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ECONOMICS AND DEVELOPMENT: A THEORETICAL AND HISTORICAL REVIEW

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ABSTRACT

This study focuses on the comparative trajectories in economics and development of the United States and Latin America. Using a systematic literature review guided by the PRISMA framework, which is a method that seeks to provide a systematic and structured synthesis of the existing literature on the phenomenon, the research analyzes key contributions in classical and contemporary development economics. This study integrates historical evidence from the 19th, 20th, and early 21st centuries, identifying critical turning points in the region's economic evolution. It also discusses the transition from import substitution industrialization to more open economic models, as well as the persistent challenges of achieving inclusive and sustainable growth. Since there is a difference between the United States and Latin America, the United States established an institutional system that fostered capital accumulation, technological innovation, and market growth, while Latin America has followed paths characterized by dependence on external factors, a diverse range of production, and recurring structural imbalances. The study contributes to the literature by synthesizing theoretical perspectives and empirical findings, offering a comprehensive understanding of development dynamics in the Americas. It underscores the importance of context-specific strategies and institutional capacity in fostering long-term economic development, which helps us understand the past, but also guides the development of future models of development that are more equitable, resilient, and context-specific.

Keywords: Economic development, Latin America, United States, Economic growth, Structural change

Economía y desarrollo: una revisión teórica e histórica

RESUMEN

Este estudio se centra en las trayectorias comparativas de la economía y el desarrollo de Estados Unidos y América Latina. Mediante una revisión bibliográfica sistemática basada en el marco PRISMA un método que busca ofrecer una síntesis sistemática y estructurada de la bibliografía existente sobre el fenómeno, la investigación analiza las contribuciones clave de la economía del desarrollo clásica y contemporánea. Este estudio integra evidencia histórica de los siglos XIX, XX y principios del XXI, identificando puntos de inflexión críticos en la evolución económica de la región. También aborda la transición de la industrialización por sustitución de importaciones a modelos económicos más abiertos, así como los retos persistentes para lograr un crecimiento inclusivo y sostenible. Dada la diferencia entre Estados Unidos y América Latina. Estados Unidos estableció un sistema institucional que fomentó la acumulación de capital, la innovación tecnológica y el crecimiento del mercado, mientras que América Latina ha seguido caminos caracterizados por la dependencia de factores externos, una gama diversa de producción y desequilibrios estructurales recurrentes, El estudio contribuye a la literatura especializada al sintetizar perspectivas teóricas y hallazgos empíricos, ofreciendo una visión global de las dinámicas de desarrollo en las Américas. Subraya la importancia de las estrategias adaptadas al contexto y de la capacidad institucional para fomentar el desarrollo económico a largo plazo, lo que nos ayuda a comprender el pasado, pero también sirve de guía para el diseño de futuros modelos de desarrollo más equitativos, resilientes y adaptados al contexto.

Palabras Clave: Desarrollo económico, América Latina, Estados Unidos, Crecimiento económico, Cambio estructural

Introduction

The economic growth of Latin America compared to that of the United States is one of the most frequent themes in the history of the global economy. Significant differences in income and productivity exist despite both regions experiencing similar forms of European colonization. Between 2014 and 2023, the Latin American and Caribbean economy, according to ECLAC (2024), registered an average growth of only 0.8% annually, less than half of what was observed in the 1980s. Furthermore, despite decades of expectations regarding regional integration and the continued emphasis on its importance, real progress has been rather limited. Trade among nations in the region has remained at around 15% of the total, being more intense in Central America and with Mexico than in South America (Salazar-Xirinachs, 2024).

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In recent years, and particularly in the most recent period, Latin America has experienced geopolitical and economic changes that have altered its place in the global system. The region, historically considered an area of US influence under the 20th-century hemispheric order, now faces a more complex situation, marked by the transition to a multipolar world and the growing presence of China.

China, emerging as a major power not only in manufacturing but also in technology, has deepened its rivalry with the United States for supremacy. Consequently, allied and geographically close countries believe they are "experiencing a transition to a new era of rules for trade and investment" (Salazar-Xirinachs, 2024:9).

Theoretical Evolution of Economic Development

Since the birth of classical economics, the problem of development and growth has occupied a central place in theoretical reflection, essentially based on the mechanisms that incentivize economic activity and the well-being of the population. Within this framework, in the 18th century, Adam Smith, in The Theory of Moral Sentiments (1759), began to formulate the relevance of the progress and wealth of nations, grounded not only in economic factors but also in the moral aspects that shape social life (Rathbone, 2026).

