# Latin America Topic Proposal

#### Submitted for the 2025-2026 College Policy Debate Season

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## Executive Summary

*“Take care and do not forget that ideas are also weapons.”*

Zapatista Army of National Liberation Subcomandante Marcos, 2000

### Why now? Timeliness

#### At some point, the College Policy Debate community needs to reckon with the fact that we have not debated about engagement with Latin America at the collegiate level since 1995, when we debated about Mexico engagement and 1999, when Cuba was one of the topics listed on a sanctions topic.

#### Why is this? These topic authors believe it is college policy debate’s fear of real controversy. Instead, we either recycle topics that we have seen multiple times over the past decade or introduce largely irrelevant topics to broader political controversies of the moment.

#### Even when topics could have addressed the question of Latin America, most debaters chose to run from the question, see the fact that over an entire year of a college immigration topic in 2011 there were only two debate partnerships who consistently read an affirmative about immigration from Latin America.

#### We are now in a state where Trump’s engagement with our Southern neighbor oscillates between racialized violence, strategic avoidance, and economic coercion. Failure to delve into conversations about positive engagement with Latin America now when there are mass deportations, increasing threats of expanded trade punishments, and strategic alignment by alternative actors does our students a disservice as civic intellectuals.

#### Now is an inflection point in re-calibrating US/Latin America engagement – introducing a controversy area rich with potential over what the US could do in the region, if Latin America would come to the table, and how a new engagement strategy situates within broader US grand strategy

#### Many scholars articulate a pivot to Latin America as an “urgency” – “time is of the essence” to craft strategies of engagement in Latin America that flip the script on Trump’s current “Donroe Doctrine.”

#### Trump’s "Donroe Doctrine" promotes aggressive unilateralism, redefining global alliances and North-South dynamics—debating this shift is key

