

**MACAO (CHINA),
EUROPA SUDORIENTAL,
AMÉRICA LATINA:
UNA MIRADA HACIA LA VIABILIDAD
DE LA COOPERACIÓN TRIANGULAR**

SLOBODAN S. PAJOVIĆ, MAJA ANDRIJEVIĆ Y SONIA CHAN PRADO
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FROM HISTORICAL LINKAGES TO TRANSFORMATIVE CONVERGENCES: INDIA-BRAZIL CULTURAL AND EDUCATIONAL RELATIONS IN THE 21ST CENTURY

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Abstract: India-Latin America relations has been the victim of a conscious neglect and apathy for the last sixty years, despite the long and fruitful engagements that India had with this region in the historical past. The contemporary separation could be attributed to any reasons—from historical, to geographical as well as political and strategic. Of late, there is an emergent bonhomie between the two sides. The paper deals with the potentials for improving this relations in the near future which are multi-dimensional and multi-faceted. One of the least explored sectors for India's relations with the region has been the engagements in the educational sector. Additionally, India's has not made sufficient efforts to showcase its cultural prowess through the idea of its 'soft power'. The paper also intends to examine the India-Latin America relations from the lenses of India-Brazil relations. It also suggests that being countries of the 'South', they have the capacity and opportunity to draw-in other countries from the 'South' like Serbia, which could act as a bridge between the two sides.

Keywords: India, Latin America, Brazil, Education, Culture

Resumen: Durante los últimos sesenta años, las relaciones entre India y América Latina han sido víctima de una negligencia consciente o la apatía, a pesar de que en el pasado India tenía con esta región unas relaciones largas y fructíferas. El distanciamiento contemporáneo podría atribuirse a cualquier motivo, tanto histórico como geográfico, así como político y estratégico. Sin embargo, en los últimos años hay una afabilidad emergente entre las dos partes. La ponencia trata las posibilidades de mejorar estas relaciones en un futuro próximo, siendo ellas de carácter multidimensional y multifacético. Uno de los sectores menos investigados dentro de las relaciones de India con la región latinoamericana ha sido el sector educativo. Además, la autora insiste en que India no ha hecho suficientes esfuerzos para mostrar su destreza cultural proyectada a través de su posición internacional en calidad de "poder blando". En el documento se propone también examinar las relaciones entre India y Brasil a partir de los marcos generales de las relaciones entre India y América Latina. Asimismo, se sugiere que al ser los países del Sur que tienen la capacidad y la oportunidad de actuar en otros países del Sur como es la Serbia, que incluso podría ser un puente entre las dos partes.

Palabras clave: India, América Latina, Brasil, Educación, Cultura

The twentieth century global history has witnessed the birth and the demise of the Cold War, the inequitable distribution of economic resources that simultaneously created another axis of global identity—the countries of the North and the South. India-Latin America shared a ‘friendly and cordial’ relationship for the past five decades. It was the rhetorical force of this ‘South-South cooperation’ that made possible this relationship to go forth. However, the identification of these two regions with the ‘South’ did not transcend the enormous communication barriers which have historically existed between them. Even today, at the level of popular perception, Latin America symbolises little more than football, the carnival and samba. One does not know whether India continues to be the land of the Rajas, elephants and snake charmers in the Latin American eyes.

In this era of globalisation, most of the countries of the world in a way are all travelling along the same path and share the same destination. Even their vocabulary in dealing with domestic and international changes like adjustment programmes, the opening of trade barriers and accepting a standard menu of financial sector reforms is common throughout. Thus, any perceptive study of India-Latin America relations in the changing international context requires an approach that looks beyond the usual scholarly analysis of the ‘official visits and volume of trade’, howsoever in vogue among the students of international relations. Countries like India and those of Latin America are attempting to integrate itself with the global economy in a manner that is anchored in both traditional and non-traditional means at their disposal. The diplomatic and economic relations and initiatives are both newer and time-tested and are being configured and re-configured with different regions of the world. In the present scenario, India is seeking new partners, re-orienting its policies towards the so long ‘unexplored’ regions which makes it imperative for it to have a fresh look at its Latin America policy as well.¹

Broadly speaking, for long Latin America had been treated with benign indifference and well-intentioned neglect by most of the Indian governments in the past. Of course, there have been certain developments from the Indian side; yet, the significant linkages between India and Latin America were minimal in scope, to say the least. Against this back-

