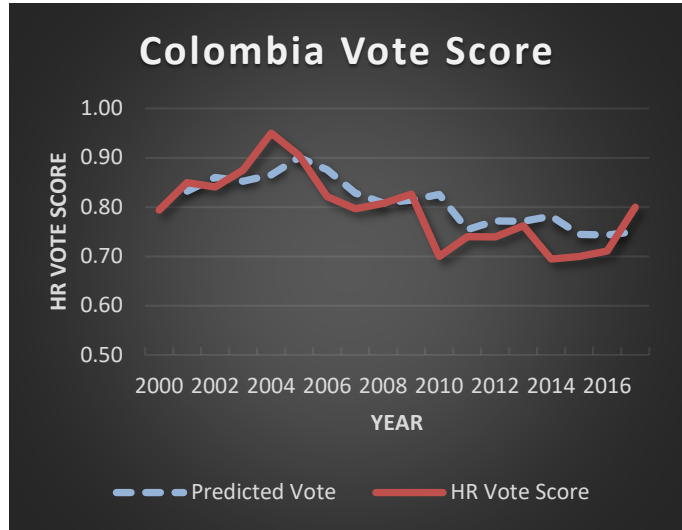
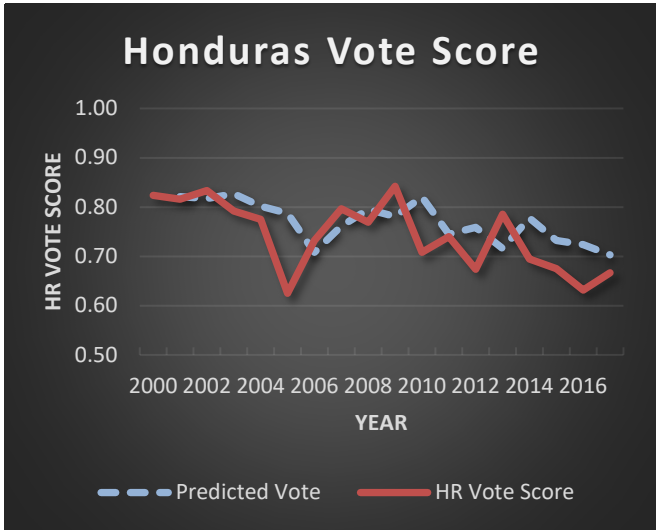


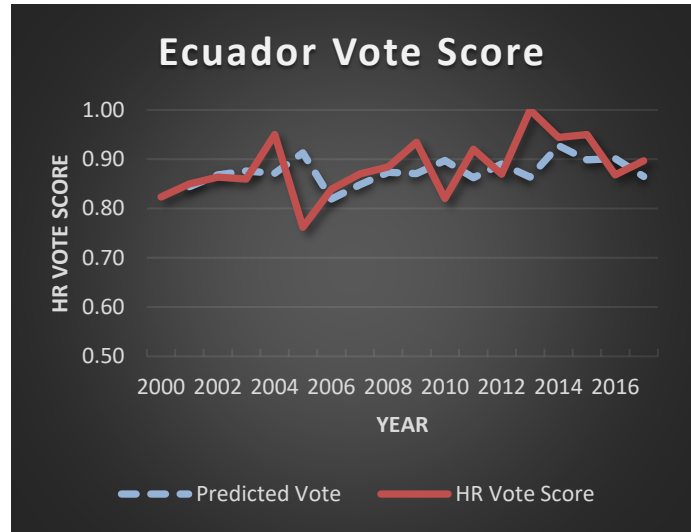
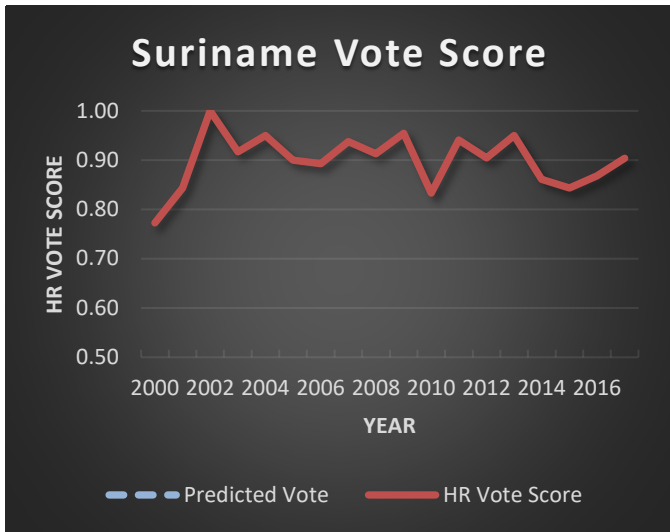