Prosperity is not a matter of combining productive factors and generating monetary profits; rather, it is a consequence of social cohesion, which rests on trust, sympathy, and mutual respect among individuals. Thus, before he formulates the invisible hand and self-interest—fundamental elements of liberalism and classical economics—Smith briefly suggested that economic development requires a social framework in which morality and ethical conduct are central to coordinating individual interests and social order (Atal et al., 2024; Rathbone, 2026).

In contrast to the preceding view, Smith describes in An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations (1776) a different analytical subject, the behavior of which is not mediated by ethical judgments and social ties, but rests under the precepts of the so-called invisible hand, which emphasizes the need to interact in the pursuit of maximum economic benefit.

Smith's significance lies in providing a systematic explanation of economic progress by emphasizing the articulation of self-interest, exchange, and the division of labor, which are seen as processes that enable the accumulation of capital and the expansion of markets based on an increase in the productivity of the factors of production: land, labor, and capital (Atal et al., 2024; Hashimoto & Huettinger, 2024).

In this way, the mercantilist conception based on national wealth created by the hoarding of precious metals was abandoned in favor of a growth perspective based on the interaction between individual exchanges, institutional incentives, and markets that operate as mechanisms of economic coordination (Buckley et al., 2026).

In 1817, David Ricardo, from within the classical tradition, refined Smithian approaches, which, from his perspective, presented ambiguities in explaining the economic context, especially in matters relating to the generation of value and the idea of a stationary state (Naranjo & Grimaldos, 2022).

In this regard, in some sections of The Wealth of Nations (1776), Smith states that the value of a commodity depends on the amount of labor required to produce it, whereas in others, he asserts that the price of goods is composed of rent, profits, and wages. This explanation oscillates, on the one hand, between labor as the generator of value and, on the other, between value as the sum of income (Atal et al., 2024; Tsoulfidis, 2024).

Regarding development, Ricardo introduced the notion of a stationary state, arguing that economic growth faces constraints imposed by the diminishing returns of the factors of production. While not rejecting economic expansion, he maintained that such expansion cannot continue indefinitely if land, labor, and capital remain constant. Ricardo's aim is not to discredit Smith's view but to strengthen classical economic architecture through a coherent theoretical formalization (Tsoulfidis, 2024).

From a radically critical perspective, Marx (1867) argues that capitalism is a system lacking spontaneous harmonization; instead, it symbolizes a social structure characterized by constant tensions between the proletariat and owners of capital. The former constitutes wage labor that generates a value exceeding their income, while the latter appropriate this surplus, called surplus value, and in doing so, obtain capitalist profits (Bernards, 2025).

From this perspective, economic growth is not the result of an invisible hand that enables the convergence of individual exchanges; on the contrary, it is a consequence of the systematic appropriation of surplus labor.

In contrast to the classical view, capital accumulation, far from promoting growth based on production and the satisfaction of needs, obeys the logic of capital owners, in which a process of continuous expansion prevails: converting money into commodities to obtain more money (DM-D') (Piketty, 2014; Bernards, 2025).

Meanwhile, the Marxist perspective challenges the image of linear or stable growth associated with the Ricardian notion of a stationary state. Marx identifies the falling rate of profit as a process inherent to the capitalist system, stemming from increased investment in technology and machinery relative to human labor, which he calls an increase in the organic composition of capital. As labor is the sole source of surplus value, the relative substitution of labor power with capital exerts pressure on the structure and profitability of capital. This gives rise to an internal contradiction within capitalism, which, as it intensifies, deepens periodic crises and erodes stability (Roberts, 2016).

In other words, when capitalists replace workers with machines, they increase production, productivity, and efficiency; however, they proportionally reduce the source of value that underpins profit. Thus, the growth of capitalism has a dual nature. On the one hand, it stimulates productive expansion; on the other, it deepens social tensions between wage earners and the owners of the factors of production. Therefore, for Marx, the capitalist model represents a structurally contradictory and conflictive environment for development (Albert, 2024).

Meanwhile, the German Historical School, prevalent from the mid-19th to the early 20th century, converged with Marxism in questioning the validity of the abstract universalism of classical economics. In particular, they argued against the concept of homo economicus, understood as a rational, calculating individual driven by self-interest, in light of the realities of human beings, whose historical nature is mediated by cultural values, social norms, and legal institutions. Consequently, individuals are not merely situated in

the abstract void of the market but rather within a social environment that shapes their decisions and motivations (Cardoso & Psalidopoulos, 2019).

From this perspective, the classical approach is insufficient to explain development through market coordination, as it is the product of evolutionary historical processes related to the formation of state laws, the organization of labor, the productive structure, the educational system, legal institutions, and public policies. Historicist criticism represents the immediate antecedent of contemporary debates on the role of institutions in the economic context (Acquah et al., 2023; Papaioannou, 2025).