¹ Aparajita Gangopadhyay. 2009. “Indo-Latin American Relations: Changing Landscapes, Emerging Agendas”, in Anjali Ghosh, Tridib Chakraborti, Anindyo Jyoti Majumdar and Shibashis Chatterjee (eds.), *India’s Foreign Policy*. New Delhi: Pearsons, p.398.

drop, this paper attempts to identify the current efforts being made to re-vitalise the relationship with the region with new, mature and achievable goals especially in the fields of culture and education. While briefly presenting the historical contours of India-Latin America relations, the paper will identify and discuss certain select potential areas of cooperation and convergence.

India-Latin America Relations: From Rhetoric to Reality

The Portuguese sailor of the fifteenth century, Pedro Alvares Cabral can be attributed with the 'discovery' of Brazil in their search of a sea route to India in the of the land route via Constantinople. But it was only in 1498, that Columbus reached the mainland or 'tierra firma' in the 'new lands'. It was the Portuguese sea explorers and seafarers who in a sense first brought India and Latin America together. The interaction resulting from the trade ensued an exchange of many goods and ideas in the following centuries to come. In fact, some of the commonly used fruits and vegetables grown in either region owe their origins to the other. While rice, pepper, cinnamon, mangoes and sugarcane were carried from India, pineapples, cashews, etc. came to India from Brazil. Sugarcane too had travelled from India to Brazil through the Arabs, Portugal and Europe.

Historically there are many references to this relationship. For instance, in 1590 the ship of S. Antonio with the Mateo de Albuquerque, the new viceroy for Goa on board was driven to Brazil and reached Goa only the next year (1591).² Another instance, was when the Spice trade with India was no longer lucrative for the Portuguese as it had been in the previous centuries, the Portuguese crown toyed with the idea of building up a new spice empire in Brazil.³ Agricultural experimentation was initiated in the Centre of Quinta do Tanque in Bahia by the Jesuit Priests. Cinnamon from India was transplanted and cultured with considerable success. Father Antonio Vieira suggested to the King of Portugal on the commercial cultivation in the 1680s. The Portuguese king ordered to the Quinta-grafts and

² K. S. Mathew. 1997. *Indo-Portuguese Trade and the Fuggers of Germany*. New Delhi: Manohar, p.181.

³ R. Narayanan (1992). "Historical Links between India and the Americas", in *Indo-Asiatic Encounters with Ibero-America*. New Delhi: The Ibero-American Community, p.8.

seeds, and experienced native cultivators were taken from India to Brazil for providing skilled care. This is the first case of technical assistance from India to Brazil in 1690. Two canarins or agriculturists from Malabar went to work in Bahia (the first Indian natives in recorded history) and subsequently pepper and cinnamon crops flourished there. It had been successfully transplanted in Maharnhao and in Para too.⁴ Also, the sources talk of a Luis de Gois from Brazil who travelled to India and joined the Society of Jesus in 1559 in Goa and introduced tobacco culture in India. Tobacco was used as preventive medicine against plague in Portuguese territories in India. Rubber was a contraband good from Brazil. In 1870, the British smuggled hevea seeds, and a H. Wickham carried these rubber seeds from Brazil as “botanical specimens”.⁵ These were the very first interactions between India and the Latin American countries.

Other instances of interaction included the Portuguese crown disallowing Escala or a stopover. Royal letters of 18 March 1665, 17 June 1667, 29 March 1670, 18 December 1670 mention the disallowance of Escala at Bahia for Indiamen or the prohibition to sell the goods on board of ships destined to Goa, which were forced by circumstances to call on Brazil.⁶ There are numerous instances of the preferences of the Portuguese sailors mentioning the Carreira do Brasil over Carreira da India. Many goods were taken from India to be sold like Tiadas, Canequins, Zuartes, Panos de Joris, Panos de Begaris etc.⁷

The records dealing with society and culture of the times were also kept well preserved. The *Avisi Particolari delle Indie de Portugallo* (Rome in 1552) and in 1555, the *Copia de Unas Cartas de algunos Padres y Hermanos de la Compania de Jesus que Escribieron de la India, Japon y Brasil, a los Padres y Hermanos de la Misma Compania en Portugal Transladadas de Portugues en Castellano* Coimbra all of which find mention of India and Brazil.⁸ Another example is the writings of Father Francisco de

⁴ Ibid., p.9.