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U.S. foreign policy is at a crossroads as the world grapples with President Donald Trump’s “Donroe Doctrine” – a reinterpretation of President James Monroe’s 1823 Monroe Doctrine. This twist in U.S. foreign policy has significant implications for international relations, such as handling the Ukrainian crisis at the White House, which led to the support of the UK. The Trumpian version of this concept, which heralds the onset of the “American golden age” and prioritizes domestic interests over multilateral commitments, is poised to redefine how the U.S. interacts with its neighbors and beyond. Could this new doctrine merely reflect an era of heightened tensions, or is it a transformative moment for American diplomacy? The potential for reshaping international relations is a compelling aspect of Trump’s foreign policy. Trump’s foreign policy demonstrates his assertive approach to international trade relations with his tariff policies, his stark criticism of NATO and global alliances, as evidenced by his stance on the Russia–Ukraine war, and his forceful stance toward China. He has consistently criticized international organizations, arguing that they undermine U.S. sovereignty and economic competitiveness. For instance, Trump has criticized NATO for bearing a disproportionate financial burden in defending Europe and has suggested withdrawing US support from NATO if allies fail to meet financial commitments. This policy has raised concerns among European leaders regarding the reliability of the U.S. as a security partner. Analysts argue that such policies could weaken NATO’s deterrence capabilities, though Trump insists they would make the alliance more equitable. Consequently, Trump avoids positioning the U.S. as the leader of a coalition in the Global North, indicating he is not interested in maintaining or strengthening traditional alliances. Instead, he emphasizes U.S. dominance on its own terms, focusing on its economic and geopolitical advantages. This may reflect an “America First” strategy that prioritizes national self-interest and suggests a move away from global leadership. Trump’s doctrine could potentially reshape the relationship between the Global South and the Global North as they navigate their unique challenges and opportunities. The terms Global South and Global North refer to socioeconomic and political divisions between countries, with the North representing wealthier, industrialized nations and the South consisting of poorer, less developed countries. These divisions arise from historical factors like colonialism and economic exploitation. While the Global North wields considerable power in international institutions, the Global South faces challenges such as poverty and political instability rooted in colonization. Understanding this divide and the global south’s economic performance is crucial when evaluating recent shifts in U.S. foreign policy, particularly under Donald Trump’s doctrine. The Global North includes wealthy countries with significant political influence through institutions like the IMF and the UN. In contrast, the Global South encompasses regions that face substantial economic challenges. The Global South is expected to have a political and economic resurgence supported by a new leadership style to foster success. The disparity between the Global South and the Global North has been a focal point in a new approach that classifies countries based on economic, social, and governance characteristics rather than historical links. By viewing the Global South through these interconnected lenses, The Donroe Doctrine could pave the way for a global power distribution driven by emerging economies and the shifting responsibilities of developed economies. This potential for a significant global power shift is a topic that will surely captivate the minds of scholars and policymakers alike. Donald Trump has suggested using military force to annex Greenland, the world’s largest island, due to its strategic shipping routes and rich deposits of rare earth elements essential for defense and electronics. Acquiring Greenland could enhance U.S. economic competitiveness, especially amid rising Arctic competition from climate change and a need to reduce reliance on Chinese materials. However, extracting these resources would face significant technological challenges and high costs, likely rendering such efforts impractical. Trump’s vision for the Western Hemisphere also includes expanding offshore drilling, changing the name of the Gulf of Mexico to the Gulf of America, and considering Canada to become the 51st state with hockey great Wayne Gretzky as Governor. Understanding Latin America’s largest and most significant country, Brazil, is a key example of how Trump’s foreign policy approach interacts with Global South leadership. Under President Jair Bolsonaro, Brazil became a key friend of the Trump administration, notably in its efforts to challenge left-wing governments in the region. While reflecting the contradiction between the United States’ emphasis on transactional diplomacy and the Global South’s broader goals, this partnership also opens the potential for new dialogues in Latin America, offering a hopeful outlook for the future of U.S. foreign policy and the Global North-South dynamics. Trump’s doctrine, which promotes a more interventionist stance towards Latin America, found a willing partner in Bolsonaro, who shared Trump’s skepticism of multilateralism. This partnership is built on shared conservative values. Trump’s foreign policy often undermines the sovereignty of nations in the Global South, such as Venezuela, by supporting opposition groups and recognizing Juan Guaidó as interim president. This interventionist stance contradicted the US’s prior non-intervention policy. Bolsonaro aligned Brazil’s foreign policy with the US to weaken Maduro’s government, reflecting the US’s support for right-wing regimes in the Global South, which clashed with the aspirations of many regional countries. Brazil’s involvement with Trump’s foreign policy approach also underscores the complex dynamics of the Global North and the South. While the U.S. and Brazil worked together to push back against leftist governments and maintain economic and political ties, the Global South’s broader push for autonomy often collided with Trump’s vision of a transactional, power-driven relationship. For example, Trump’s support for Bolsonaro’s environmental policies, heavily criticized for disregarding Indigenous rights and the Amazon rainforest, exposed the stark divide between the Global North’s emphasis on economic growth and the South’s need for environmental protection and sustainable development. This policy risked widening the divide between the U.S. and Global South countries advocating for sustainability and equity. However, it also inspires those championing these causes in global governance. The long-term impact of Trump’s foreign policy remains uncertain, underscoring the need for further analysis and understanding. Several key takeaways can be drawn, but the full implications of his actions are yet to be fully realized. Trump’s policies may reshape political dynamics in Latin America despite initial resistance from left-wing governments. His support for right-wing leaders could encourage stronger governance, potentially leading to greater stability if managed well. Positive outcomes for the region are possible by promoting dialogue and mutual interests.