While Marxism and the German Historical School were discussing classical abstractions, the marginalist revolution of the late 19th century took up and formalized the role of human behavior by mathematizing rational utility-maximizing homo economicus under conditions of scarcity.

Smithian perspective based on labor value, a representation of subjects who value commodities subjectively in accordance with the utility or satisfaction they provide. The solution to development problems is contingent upon mathematical formulations aimed at identifying equilibrium points based on efficient allocations, in which the marginal utilities of representative individuals converge. This efficiency-based perspective reveals a reductionist view of human behavior that persists to this day, one that disregards the complexity of the human mind, social conflict, and the historical dimensions inherent in the progress of nations (Bowles & Carlin, 2020).

On this theoretical basis, Alfred Marshall (1890) consolidated himself as one of the founders of the neoclassical school, insofar as he adopted the principle of marginal utility as the foundation of value and systematized the definition of the Smithian invisible hand through a graphic-analytical model centered on the balancing interaction between supply and demand (Oslington, 2024).

Marshallian thought lies in the fact that it complements the Walrasian perspective of general equilibrium by introducing partial equilibrium as a methodological tool aimed at studying a specific market, under the ceteris assumption paribus that allows the isolation of the functional relationships between supply and demand without resorting to the formalization of the economy as a whole (De Vroey, 2016; Bowles & Carlin, 2020).

In partial equilibrium, the principle of maximization under constraints is investigated, and central instruments of modern microeconomics are developed, including elasticity, marginal costs, consumer surplus, the divergence between short and long runs, and the incipient definition of Marshallian industrial districts.

Although the neoclassical conception lacks an explicit theory of development, it possesses an evolutionary conception of economic progress based on the accumulation of human capital, industrial organization, and economies of scale associated with productive concentration within a competitive market that continues to assume a central role in coordination (Jones, 2022).

In this context, Alfred Marshall's Principles of Economics (1890) became the dominant textbook in economics teaching for several decades by coherently and pedagogically accessible integrating marginalism as a theoretical structure that articulates efficiency, industrial organization, and economic development based on the ideal of a competitive market.

During the first decade of the 20th century, Walras's formalization of general equilibrium and the neoclassical school of thought, spearheaded by Alfred Marshall, became the dominant perspective. This preeminence stemmed, in part, from the explanatory power of formal and mathematical analysis, which aimed to elevate economics to the status of a rigorous science, framed within the precepts of positivism and the applicability of the scientific method to human behavior (Backhouse, 2022).

Within these theoretical traditions, development was conceived as a process of adjustment toward optimal equilibrium under conditions of stable competition. Inequality, social tensions, differentiated institutional trajectories, and the dynamics of capitalist accumulation were seen merely as deviations from the ideal economic situation.

This tension between formal abstraction and the historicity of structural problems created fertile ground for the emergence of critical approaches within economic theory. From the 1930s onward, the Great Depression highlighted the explanatory limitations of classical and marginalist models based on the automatic equilibrium of markets (Skidelsky, 2018).

From this perspective, John Maynard Keynes (1936), although trained in the Cambridge Marshallian tradition, introduced a significant turning point in prevailing precepts by questioning the self-regulating capacity of the system and pointing out that economies can remain in situations of involuntary unemployment and insufficient demand for extended periods. While he did not conceive an explicit theory of development, his ideas focused on stability, employment, and crises arising from production, especially in advanced economies. These ideas later influenced schools of thought that explored the role of the state as a stabilizing agent during periods of economic contraction (Rowthorn, 2013; Skidelsky, 2018).

Building on criticisms of automatic equilibrium, scholars such as John Kenneth Galbraith (1958, 1967), Albert O. Hirschman (1958, 1963, 1970), Amartya Sen (1985, 1999), and Sergei Latouche (1993, 2009) deepen the discussion by explicitly incorporating issues inherent to institutions, the power of large corporations, historical analysis, empirical observation, human freedoms, and degrowth determined by the overexploitation of natural resources.

Unlike his predecessors, Galbraith (1958, 1967) adopted the heterodox institutional precepts of Thorstein Veblen (1899). For Galbraith (1958), the economy cannot be understood solely through formal analysis and efficiency, given that it represents a complex web of institutional power relations. He argues that the conventional model of perfect competition inadequately describes the functioning of markets in which large corporations play a dominant role, exerting influence over prices, innovation, and the shaping of preferences through marketing and advertising strategies.

To explain this context, he introduced the term technostructure, defined as the set of decision-making individuals within large organizations that replace the figure of the marginalist individual entrepreneur in charge of the production process.