⁵ Ibid., p.10.

⁶ P. Sequeira Anthony. 2000. “Liberty Goods and Private Trade: Some Reflections on the Liberty and Subtlety in the 18th Century Indo-Portuguese Trade”, in Charles J. Borges, Oscar G. Pereira and Hannes Stubbe (eds.), *Goa and Portugal: History and Development*. New Delhi: Concept, p.23.

⁷ Ibid., p.24.

⁸ John Correia-Alfonso. 2000. “Indo-American Contacts Through the Jesuit Missions”, in Charles J. Borges, Oscar G. Pereira and Hannes Stubbe (eds.), *Goa and Portugal: History and Development*. New Delhi: Concept, p.71.

Sousa, a historian born in Bahia who arrived in India in the middle of the 17th century and wrote a book on the Jesuit movement in India with great references to medieval Indian history in general. Also, the Society of Jesus (of Brazil) travelled to India on number of specific ecumenical (worldwide Christian church) and other assignments whose eye witness accounts are very useful.

The Indian influence on Portuguese art was visible which in turn “came to echo in Brazil some years later in Baroque”, says noted art historian Maria Helena Andres.⁹ “All the lavishness of the Baroque art in Minas Gerais seem to...transmit exuberance, sensuality, motion, life in the space thoroughly filled with figures and symbols...attires of gods of the Hindu pantheon”.¹⁰ She further states that “Even pronounced is the Indian influence in the ‘prophets of Congonhas de Campo’ where the choreography of the figures, almond eyes, position and movement of their bodies conveying formal similarities, to Indian temples and Hindu gods”.¹¹

In the social sector, many of the historical books of colonial Latin America make reference to an unique and successful experiment known as *Reduções*. It was introduced by the Jesuits in South Brazil and Para (communal settlements organized by early Jesuit missionaries during the late 17th and 18th centuries—education, language, skills, culture, medicines). In fact, the French philosopher Montesquieu speaks of it in laudatory terms and compares it with Plato’s Republic. However, in 1767, the Jesuits were expelled and *Reduções* disappears.¹² Similar experiments were conducted in India—a half century before in South America. The Jesuits did similar experiment in Thana and in Bassien where a communal settlement was set up. Father Goncalo Rodrigues wrote in 1557, “Its called *Trinidade*, its a league from Thana and we have already settled 30 souls”.¹³ It flourished till 1739 until the Maratha invasions.

Thus, the highlighting and citing of above mentioned examples from various sectors of Indian-Brazilian life in the historical context is to emphasise on the vibrant social, cultural, economic and trade relations between India and the countries of the region, especially Brazil. The relations between the two remained unabated till the establishment of

⁹ Narayanan, n.2, p.10.

¹⁰ Ibid., pp.10-11.

¹¹ Ibid., p.11.

¹² Ibid., pp.12-13.

¹³ Ibid.

independent countries in the region and with the independence of India. Numerous reasons could be attributed to the slowing down and ultimately declining and disappearing of this bond between India and the Latin American countries.¹⁴ To name a few, the historical circumstances of the Cold War, the preoccupation of the countries with their region, the physical distance translating into 'distances of the mind'. Although many of the Indian prime ministers visited a number of countries in the region like Mexico, Chile, Brazil and others in the past like Jawaharlal Nehru and Indira Gandhi, none of them decoded these visits into closer cultural and educational linkages between the two countries. The general focus of their visits remained on the politics and economics. For instance, the visit of Indira Gandhi in 1968 resulted in some significant agreements like:

1. Negotiation of the cultural agreements with a number of Latin American countries;
2. Setting up of Indian studies chair in selected universities in the region;
3. Organizations of exhibitions of Indian Art;
4. Proposal to establish a Centre for Latin American studies in India so that people are encouraged to take interest in the language, literature and problems of South American countries.¹⁵

The collapse of the Soviet Union and the disintegration of Eastern Europe compelled states to rethink their foreign policies in the changed global matrix. Simultaneously, the process of Globalisation brought forth its own imperatives bearing heavily on the domestic and foreign economic policies of many countries of the developing world. By virtue of its globalising impulses (arising out of structural adjustment programmes and attendant neo-liberal economic reforms) India could not ill-afford to neglect countries of the region any longer. The end of Cold War had, indeed, unleashed unprecedented forces and offered new opportunities to explore, establish and sustain varied relations with the region, that had hitherto been somewhat constricted by the ongoing superpower rivalry.¹⁶

Given the comparable levels of development and complementarities between India and the countries of Latin America especially Brazil, the

¹⁴ Gangopadhyay, n.1, pp.400-401.