#### Trump 2.0 reshapes U.S.-Latin America relations, reviving the Monroe Doctrine to counter China—debating these shifts is key

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Trump 2.0 has initiated a new phase in U.S.-Latin America relations, marked by both continuity and change in economic, security, and diplomatic policies. This approach shows a strategic adjustment of regional priorities, including sanctions on Venezuela, engagement with Argentina, and altering trade negotiations with Mexico and Colombia. While some Latin American leaders align with Trump’s policies, others experience tensions, especially regarding migration and trade disputes. The stakes are significant: Latin America is vital for the U.S. economy, a key geopolitical arena amid rising Chinese influence, and a source of immigration issues. For Latin American countries, U.S. policies influence their market access, investment prospects, and regional stability. As the administration strengthens its role in the region, understanding these shifting dynamics is crucial for grasping the future of inter-American relations and their global effects. As frequently emphasized during Donald Trump’s first term, his return to the presidency is expected to signal the resurgence of the Monroe Doctrine for Latin America. Outlined initially in 1823 by then-U.S. President James Monroe, this doctrine asserts that the United States rejects any intervention by external powers—mainly European countries—in the affairs of the Americas. Trump’s 2018 statement that the Monroe Doctrine remains a key priority of U.S. foreign policy indicated that this policy framework would shape the country’s economic, diplomatic, and security strategies in the region. Furthermore, Republican senators have reinforced this approach by legitimizing the doctrine and supporting efforts to curb foreign influence in the hemisphere. A defining factor in U.S.-Latin America relations under Trump 2.0 will be China. Having initiated trade wars against China in 2017, Trump is expected to invoke the Monroe Doctrine again to counter Beijing’s growing influence in Latin America. Since the early 2000s, China’s economic presence in the region has expanded significantly, bringing with it increasing political and diplomatic leverage. Chinese government embraced a ‘going out strategy’ that encouraged Chinese companies to go abroad to search for raw materials needed for its industrial development. Latin America was a significant region for new Chinese development strategy. The region is rich of various raw materials. Also, imported agricultural products from Latin America helped Chines government feed its huge population. Thus, Chinese companies started investing in the region first for extraction projects, then for infrastructure projects to guarantee transportation of raw materials to the country. This shift has offered Latin American countries an alternative to U.S. dominance. The erosion of U.S. influence in its so-called ‘backyard’ and the increasing autonomy of Latin American nations—particularly during the commodity boom between 2000-2013—are viewed by Trump’s administration, which favors isolationist policies, as challenges that must be reversed. Failing to generate sufficient consent mechanisms to encourage regional actors to align with the U.S., the Trump administration is expected to resort to coercion and pressure tactics against countries engaged in trade and diplomatic relations with China. For instance, the U.S. has issued warnings regarding China’s potential military use of the Panama Canal, framing its actions as efforts to safeguard American interests in the region. Trump’s desire to reclaim control over the Panama Canal may be part of a broader strategy to counter China or a new manifestation of U.S. expansionism. In response to U.S. pressure, Panama’s government appears to be distancing itself from China while increasing cooperation with American companies. However, should the U.S. retake canal control, it could provoke a geopolitical crisis and further damage its reputation in Latin America. Another key factor shaping U.S.-Latin America relations in the coming period will be the economic, political, and diplomatic dynamics within North America. Although Trump replaced NAFTA (North American Free Trade Agreement) with the USMCA (United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement) during his first term, his renewed push for high tariffs on Mexico and Canada at the start of his second term threatens the stability of trade relations in the region. Trump’s tendency to frame Latin America as a source of irregular migration and organized crime raises concerns among regional leaders about the implications of such rhetoric. Despite extensive border militarization, family separations, and mass deportations, these measures have failed to curb migration flows. The Trump administration’s proposal to designate Mexican drug cartels as terrorist organizations also raises critical questions about the potential consequences of military interventions—whether they will destabilize local and national contexts or escalate violence in U.S. cities. Studies explain that the war on drugs didn’t decrease cocaine production and increased the decentralization of smuggling routes rather than eliminating the trade. Trump’s tariff policies, coupled with his anti-immigration stance and disproportionate drug control measures, could jeopardize U.S.