Galbraith challenges the notion that social welfare should be evaluated solely based on private consumption. He emphasizes that contemporary economies have a high capacity for producing abundant consumer goods while neglecting the provision of essential public goods, such as education, infrastructure, and social services. From this perspective, economic development should not be conceived solely in terms of productive expansion or increased income; rather, it represents a framework that requires state intervention to improve collective conditions through market regulation and the adequate provision of public goods.

In this scenario of debate on the nature of development, Albert O. Hirschman in the 1950s and 1970s, defended the use of case studies as the main tool to analyze the reality and economic problems, observed mainly in Latin American nations.

In contrast to orthodox approaches that seek to explain development through generalizable and formalized models, Hirschman proposed investigating this definition through empirical analysis. In this regard, the core argument first emerges in The Strategy of Economic Development (1958), where, through a method that prioritizes historical observation and the study of particular experiences, he questions the theories that emphasize the existence of uniform growth trajectories.

Hirschman emphasizes that the path of development often follows unbalanced processes in which the expansion of certain sectors drives others through production linkages. In subsequent studies (1963), he consolidates this view by concluding that the economic problem not only involves issues of insufficient aggregate demand but is also influenced by institutional, political, and social factors that determine unequal paths.

Along similar lines, since the 1990s, Armartya Sen has proposed redefining economic development by placing freedom and human capabilities at its core. From this perspective, societal progress should not be reduced to productive expansion but is linked to the effective opportunities individuals have to develop their potential and realize their life projects. Under this framework, education, health, equity, and political participation constitute key dimensions of collective well-being.

From a broader perspective, Sergei Latouche's (1993, 2009) studies fall within a critical current that questions the relationship between development and unlimited economic growth. For Latouche, the orthodox notion of development is deeply linked to industrial capitalism and the productivism dynamic that incentivizes the sustained increase in production and consumption. However, he emphasizes that this paradigm overlooks the scarcity of natural resources and reproduces logic of inequality and economic dependence, primarily in nations of the Global South. At the same time, he argues that this perspective on development also operates as a cultural instrument by disseminating a model of progress inspired by Western industrialized countries, which, however, does not necessarily reflect the social, environmental, and cultural realities of local contexts in poor nations.

Faced with these barriers, Latouche outlines the perspective of economic degrowth, which should not be interpreted solely in terms of a decrease in gross domestic product (GDP). Rather, it symbolizes a transformation in consumption, production, and social organization patterns toward more sustainable frameworks that favor the relocation of productive activities, cooperation, and the preservation of natural ecosystems. Therefore, development moves away from tradition based on the quantification of indicators, as it is necessary to consider alternative ways of life that prioritize the quality of social relationships and the balance between human activity and the natural environment.

From this theoretical overview, it is evident that conceptions of economic development have shifted from explanations centered on market mechanisms to approaches that incorporate institutional, social, political, and environmental dimensions. However, questions remain regarding the historical and geopolitical conditions that have influenced the dissemination and application of these approaches in various regions of the world. In particular, in the case of Latin America, the question arises as to whether the adoption of economic models inspired by the experiences of industrialized countries has effectively contributed to promoting development processes, or whether, on the contrary, it has generated divergent trajectories compared to the core economies. In this sense, it is worth asking: Has the application of economic principles conceived in different contexts favored or limited development possibilities in Latin America? Has the economic and political influence of the United States in the region affected the configuration of these trajectories?

Methodology

To investigate the existing academic production on the interference of the United States in Latin America and its possible implications for the economic development of the region, a systematic literature review is proposed based on the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (i.e., PRISMA) method (Page et al., 2021).

The selection of the PRISMA method is justified because it guarantees transparency, replicability, and methodological rigor by providing a structured analytical framework aimed at systematically documenting the phases of identification, cleaning, and selection of scientific documents.

In parallel, its applicability allows for the minimization of bias in the selection of literature, ensuring that the documentary analysis adheres to verifiable criteria. At the same time, it enables the examination of the state of the art regarding a specific topic by highlighting predominant approaches, acknowledging limitations in the available information, and identifying possibilities for future lines of research.

Phases of the PRISMA method

The method was systematized based on the applicability of four phases: identification, selection, eligibility, and inclusion. The first phase, identification, refers to the detection of relevant studies, specifically documents concerning the political and economic influence of the United States on the Latin American region. The purpose of identification was to gather a set of academic texts that investigate the phenomenon from different perspectives, such as economics, sociology, economic history, and international politics.

The second stage, selection, was based on a preliminary review of the records retrieved in the previous phase through the analysis of titles and abstracts. Its purpose is to discard research that is not essential for explaining the phenomenon under study.