¹⁵ See R. Narayanan, "Indo-South American Economic Relations, Patterns and Promise", *Indian and Foreign Review*, vol. 18, no.22, 1-14 September 1981.

¹⁶ Gangopadhyay, n.1, p.403.

deepening of economic interactions is a sine qua non for the making of robust geo-political relations between them. Any concerted bid to promote relations calls for the strengthening of institutional mechanisms of cooperation. Indeed, in a larger context, the India-Brazil relations seem to be poised a vigorous expansion amidst the disappointingly slow growth of India-Latin America relations in general. One explication of the Brazilian case is an instance of the promises and pitfalls of the emergent India-Latin America relations in the present day international context.

India-Brazil Relations: Towards a Prospective India-Latin America Partnership

The current global order inheres promising new scenarios leading to the creation of feasible and concrete bilateral ties between the two developing nations, India and Brazil. In a way, India and Brazil seem to be transgressing the 'rhetorical' sway of the past relations.¹⁷ The newly found confidence and maturity of this partnership are visible on multiple fronts. This is far cry from the low key, though 'friendly and cordial' relations that had dominated the scene for decades. In a manner of speaking, the bilateralism of the yore was not grounded in any substantial institutional co-operation save the shared rhetoric of 'South-South cooperation'. By contrast, one witnesses today certain concrete initiatives on part of both these countries so as to impart substance to their bilateral relations. The lessons of history seem to have made them wiser as they are focusing on common interests rather than amplifying their differences.

India-Brazil relations are undergoing promising metamorphosis. True, the two have unique set of regional issues to deal with. Understandably, very often they are mired in the trials and tribulations of their respective regional geopolitics. Nonetheless, the newly found camaraderie between the two augurs well for the prospects of a healthy and meaningful bilateral relationship. Their unified thinking, common goals and collaborative political action at the global fora portend the contours of such a relationship. In the ultimate analysis, the future of Indo-Brazil relations is predicated on their ability to project a unified front in the midst of challenges emanating from Globalisation and the attendant dangers of a unipolar world.

¹⁷ Ibid., p.407.

Cultural Relations

India and Brazil have a great deal of interest in each other cultures and cultural expressions. Be it the various Indian dances, Indian music both classical and popular or the interest in Indian cinema and the Indian way of life is well-documented. For instance, the popularity of the Telenovela located in India and dealing with Indian issues in the very successful and popular TV O Globo's "Caminho das Indias" drew a great deal of attention and excitement about India. Indian clothing and accessories were in demand during the running of this telenovela. Also there is immense interest in culture, religions, performing arts and philosophy. India has managed to export Yoga to various parts of the world including to Brazil where it is not only well-accepted but widely practised. It is amply visible that in Brazil there are the chapters of most of the spiritual missions and organisations from India carrying forward the guru traditions, be it the Ramakrishna Mission, ISKCON, Satya Sai baba, Bhakti Vedanta etc. The mesmerising influence of Mahatma Gandhi in Brazil can be amply felt. His philosophies are widely circulated among the government officials, NGOs, and Brazilian society to understand the meaning of non-violence among youth, students and police.¹⁸ The belief is that his ideas of peace and tolerance could be accepted and imbibed by all sections of society. Gandhi's statutes are placed in the major squares in Rio de Janeiro, Sao Paulo and Londrina. The famous Rio Carnival too has a float called the "Children of Gandhi". Although, the number of Indians living in Brazil is considerably smaller in comparison to the Indian Diaspora elsewhere, however in the recent years there has been the establishment of Brazil-India Club and many of the Brazilian actors and models are working in Indian movies and are seen in many advertisements regularly aired on Indian television.