-Mexico cooperation on migration policy and push Mexico to seek alternatives to its most important partner. According to Article 32.10 of the USMCA, if one of the signatory countries enters a free trade agreement with a non-market economy, the other parties have the right to terminate the agreement. This provision significantly constrains Mexico’s ability to expand trade relations with China. Although Mexican President Claudia Sheinbaum has taken steps to address migration-related concerns, the Trump administration is unlikely to alter its position on tariffs, as trade with Latin American countries is perceived in the U.S. as a direct threat to domestic employment. Additionally, Washington’s confrontational stance toward Mexico has prompted ALBA (Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of Our America) countries like Venezuela and Cuba to express solidarity with Mexico. These ideological divergences suggest that Latin America’s geopolitical landscape could become increasingly polarized under Trump’s leadership. Another key issue will be the ongoing crisis in Venezuela and the Trump administration’s approach toward Nicolás Maduro’s regime. The political and socio-economic crisis has been raised concerns about hyperinflation, democratic backsliding, and humanitarian crisis resulted with Venezuelan migrant and refugee crisis in the region. During his first term, Trump secured the support of right-wing governments, particularly Jair Bolsonaro’s Brazil, in pursuing a U.S.-led resolution to the crisis. This strategy further isolated Venezuela in the region and even pushed regional organizations like UNASUR (Union of South American Nations) to the brink of disintegration. Although sanctions on the Maduro government may decrease in Trump’s second term, key political figures in his administration—such as Secretary of State Marco Rubio—view military intervention in Venezuela as a viable option. Venezuelan migration remains a pressing issue in Latin America, particularly for Colombia, Peru, and Brazil. However, South American leaders take a critical stance toward potential U.S. military intervention against Maduro. Additionally, Cuba, which faced tensions with Trump’s administration after he repealed Obama-era agreements, continues to support Venezuela. On a broader geopolitical scale, external actors like Iran and China have voiced strong opposition to potential U.S. intervention in Venezuela, creating further challenges for the Trump administration. South American nations, particularly Brazil and Argentina, are expected to be cautious regarding U.S. tariffs on key exports such as steel and agricultural products. Brazil’s growing role in BRICS and its deepening economic ties with China could be perceived as a strategic threat by the Trump administration. For instance, BRICS’s decision to expand economic transactions in yuan as an alternative to the U.S. dollar has prompted Trump to issue threats against member states. Moreover, ideological divergences between Lula and Trump could strain bilateral relations despite Brazil’s emphasis on cooperation. Trump’s protectionist measures may negatively impact Brazil’s agricultural and energy sectors. Given that Brazilian exports to the U.S. reached record levels in 2024, any deterioration in relations could have significant economic repercussions, potentially influencing the 2026 Brazilian elections. On the contrary, Javier Milei, the President of Argentina, has cultivated a notably close relationship with Trump, grounded in shared ideological perspectives and mutual admiration. However, potential limitations exist in this burgeoning partnership. Milei’s proposal to exit Mercosur (Southern Common Market) has sparked regional tensions, as the bloc’s regulations prohibit unilateral trade agreements without collective consent. Additionally, Milei’s confrontational stance toward China, labeling it an “assassin” and expressing intent to freeze relations, could pose challenges. China is a significant trading partner for Argentina, and such a drastic shift in foreign policy might have economic repercussions. In summary, while the ideological alignment between Milei and Trump lays a foundation for potential cooperation, domestic and international practical challenges may constrain their collaboration’s depth and effectiveness. Ultimately, the influence of the Monroe Doctrine on Trump’s Latin America policy may manifest in efforts to reinforce U.S. dominance in the region, curb the impact of China and other external powers, and safeguard U.S. security interests. However, this approach’s regional repercussions and potential consequences must be carefully assessed. The Trump administration will undoubtedly need to formulate a strategy to counter China’s growing presence in Latin America. Rather than relying solely on threats and sanctions, this strategy should focus on fostering competition through diversified investments and infrastructure projects. Encouraging U.S. companies to shift production to Latin America to strengthen regional supply chains also remains a viable option. However, it remains uncertain whether the U.S. will provide substantial investment or infrastructure assistance to the region. Meanwhile, China has already braced itself against the Trump administration, with Beijing signaling its preparedness for a potential economic confrontation. At the same time, ideological divisions and differing priorities continue to undermine Latin America’s capacity to respond collectively to common challenges. Trump’s preference for bilateral agreements over multilateralism threatens to weaken regional unity on critical issues such as climate change, inequality, poverty, and organized crime. In this context, a key development to watch will be how Lula da Silva’s government positions itself as a regional power in response to Trump’s interventionist policies. The extent to which Brazil possesses the structural resources to promote regional cooperation and how it balances the U.S.-China power struggle in favor of Latin America’s interests will also be crucial in shaping the region’s trajectory in the coming years.

