

Chinese Take Away or Burgers and Fries: U.S.-Latin America today

Cynthia Watson, PhD
The National War College
Naples World Affairs Council

2 March 2012

Two current titles explain it all

- *Latin Lessons: How South America Stopped Listening to the United States and Started Prospering* (Hal Weitzman)
- “Grown in the Cone: South America’s Soybean Boom”, Mariano Turzi, *Current History* (feb 2012)

agenda

- Traditional U.S. view of regional relations
- *De facto* U.S. focus: Circum-Caribbean, traditional foci on security threats to us
- South America: increasing opportunities around the world without U.S. bias
- Implications for United States

Traditional U.S. view of ties

- The Monroe Doctrine
- Our closest partners, geographically
- Organisation of American States
- Freer trade
- Latin America stopping drugs
- Latin America focusing on what D.C. likes
- We focus where they can affect us the most

De facto: Circum-Caribbean

⇒ Blurring of the border, legally and factually

Mexico

- NAFTA at 20
- Criminal violence spreading into U.S.
- Continuing immigration tension
- Central America
 - Increasing violence as narcotics and crime flow north
 - Fragile democracies under tremendous stress
- Caribbean Basin: more open crossroads
- Response: Merida Initiative

Los paises al sur

- Prolonged frustration, coupled with resource abundance, has refocused South
- South America has become major food producer: soybeans, wheat, others
- South America is a tremendous supplier of petroleum, ores, and all natural resources
- South America benefitting from global growth as provider of choice

South America's view

- Washington is no longer the most immediate desired partner
- China's involvement in region is multi-faceted, evolving, and impressive
 - Investment
 - Trade
 - Diplomatic
- Iran
- Russia

State of Affairs in South Am

- Democracy flourishing for the most part
 - Brasil, Chile, Colombia, Peru
 - Venezuela increasing deterioration
 - Hypernationalism in Bolivia and Ecuador
 - Cristina's future in Bs As unclear
- Regional movements under discussion, if not truly in practice

Implications for United States

- No longer guarantee of U.S. role as preferred partner
- China's increasing position is commercial but not strategic. That could change.
- Iran's engagement much more immediate and potentially worrisome due to nature
- 'Washington model' also under consideration as one of many but not sole

Latin America