In the recent past, India and Brazil had signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) on Cultural Cooperation in October 2007 under the aegis of the IBSA. This aims and objectives of the MOU includes among others research and development in arts and culture, education and training in arts and culture, cultural promotion through festivals; cultural heritage promotion through exchange of exhibitions, experts, trade fairs and book fairs; cultural dialogue through conferences and workshops; promotion of cultural diversity focusing on the exchange of best practices of measures to protect and promote the diversity of cultural expressions. For instance, in prepa-

¹⁸ <http://indianembassy.org.br/bilateral/> Accessed on 18 March 2019.

ration of the 6th IBSA Summit to be held in New Delhi, India, the Culture Working Group met in New Delhi, on 29 April 2013. The Cultural Exchange and Technical Cooperation agreement signed between India and Brazil on 30 March 2012, highlighted to organise meetings of cultural joint commission, promote technical and cultural cooperation on visual arts, exchange artistic groups and cooperate in cultural heritage and museums.¹⁹ The BRICS Summit at Goa in 2016 was preceded by two very important engagements, the BRICS Educational Agreement and the BRICS Academic Forum that reiterated the “BRICS Education 2030 Framework for Action” in September 2016.

No doubt significant efforts are being made to popularise and expose the people of both the countries to the richness and variedness of each other’s cultural and civilizational diversity; however, a familiarity of any kind is yet to become a reality in either India or in Brazil. The arena of culture and its associated undertakings still remains the arena for a select few to display their skills and techniques. For instance, Brazil and the Brazilian countryside are quite mystical and exciting to most Indians. A concrete and through effort at showcasing the Brazilian cultural heritage and diversity could lead to a greater number of Indians being attracted to know, learn and travel to Brazil. Incentives could be given to the makers of popular ‘Bollywood’ movies in India to shoot these in Rio or Sao Paulo or even in the picturesque hinterland of Brazil. For instance, the popularity of the Bollywood movie *Dhoom 2* which was partly shot in Rio encouraged many people to travel to Brazil to see the famous beaches of Copacabana and Ipanema. Similarly, India could be the host for many more Brazilians who could visit India to learn more about its various manifestations, especially Yoga and Ayurveda. Goa which has a historical linkage with Brazil through Portugal is a ready attractive destination. Tourism could hold the key to expanding cultural ties. The establishment of the Consulate at Sao Paulo and the Honorary Consuls at Rio de Janeiro and Belo Horizonte will facilitate the people to people link. However, for all these efforts are yet to fructify and greater efforts have to be made by the representatives of both the governments in Brazil and in India to popularise each other as a well-sought after destination. It should not remain exclusive and merely the domain of a few. In addition, it is absolutely necessary that direct air links be established between the two sides to reduce the harrowing experiences of travel from India to Brazil or vice-versa.

¹⁹ <http://www.ibsa-trilateral.org/resource-centre/agreements>, Accessed on 23 September 2014.

Educational Linkages and Ties

Education has been the new and emerging arena that reduces distances and creates greater and deeper people to people contacts. Indian students have made their presence felt in a number of western countries which have benefitted the host countries tremendously as a great source of revenue. However, in the case of India-Brazil the understanding and exposure to each others' educational programmes and institutions are abysmal. India and Brazil have signed Educational Exchange Programmes/MoUs on several initiatives that include Exchange of scholars/students/researchers; Sharing of information/publications; Organising joint seminars/workshops/conferences etc.; Working towards mutual recognition of qualifications; developing institutional linkages; and providing scholarships to students/researchers. Apart from that India and Brazil also have a MoU under the larger umbrella of IBSA that substantiates cooperation between the IBSA countries' academic institutions, faculties, researchers and students through joint research projects in areas of mutual interest; to explore, investigate and develop new forms of South-South linkages in the field of education; to align the higher education systems; and to strengthen training and professional development. A number of areas and themes have been underlined in this regard.²⁰

On closer scrutiny, one finds that there are promising, howsoever rudimentary and diffused, institutional frameworks on both sides to push further the cause of India-Brazil relations in the education sector. The Indian efforts at enhanced understanding of Brazil took institutional shape by way of initial establishment of two Latin American Studies centers where it was subsumed. The first such centre was incorporated as a division in the Centre for American Studies way back in the early 1970s at the School of International Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU), New Delhi. Subsequently, a full-fledged Centre of Latin American Studies was set up under the University Grants Commission (UGC) Area Studies programme at Goa University in 1988. The primary objective of these study centers is to disseminate knowledge about this region through various programmes of study, Latin-America specific research, publications, exchange of scholars through field trips and the creation of a general intellectual climate regarding the region. Indeed, these initiatives have started