In the third phase, eligibility, the documents selected in the previous stage are thoroughly reviewed to assess their thematic relevance and contribution to explaining the phenomenon. Specifically, texts addressing the debate surrounding Latin America's development process and its relations with the United States are examined.

Finally, the inclusion stage integrates the studies that meet the preceding criteria to establish a documentary base for systematic review.

Inclusion and exclusion criteria

To ensure the coherence and quality of the documentary corpus, the PRISMA method establishes inclusion and exclusion criteria that enable the selection of studies considered in the systematic review. To identify relevant literature, specialized academic databases were consulted, primarily Scopus, due to its broad coverage of publications in economics and Latin American studies.

The inclusion criteria incorporated scientific studies that examined the economic and political influence of the United States in Latin America and its implications for the region's development processes. Similarly, articles and academic documents that addressed empirical, theoretical, and historical analyses of the phenomenon were included, primarily from contexts linked to orthodox and heterodox theories of economic development.

The exclusion criteria omitted documents that emphasized US foreign policy without considering a direct connection to Latin America and the region's economic development processes. Studies focused on diplomatic aspects, journalistic texts, opinion pieces, and documents lacking academic rigor were also excluded. These criteria allowed for the delimitation of the analysis and ensured the thematic relevance of the research selected for the systematic review.

Literature analysis strategy

Once the final set of selected documents was established, a qualitative analysis of the literature was conducted to recognize the predominant theoretical approaches and main lines of research on the interference of the United States in Latin America.

The analytical strategy was based on three main dimensions. First, the theoretical economic approaches used in the literature were identified, such as classical economics, marginalist approaches, Marxist critiques, institutionalist approaches, and contemporary development perspectives.

Second, the forms of interference highlighted in the reviewed studies were examined, including economic mechanisms of influence, international cooperation, and trade relations.

Third, the interpretations of Latin American development addressed in this research were explored, essentially those linked to the effects of North American influence on economic development.

Additionally, the search strategy involved the incorporation of Boolean operators that allowed for limiting the obtained results. AND and OR were used to combine words or phrases associated with the phenomenon.

In general, the preceding strategies made it possible to identify convergences and divergences within academic studies as well as relevant debates regarding external influence in Latin America.

Analytical categories

Following the formation of the analytical body through PRISMA systematization, the next stage is the construction of the matrix of analytical categories, which has the purpose of organizing the information contained in the selected documents.

Within the framework of the phenomenon under study, the categories were defined based on their relevance in the literature on economic development in Latin America and their ability to recognize analytical patterns linked to the influence of the United States in Latin America.

Table 1 presents the categories used to identify and examine existing academic production on U.S. interference in Latin America and its possible implications for the region's economic development.

Table 1.

Categories used to identify and examine existing academic production on US interference in Latin America

Analytical category	Description
Theoretical perspective of economic development	The theoretical and conceptual approach used by the research to interpret the relationship between the United States and Latin America
Economic influence	Type of influence examined in the study, especially those related to economic mechanisms, such as trade, financing, cooperation, and international economic policies.
Period	Time frame in which the analysis of the phenomenon was conducted.
Region	The geographic area in which the phenomenon susceptible to study develops.
Economic instruments of influence	Mechanisms by which the United States exerts influence over Latin America
Impact on economic development	Effects identified by studies of US interference in terms of employment, productive structure, and institutional development
Main results	Findings detected in research regarding the US influence on Latin American economic development,

The elements described in the table above make it possible to systematize the information from the selected studies to determine theoretical patterns, interpretive convergences, and divergences, as well as future lines of research on the subject.

PRISMA Flowchart

One of the central phases of the method is representing the search and systematization of information using a PRISMA flow diagram, which summarizes the different stages of cleaning the scientific literature.

The PRISMA framework allows the visualization of the scientific text selection process from the initial stage to the formation of the documentary body. Specifically, the diagram reflects the number of records initially identified, the number of studies eliminated through screening, the documents included after reviewing titles and abstracts, the studies evaluated through comprehensive reading, and the final number of studies included in the systematic review.

The graphical representation of this process allows for transparency in the selection of literature and demonstrates the application of explicit criteria for purging academic material.

Methodological scope

The PRISMA method seeks to provide a systematic and structured synthesis of the existing literature on the phenomenon under study. However, the protocol is not intended to adopt a normative position regarding U.S. interference in Latin America; rather, it aims to examine how this topic has been analyzed in the scientific literature.