### Core Controversy

#### Engagement with Latin America is an underexplored area of policy. Debate on this topic would allow for a number of advantages centered around development of Latin American economies, competition with China over influence with these countries, and would allow for Kritiks focused on the implementation of this engagement.

O’Neil, 2-20-24 (Shannon K., Vice President of Studies and Nelson and David Rockefeller Senior Fellow for Latin America Studies at the Council on Foreign Relations, “The United States’ Missed Opportunity in Latin America”, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/united-states/united-states-missed-opportunity-latin-america>) AJW

When policymakers consider national security, they tend to think first of military capabilities: the weaponry and ammunition a country possesses, the state of its armed forces, its border defenses, its surveillance and cybersecurity. Since 2020, however, U.S. national security strategy has taken a sharply commercial turn. The COVID-19 pandemic and its huge disruptions of economies made strategists more conscious of supply chains’ fragility. Where, exactly, are all the chips and ball bearings that go into weapons manufactured? The pandemic also illuminated just how much U.S. companies depend on China in the multistep manufacturing processes that bring products to consumers, including items crucial for national security and for the transition to green energy. China currently processes 85 percent of the critical minerals that go into high-tech devices. China also boasts 77 percent of the world’s battery-manufacturing capacity and makes more than half the electric vehicles sold worldwide. Beijing makes no secret of its intent to displace Washington as the motor that drives the world’s economies—or of its willingness to use subsidies, espionage, and coercion to achieve this end. Since U.S. President Joe Biden took office in early 2021, his administration has worked to try to diminish the threat China’s supply chain dominance poses to the United States. In his first 100 days, he ordered a sweeping analysis of the supply chains for four areas vital to U.S. security and economic stability: critical minerals, large-capacity batteries, semiconductors, and pharmaceuticals. The review found that the minerals that power Americans’ mobile phones and computers mostly come from China, as do a good portion of the active ingredients that go into 120 of the most basic medicines. The analysis showed how reliant the U.S. electric vehicle, solar panel, and wind turbine industries are on Chinese factories. Biden has sought to help U.S. companies fill these supply-chain gaps. He has aggressively pursued “friend shoring,” establishing working groups with European countries to address drug shortages and secure critical minerals, as well as coordinating with the European Union on supply chain, technology, data, and investment policies. His administration has dedicated even more energy to fortifying economic alliances in Asia, launching the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework—which focuses heavily on supply chains—and inviting Japan and South Korea to collaborate on an early-warning system to predict supply chain disruptions. These far-flung efforts, however, badly neglect solutions in the United States’ own backyard: the countries of Latin America. The region is rich in the critical minerals the United States needs. Many Latin American countries already boast sophisticated pharmaceutical industries. Others have technically sophisticated, economically competitive, and geographically proximate workforces that could assemble, test, and package microchips made in U.S.-based fabrication plants. American car makers already rely on Mexico, and incorporating Latin America more fully into electric vehicle manufacturing would make the industry more competitive by drawing on different labor markets and tapping into a fuller range of subsidies provided by the Inflation Reduction Act. U.S. leaders consistently overrate the worth of securing alliances next door to China and overestimate Europe’s commercial prospects. Neither Europe nor Asia can provide substantial or sustainable solutions to the threats to U.S. supply chains. The United States and Europe can certainly benefit from unifying the way they set technology standards, screen their foreign investments, and move toward more environmentally friendly and labor-friendly sourcing of all kinds of goods. But Europe will never become a strong source of critical minerals or an affordable supplier of inputs to semiconductors or electric vehicles. Other than Australia, few U.S. allies in the Indo-Pacific have significant critical mineral reserves. And it will be enormously hard to pry Asian electric vehicle, semiconductor, and pharmaceutical supply chains free of Chinese