²⁰ <http://cricket.yahoo.com/news/india-brazil-conclude-agreement-cultural-exchange-technical-cooperation-110808513.html> Accessed on 30 September 2015.

yielding dividends. At present, there is a band of professionally trained scholars on Latin America and Brazil. Research on the region has also been consolidated over the years as evidenced in growing number of M. Phil and Ph.D dissertations and related publications on not only Latin America but a great deal of such academic focus has been on Brazil.²¹ In the recent past similar programmes and studies are being conducted in other universities like Jamia Millia Islamia in Delhi and the setting of the South African and Brazilian Studies programme at the Aligarh Muslim University. Also, out of the various cultural centers that the Government of India has established all around the world to disseminate information and awareness about India one of them is located in Sao Paulo. The Indian Council of Cultural Relations (ICCR), the nodal agency entrusted with this task, generally refers to these centers as part of its 'cultural diplomacy'. Apart from that the setting up of the Indian Studies Chair at the Getulio Vargas foundation in Brasilia is a positive step in that direction.

There are reciprocal initiatives from the Brazilian side as well. For example, Brazil has already instituted two Brazilian Studies Chairs at JNU and Goa University (to be initiated in 2019) respectively with a view to make Brazil academically more visible. Also over time the intermittently organised all India essay competitions with handsome prize money had encouraged Indian students and young researchers to contribute scholarly pieces on different aspects of Brazil and had enormous popular appeal. The idea was obviously to generate an active interest about Brazil among the students of Indian universities. The Candido Mendes University in Brazil followed suit by organising their first All India Essay Competition in the year 2000 in association with the Publishers and Book Sellers Guild in Kolkata. This competition has already seen its second round in 2001. Furthermore, the creation of a National Consultation Group by the Indian Council of World Affairs (largest Think Tank sponsored by the Ministry of External Affairs) on Latin America and the Caribbean in 2012 is a positive step in that direction.

A closer look however brings forth that such efforts are far and few in between. For instance, Jawaharlal Nehru University and Goa University which have the oldest programmes on Latin America has only three MOUs with Latin American Universities. Among these there is one with

²¹ Gangopadhyay, n.1, p.415.

University of Sao Paulo signed in 2013. Other public universities like Jamia Milia Islamia and Goa University that have programmes on Latin America are either in the process of signing MOUs or have them in singular numbers. Institutions of higher learning have yet to make full utilisation of the potential for higher education and research that is possible in each other's institutions and universities. For instance, some of these could be in fields other than in social sciences and humanities and encompass subjects like engineering, computer sciences and mathematical sciences, biotechnology, agriculture and livestock, sustainable development, social transformation and empowerment etc. Both India and Brazil are leaders of their region and the world in many of these disciplines and can learn from each other. Another popular method of increasing interaction and links between institutions is organising short term programmes that are very much in vogue these days called "Study India Programme". These programmes show case India and are tailor made to the receiving audience. They are technically short term programmes recognised by the Indian and the foreign universities. They could be a concrete and serious effort in creating such linkages.

Even in the education sector the private sector dominates bilateral agreements between educational institutions in India and Brazil. For instance, the Vellore Institute of Technology University is in such a programme with some of the Brazilian institutions. Also, the practically unknown private university, Chitkara University in Punjab has four important MOUs with PUCRS, UNICAMP, the Federal University of Lavras and the Federal University of Sao Joao del-Rei. The O.P. Jindal University, one of the largest and successful private universities in India too had an agreement with the Escola de Direto de Sao Paulo da Fundacao Vargas and is encouraging engagements and interactions between the two institutions. The agreements are not merely restricted to private players but cut across a cross section of public universities as well. Apart from these many Latin American universities and institutions are engaging with Indian counterparts that especially deal with spirituality and divinity like the Dev Snaskriti Vishwavidyala with Divine Values School in Ecuador and the VELS institute with Multicultural Institute in Santiago, Chile.

Also present are the rich and well-stocked archives and libraries in Brazil and India (Goa) which are sources of great deal of information about the historical links between India and Brazil from the 16th century onwards could be harnessed to integrate educational institutions in both

the countries. Many of these lie unused due to neglect and apathy of institutions. These could be for instance, digitised and uploaded facilitating students and researchers working on these themes.