In summary, while a systematic review of documents allows for the identification of central approaches and interpretations regarding external influence on development processes in Latin America, it nevertheless has limitations. First, the review is limited to the literature available in scientific databases, which excludes relevant studies hosted in alternative repositories. Second, it is important to emphasize that the systematization does not aim to adopt critical or causal positions but rather to provide an analytical synthesis of existing knowledge.

The PRISMA method in the context of US interference in Latin America and its possible implications for economic development

To investigate U.S. interference in Latin America and its impact on economic development, the PRISMA method of systematic literature review was applied. This method is based on a four-stage process of searching and filtering scientific literature: identification, selection, eligibility, and inclusion. The search was conducted primarily in the Scopus database.

During the identification phase, scientific documents were detected that examine the economic and political influence of the United States in Latin America and its possible implications for the development of the area based on research from disciplinary fields other than the social sciences, such as economics, sociology, economic history, and international relations.

To retrieve the records, combinations of related words AND and OR Boolean operators, AND and OR, were used. Specifically, the search was performed the search was limited to the years 2000 and 2025 because significant transformations occurred in the region, such as the consolidation of regional integration, globalization, and the geopolitical influence of the United States in Latin America. The search in Scoups yielded 1779 documents.

Subsequently, the selection process involved reviewing the abstracts and titles of the texts identified in the previous phase to pinpoint studies that demonstrated a direct connection to the economic influence of the United States in Latin America. Research addressing the topic from perspectives other than economic analysis, as well as duplicate entries, studies focused on territories other than Latin America, and texts written in languages other than English were excluded. Similarly, only scholarly articles were considered. This process resulted in the identification of 65 potentially relevant documents.

The eligibility process involved reading the 65 selected articles to examine their thematic relevance and their contribution to the debate on US interference in Latin America. The theoretical framework and methodological approach were also considered. This phase allowed for the elimination of documents that, despite mentioning the topic under study, did not explain the relationship from a solid theoretical basis. Consequently, 13 articles were selected that met the specified criteria. This selection, in accordance with the PRISMA framework, follows a refinement criterion whereby studies are chosen based on their relevance to the research objective.

Finally, in the inclusion phase, only three articles were identified that demonstrated the relevance of US interference in Latin America. This highlights the importance of the topic and the need for in-depth research into its implications for the region's economic development. These studies form the basis of the PRISMA systematic review.

Analytical categories

Based on the analytical categories presented in Table 2, the articles included in the inclusion phase were systematically examined and classified according to year of publication, author, geographic region, methodology, and main results. This procedure allowed for the organization of information and the identification of potential patterns in the selected literature.

Table 2.

Categories regarding the studies included in the systematic literature review

Year	Author	Region	Methodology	Main results
2018	Nikolay N. Kholodkov	Latin America and the United States	Descriptive study	Loss of dynamism in Latin America due to the protectionism of the US President
2024	Juan Rivas Maldonado	Latin America and the United States	Historical and descriptive	Development cannot be explained solely by economic variables. Historical, geographical, and power-related factors are also important.
2024	Davydov Vladimir & Kodzoev , Magomed	Latin America and the United States	Descriptive study based on statistical data.	Latin America continues to occupy a secondary position on the United States' strategic agenda, thereby limiting its development.

PRISMA diagram and methodological analysis

The application of the PRISMA method facilitated the identification, organization, and analysis of scientific literature regarding the influence of the United States on Latin America's development process. The PRISMA diagram (Figure 1) schematically illustrates the traceability of the review of scientific documents by establishing criteria for the identification, eligibility, and inclusion of research.