influence. In terms of geographical proximity, Latin America, by contrast, is a Goldilocks option for U.S. manufacturers. It is not so close to the United States that moving production there would dangerously concentrate risk from natural or manmade disasters, but it is not so far that it creates complicated long-distance logistics problems. The United States has a great deal to gain broadly from helping Latin American countries strengthen their economies. Most of those countries are democracies, and economic growth and democratic consolidation in the region would create new investment opportunities and middle-class consumers for U.S. companies. And Latin America is the one region in the world with which the United States has an existing trade and market advantage, having already inked free trade agreements with 11 countries there. Yet the United States is failing to engage Latin America’s nations commercially or strategically, missing an opportunity to shore up national security and wasting built-in geopolitical advantages. Indeed, the United States cannot afford to overlook the opportunities Latin America offers. China already recognizes Latin America’s potential. It is swooping in fast, expanding its trade with the region from $12 billion in 2000 to nearly $500 billion in 2022. Its mining and refining companies are moving to lock up access to the region’s natural resources. When it comes to the countries south of the U.S. border, some American leaders may simply feel that good fences make good neighbors. Taking that stance would be a big, counterproductive mistake. If the United States fails to integrate Latin America substantially into U.S. supply chains and keeps looking farther afield for economic allies, it will only help bring more Chinese influence closer to its doorstep. ALL THE WRONG PLACES Eighty percent of the U.S. supply of critical minerals comes from abroad, and the United States relies especially heavily on China for materials used in battery production such as nickel, manganese, and graphite. Sixty percent of the microchips—and 90 percent of the most advanced kind of semiconductor chips—vital to both Americans’ daily communications and U.S. national defense are manufactured in a nation under perpetual Chinese threat, Taiwan. Over 70 percent of the facilities that make the advanced ingredients on which the U.S. pharmaceutical industry relies are located abroad, and the United States is running short of more medications than at any other point in nearly a decade. China has become the United States’ biggest provider of many antibiotics, blood thinners, and chemotherapy and diabetes drugs, as well as the main source for the active ingredients in pharmaceuticals manufactured in India, a top source of imported U.S. medications. To shore up U.S. supply chains, the Biden administration has placed big bets on boosting domestic capacity and on better integrating Europe and Asia into U.S. manufacturing. The 2022 CHIPS and Science Act allocated tens of billions of dollars to build up U.S. domestic semiconductor production. The 2022 Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) offered electric-vehicle manufacturers subsidies of up to $7,500 per car if most of the inputs are made in the United States or in countries with which Washington has free-trade agreements. The U.S. Department of Energy recently launched investments into more than two dozen critical minerals and materials projects across the United States, including lithium mines and refineries. And in November 2023, Biden announced a major initiative to encourage domestic pharmaceutical production, rebooting the pandemic-era authorization President Donald Trump gave the U.S. Defense Department to produce crucial medications. The pharmaceutical supply chain “is going to start here in America,” Biden vowed. U.S. leaders consistently overrate the worth of securing alliances next door to China. The Biden administration’s security and resilience efforts, however, are bound to fall short. Indeed, they already do. Most of the money earmarked for domestic semiconductor production has gone toward the capital- and tech-intensive manufacture of chips in fabrication plants. But U.S. national security depends on controlling a fuller supply chain—from chip design to assembly, testing, and packaging. The vast majority of these steps still take place in Asia, particularly in China. New Arizona- and Texas-based fabrication plants will continue to have to send their chips back to geopolitical rivals for completion. Full back-end chip manufacturing is unlikely ever to take place solely in the United States: the final chips would be too costly to be commercially viable. In terms of electric vehicles, no U.S. ally in Europe or Asia will be able to undo China’s control of the critical minerals these vehicles require. They