Many Think Tanks dealing with India's Foreign Policy issues like the Indian Council of World Affairs (supported by the Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India) currently has five agreements with different institutions in Argentina, Colombia, Dominican Republic, Mexico and Peru. Many Indian faculty members are currently part of the academic boards and advisory committees in some of the Latin American countries.²²

Some Concluding Remarks

The foregoing pages amply demonstrate that India can no longer claim its lack of knowledge and awareness about Latin America and Brazil as the major hurdle in taking their relations to newer heights. Equally true is the realisation that the efforts made hitherto towards developing meaningful relations have been few and far between. The prevailing political climate in Latin America and the historically cordial relations that it shares with India should act as the building blocks for further advancement by both the sides. The strategic relationship that India needs to develop with Latin America need not be limited to merely political, economic and trade relations though this remains the pre-eminent pre-occupation of the current policy regime in India.²³

Of necessity, the existing 'incipient' relations need to be strengthened and given a new lease of life. This studied indifference towards Latin America is being vigorously shaken off. India's recent policy overtures towards the region promises a new beginning in this context. It would be an enriching endeavour for both sides, if they jointly shoulder the responsibility to negotiate a fair deal as countries of the 'South' with regard to issues of global concern such as education, environment, labour and agriculture. Other countries from the 'South' like Serbia which has fairly well established relations with both sides can act as a bridge between In-

²² Academic Council of the Indian Studies Programme of the State University of Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. Advisory Council Member on Centre on Studies and Services on Contemporary India and Southern Asia (CESICAM), Universidad Externado de Colombia, Bogota.

²³ Gangopadhyay, n.1, p.411.

dia and countries of Latin America. India-Serbia relations date back to Nehru and Tito, the two founders of the Non - Alignment movement during the Cold War days. Even after the breakup of Yugoslavia, India and Serbia continued to maintain excellent relations; with a number of agreements that range from economic cooperation to, food production, agriculture, pharmaceuticals, defence, health, tourism and IT. Agreements have also been signed in the cultural sector that included among other arts, youth affairs, sports, Yoga, etc. These memoranda were extended to encompass the fields of science and technology as well. Indian presence is registered at University of Belgrade and through the ICCR Hindi Chair at Novi Sad as well as the AYUSH Information Cell at Belgrade. Nehru and Gandhi are popular in Serbia and two roads in Belgrade are named after them.²⁴ This speaks of a strong and deep relationship between the two countries. The recent bonhomie between India and Serbia was visible at the United Nations as well. Therefore, India - Brazil (for Latin America) - Serbia could form a troika to engage with each other and forward the agenda of the 'South' in international fora as well as become the focal point for cultural and educational engagements.

As India emerges not just as a valuable trade partner to Latin America, the 'New India' story is one of a stable, diverse democracy with high growth and deep cultural roots which resonates in Latin America trying to find its way in the twenty-first century? Thus, there is no dearth of either issues or possible arenas to anchor India and Latin America as meaningful partners in the emerging international context. Nonetheless, much depends on the political will of the ruling classes on both sides of the divide.

Arguably, Globalisation need not totally undermine the imperative of the 'South-South Co-operation' even though it has changed the matrix of such cooperation. Certainly, the contours of the international relations are bound to be different in the changed global context. Like other countries and regions of the world, India and Latin America will have to negotiate their way through the zigzag of shifting polarities that the new world is witnessing. This, in no way, should dampen their spirit or make them lax in their endeavours. In fact, a sense of optimism is visible on both the sides. It is this shared sense of optimism that will bind them together in

²⁴ https://www.mea.gov.in/Portal/ForeignRelation/India-Serbia_Bil_Brief_as_on_31.01.18.pdf

years to come. Both entities can potentially play an important role in the shaping of the future global order by virtue of their geo-strategic endowments. They can, in large measure, help shape the future trajectory of world politics. In any case, cultural and civilizational differences need not come in the way of building long sustaining and mutually enriching relationship between the two sides. At a time when the post-modernist echo of global academia is reverberating with the slogan *vive sa difference*, to treat differences as hurdles is to go against the grain of history. And it is this vision of a multipolar world that opens up a vista of possibilities for India and Latin America.

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