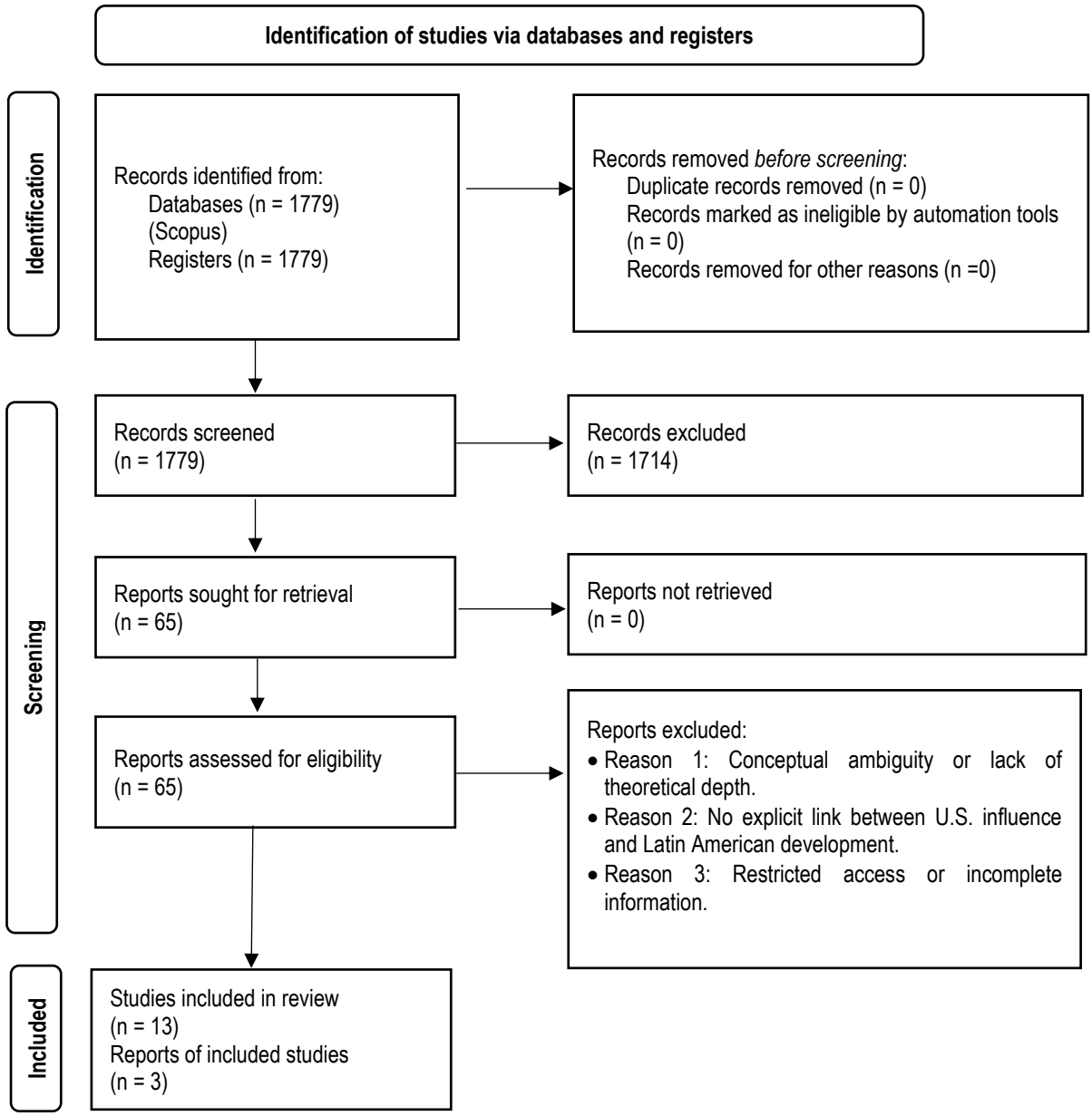

Figure 1. *PRISMA flowchart:* US interference in Latin America

This procedure identified interpretive angles that highlight the development dynamics in the Latin American region, which are conditioned by structural factors characterized by dependence on natural resource exports, barriers to investment and technological development, and low levels of productivity. Furthermore, the United States significantly influences the competitive position of Latin American nations (Kholodkov, 2018). Likewise, it is emphasized that the process of economic development in Latin America cannot be understood exclusively through economic variables but rather as a long-term historical and geopolitical mechanism in which lasting power structures have been formed between developed and underdeveloped countries (Rivas, 2024).

In this regard, the articles selected using the PRISMA method highlight that Latin America symbolizes a region embedded in a context of global reconfiguration among centers of political and economic power, generating new forms of international relations based on the region's strategic position within the new global economic system. However, Latin America continues to occupy a secondary position on the United States' strategic agenda, which limits its economic development (Davydov & Kodzoev, 2025).

Although the PRISMA method allows the exploration of scientific approaches and methodologies, it has limitations. First, the literature review was limited to texts available in scientific databases, which excluded research published in alternative repositories. Second, the purpose of systematization is not to establish causal relationships or adopt normative positions regarding the phenomenon analyzed, but rather to identify and synthesize relevant approaches.

Geopolitical Context

Since 1823, with the Monroe Doctrine and its motto “America for the Americans,” establishing that any European intervention in the affairs of American countries would be considered an act of aggression requiring U.S. intervention, the foundations of American influence in the Western Hemisphere were laid. This influence has persisted throughout the 19th and 20th centuries, increasing even more recently with the publication of the National Security Strategy (The White House, 2025) in November 2025, which clearly reiterates

the Western Hemisphere as an area of exclusive U.S. influence. Thus, on page 16, it states: “We will expand by cultivating and strengthening new partners while bolstering our own nation's appeal as the Hemisphere's economic and security partner of choice.”