don’t have the natural resources, and environmental regulations and costs make large-scale refining in these regions less competitive. And few of these nations qualify for the IRA’s subsidies as they have not ratified free-trade agreements with the United States. Even with subsidies, U.S. domestic electric vehicle production faces stiff competition given the technological advances and economies of scale of China’s heavily subsidized rival models. When it comes to refining chemicals and manufacturing anodes, cathodes, and battery cells, the United States lags behind China. In early 2023, when Ford unveiled a plan to build a new $3.5 billion electric-vehicle battery factory in Michigan, it indicated it would bring Chinese engineers to the plant and license Chinese technology rather than develop its own. Despite U.S. efforts, Asian countries’ integration with China will likely only deepen in the coming years. In September 2020, 15 Asian countries—including China, as well as the major U.S. allies Japan and South Korea—signed the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership, which intends to coordinate production across Asian economies, eliminating tariffs, streamlining customs, and unifying rules of origin requirements. Over time, products made throughout Asia will likely have more, not fewer, Chinese inputs, especially if China gets its wish to join the Comprehensive and Progressive Trans-Pacific Partnership. When Trump withdrew the United States from the agreement’s predecessor, the Trans-Pacific Partnership, he incentivized the countries that stuck with the agreement to build supply chains that cut out the United States. THE MISSING LINK Latin America offers the best hope the United States has to diversify and relocate its vulnerable, highly consequential supply chains for critical minerals, semiconductors, pharmaceuticals, and large-capacity batteries—all four of the supply chains that Biden’s administration identified as most crucial to U.S. security and prosperity. Latin America has ample reserves of half the over four dozen minerals Biden deemed critical. The region has a particular abundance of the minerals needed to make batteries: it is estimated to hold 60 percent of the world’s lithium reserves, 23 percent of the world’s graphite, and over 15 percent of its manganese and nickel. Latin America already mines a good amount of the world’s copper, which is crucial for the construction of electric vehicles, wind turbines, and other green technologies. Latin America also has a strong leg up through formal preferential trading ties, as a majority of all U.S. free trade agreements are with countries in the region. These reduce costs for importers and exporters, and safeguard investments. They also enable critical mineral providers to take advantage of U.S. subsidies for electric vehicles. Mexico can provide a further lift to the United States’ ambition to build out resilient electric vehicle supply chains: its factories are already pillars of the North American car industry, and electric vehicle components manufactured in Mexico or Canada are eligible for the IRA’s full set of subsidies. Brazil, Costa Rica, Mexico, and Panama are well positioned to take the place of Asian countries in testing, packaging, and other less capital-intensive and technologically intensive semiconductor steps: investments and initial facilities and pilot training programs are already underway in these countries. And to quickly boost resilience in its pharmaceutical supply, the United States need not look further than the Western Hemisphere. The region already produces tens of billions of dollars’ worth of vaccines, active pharmaceutical ingredients, and consumer-ready medications every year and hosts sophisticated research and development institutes: Brazil’s Butantan Institute and Oswaldo Cruz Foundation are among the 15 largest vaccine manufacturers in the world. Mexico already produces a variety of medicines and medical devices, exporting $800 million in pharmaceuticals to the United States each year. Even smaller producers such as Argentina and Uruguay make over 30 percent of the drugs they consume. These manufacturing bases could become robust alternative suppliers. With the right investments in training and infrastructure, within a decade, American companies could be sourcing all the lithium they need from a vibrant Latin American “lithium triangle”—Argentina, Bolivia, and Chile—and partnering with busy factories in Mexico to produce electric vehicle batteries, plastic casings, and chargers. When U.S. patients ask their doctors where their children’s mumps, measles, and rubella shots come from, the answer could be Brazil. American smartphones could feature chip technology tested and packaged in Panama. Most important, many more stages of the production cycles for America’s most critical