



The Latin American and Caribbean Institute for Geopolitical Studies (LACIGS)

TEXT VANESSA VAN DIJSSELDONK

Wintercourse

After its successful establishment, the Latin American and Caribbean Institute for Geopolitical Studies (LACIGS) hosted its first post-academic course on 9–11 November 2016 with the theme: “Geopolitics in the 21st Century and its impact on Latin America and the Caribbean.” According to Mr. Humphrey Senior, responsible for the organization of the event, “many young professionals and civil servant were interested in learning about the region. This winter course, based on those held at the Geneva Institute of Geopolitics, was a perfect opportunity for students and professionals in Curaçao to get insight in the working of our region.”

This course provided an innovative combination of scientific and practical geopolitics methods and theories. The Winter Course started off with key note speeches from Dr. Gyula Csurgai, Director of the Geneva Institute of Geopolitical Studies (GIGS), and Dr. Mark Kirton, Senior Lecturer at the Institute of International Relations at University of the West Indies. This was followed by workshops given by Dr. Virginie Mamadouh, Associate Professor in Political and Cultural Geography at the University of Amsterdam, and Dr. Gyulia Csurgai held introductory workshops on geopolitics and geo-economics. In addition, various public lectures were offered by Professor Atilio Borón, Director and Professor at Programa Latinoamericano de Educación a Distancia en Ciencias Sociales (PLED), Dr. Juan

Eduardo Mendoza Pinto from the University of Concepción-Chile, Jose Miguel Alonso Trabanco, and former Venezuelan Ambassador and President of LACIGS, Mr. Roberto Palacios.

Background

LACIGS is an accumulation of efforts by various professionals that started off as an inspired idea in Switzerland. Whilst following a summer course at GIGS, former Ambassador Roberto Palacios and Mr. Humphrey Senior felt the absence of material relating to their respective geographical areas, Latin America and the Caribbean. After various discussions, the idea arose to start an organization in the region that would focus on geopolitical issues and opportunities in Latin America and the Caribbean. Together with Ms. Vanessa van Dijksseldonk, a young diplomat and academic, the institute was created and became a reality.

Curaçao was, for various reasons, the first choice for the location of the Institute. Curaçao is a country with a dynamic history and a unique location. As the part of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, Curaçao is an autonomous country rooted in the Caribbean and lies at the crossroads between the Caribbean, North and Latin American relations.

The aim of this institute is to create platforms to bring together scholars, academics, policy officers and diplomats, and representatives from the private sector and civil society, who are interested in broadening understanding of

these topics, and to teach, learn, and exchange ideas on geopolitical topics involving and affecting Latin America and the Caribbean.

Geopolitics

Geopolitics is the analysis of the relationship between geographical facts on the one hand, and international politics on the other. These geographical facts include essentially unchanging natural features, such as rivers, mountains, and oceans, along with elements of human and political geography such as national boundaries, trade networks, and concentrations of economic or military power. In other words, geopolitical conditions are the facts on the ground that governments consciously or unconsciously take into account when determining policy. As such, a refusal to recognize or understand geopolitical factors in world politics is not so much unethical, as it is foolish – like an insistence on playing chess without learning the rules.

LACIGS takes this train of thought a step further by focusing on Latin America and the Caribbean. Some examples of geopolitical occurrences in Latin America and the Caribbean discussed during the Winter Course included the ongoing presence of China and the United States of America in the Caribbean and Latin America, the historical relations between Venezuela and Curaçao, and the integration of the Caribbean and Latin America.

By using the lens and tools that geopolitics provides, one can better understand why particular events occur and how governments react to these events, basing their response on the geopolitical situation that facilitates or prohibits governments from determining its policies. Should you have any questions regarding LACIGS, please feel free to email us at: info@lacigs.org.