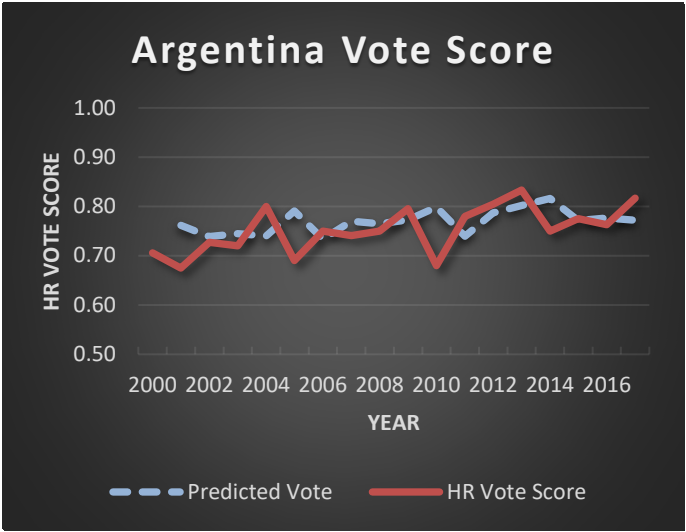
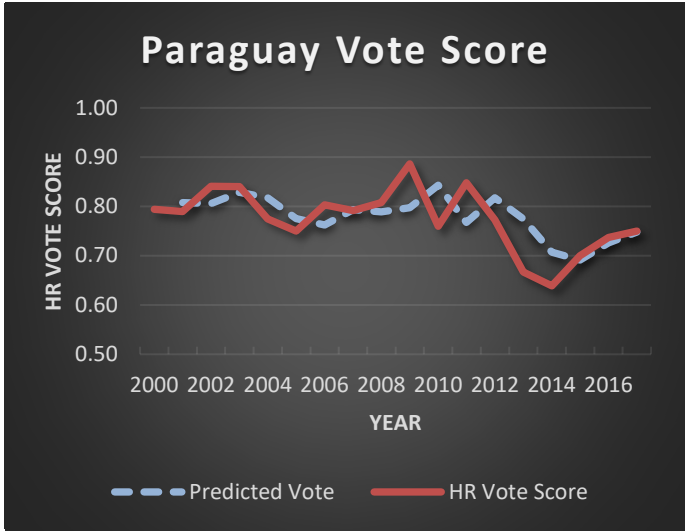
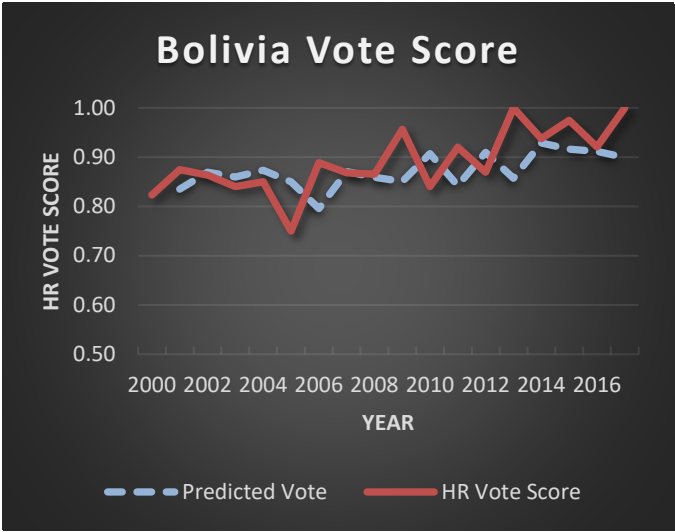


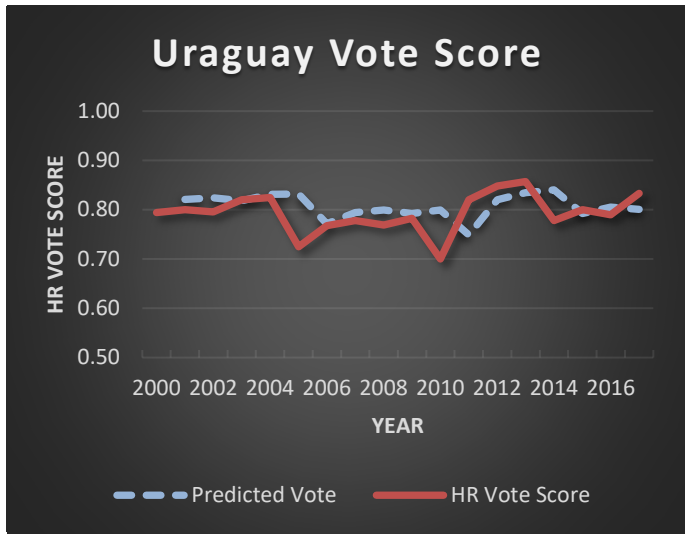












¹⁹² Countries without a blue line do not have a polity score, thus are not included in the final model.

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