However, a review of the region's historical growth might lead to a reassessment of the viability and advisability of this approach. Bértola and Ocampo (2022) point out that over the past 200 years; Latin America's per capita output has grown at approximately the same rate as the global average. A predominant feature of international development has been the increasing divergence of income levels between different regions. Thus, while Latin America has widened its gap with less dynamic regions in Africa and Asia, it has also seen a widening gap between itself and developed countries.

According to Naranjo Navas and Navas-Labanda (2024), the region experienced two periods of growth: the first, from the 1830s to the 1860s, was characterized by slow growth, regional conflicts, and frequent defaults on external debt; the second, from the 1870s to the 1900s, was marked by rapid GDP growth, increased exports and investments, higher literacy rates, and increased life expectancy. This economic growth led to the proliferation of banking systems and educational and healthcare institutions, factors that further fueled population growth.

Indeed, De Gregorio (2017) points out that Latin America has had some of the most disappointing results during the 20th century. There have been many episodes of growth, but they typically ended in crises and a long period of slow growth. The 1960s and 1970s—especially the former—are remembered as periods of high growth; however, during those years, Latin American growth was slower than the global average and that of many other regions. Perhaps the most significant characteristic of the 1960s was the very limited variation in growth among the countries of the region. In the 1990s, however, when global growth was much lower, some economies managed to grow significantly, at rates much higher than those of the rest of the world.

Bértola and Ocampo (2022) examine Latin America's economic performance during the extended cycle from 1998 to 2014, which intertwined the regional impacts of the Asian crisis with a growth phase fueled by a commodity price supercycle. This period of expansion was succeeded by five years of economic stagnation, during which earlier gains were eroded, even before the onset of the COVID-19 crisis and its adverse effects. This situation highlights the region's ongoing economic vulnerability to external shocks and the challenges in sustaining growth rates linked to structural changes, which are essential for narrowing the development gap with leading countries and addressing environmental sustainability challenges. Additionally, despite significant social development achievements during the recent growth cycle, the region's entrenched structural inequalities remain unaddressed.

In line with the findings of the PRISMA method, although 13 articles met the eligibility criteria, only 3 directly address the relationship between development in Latin America and its connection with the United States. These studies highlight that development in the region should not be understood solely in terms of economic variables, but must also incorporate historical and geopolitical trajectories. Likewise, they emphasize the persistence of structural dependence and the subordinate position of Latin American nations within global power structures (Kholodkov, 2018; Davydov & Kodzoev, 2025). Therefore, it is reasonable to conclude that U.S. economic influence will continue to shape Latin American development in the long term, limiting its capacity for autonomous and sustained growth.

Given the recent political, economic, and geopolitical events in Latin America, which raise serious questions about the way in which this new U.S. interest in the region is being pursued, it would be worthwhile to factually assess whether Latin American history is doomed to repeat itself, emulating that eternal return suggested by Nietzsche. Will the people of Latin America ever decide to break from this dynamic? The data is clear. The facts are there. The time has come.

Conclusions

Rather than definitively concluding whether the influence of one power or another has been negative or positive, the evidence points to a more fundamental idea: the lack of an independent strategy for regional development. Historically, Latin America has tended to adapt to external dynamics instead of establishing a proactive stance within the global system.

The region's destiny should not be solely tied to or dependent on decisions made by external power centers such as Washington, Moscow, or Beijing, but rather on the capacity of Latin American and Caribbean countries to establish a joint development agenda. Building their autonomy in a changing world, and as Rebeca Grynspan points out, in a new era "the era of polyglobalization" is crucial.

In relation to the research objective, it is pertinent to emphasize that this study provides a critical and systematic synthesis of research trajectories concerning the development of Latin America and its relationship with the United States, where the main constraint lies in the absence of an autonomous and collaboratively oriented regional development strategy. Accordingly, the study does not seek to establish causal relationships, but rather to offer an initial interpretative overview of the phenomenon that may guide future research.

The search method may have limited the inclusion of significant research. Although key terms and inclusion and exclusion criteria were established, this approach favored articles indexed in recognized databases while excluding gray literature, institutional reports, and studies in languages other than English and Spanish.

Since this is a theoretical and historical analysis, the article does not seek to establish definitive causal relationships or offer predictive models, but rather to provide a critical and contextualized interpretation. The conclusions should be understood as indicative and subject to empirical verification in future research.

Declaration of Conflicts of Interest

The authors do not have any interest conflict.

Authors contribution

Author	Concept	Curation	Analysis/ Software	Research/ Methodology	Resources	Supervision/ Validation	Initial Writing	Final Writing
1			X	X	X	X		
2	X	X		X	X			
3				X	X		X	X

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