national security technologies could unfold close to U.S. borders. FLAWS IN THE OINTMENT Latin America already has outsize access to the U.S. consumer economy. The United States is the region’s largest trading partner, with more than $1.1 trillion in goods and services exchanged each year. It is also Latin America’s biggest outside investor, contributing nearly 40 percent of all the foreign direct investment the region receives. Latin America’s political culture makes it a natural collaborator, too. Latin America is where democracy and development meet: over 550 million citizens there continue to use the ballot box to resolve their differences and address their grievances. Public opinion in the region generally regards the United States better than its geopolitical rivals: recent surveys suggest that strong majorities of Argentines, Brazilians, Colombians, and Mexicans hold a positive view of the United States, outpacing any warmth of feeling for China and Russia. Four decades of polls collated in 2022 by the Centre for the Future of Democracy show that the United States has recently become more popular in Latin America, unlike in the rest of the developing world. So why is the United States neglecting to engage Latin America commercially or strategically? The CHIPS and Science Act is underwriting studies of Costa Rica’s and Panama’s ability to contribute to the semiconductor supply chain. And U.S. officials are working to beef up Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) funding to support American companies’ bids for investment-ready projects in the region. But this does not reflect the ambition the United States needs. The infrastructure deficit in Latin America is monumental. Transportation is expensive within and between Latin American countries thanks to a lack of paved roads, railway lines, deep commercial ports, and flights. Bureaucratic red tape adds to businesses’ expenses in the region. Many new industries require expertise that Latin American workforces still lack. Latin American nations must also seize opportunities themselves. Local governments will need to invest in infrastructure, education, and the rule of law to better attract U.S. and other international companies. They will need to think strategically about the niches they can best fill in supply chains, differentiating themselves and specializing in specific components rather than trying to do it all. But a stronger U.S.-Latin American economic-security alliance would not just be nice to have: for both places, it is an urgent need. China has recently transformed its presence in Latin America to play an important, even dominant, role in many of the region’s economies—a development that seriously threatens both Latin American and U.S. interests. OPPORTUNITY COST Over the last two decades, China has recognized opportunities in Latin America that the United States has overlooked. It has assiduously courted Latin American governments by making loans, at times coercing them to withdraw diplomatic recognition from Taiwan. China is now the largest trading partner for Brazil, Chile, Peru, and Uruguay and the second largest trading partner for a score of other nations, accounting for nearly 20 percent of Latin America’s total trade. Beijing has also become a significant banker in the region. China is now one of the only sources of outside financing available to Argentina, Ecuador, and Venezuela. Beijing has curtailed its international lending since 2020, but it still comes through in emergencies: in 2023 alone, China stepped in twice to offer currency swaps to help Argentina meet its International Monetary Fund repayments during a volatile election season. Through its Belt and Road Initiative and other commercial forays, China has also become a big funder and builder of Latin American infrastructure. Its banks finance the mostly Chinese companies now building highways, ports, hydropower dams, solar power plants, and electricity grids in over 20 countries. It bankrolls energy and mining projects across the region, including an $8 billion nuclear power plant in Argentina and a nearly $10 billion copper mine in Peru. During the first two decades of the twenty-first century, these growing trade, financial, and infrastructure ties filled many Latin American governments’ coffers and brought in much-needed capital. Yet China’s growing role in the region has not been an unalloyed good. As Latin America’s trade with China ballooned, many Latin American economies simultaneously became less diverse, less sophisticated, and less equal. China’s economic activity in the Americas is lopsided: between 2015 and 2019, just five commodities—iron ore, copper ore, refined copper, soy, and crude oil—accounted for nearly 70 percent of Latin America’s exports to China. China then sold finished goods back to the region, undercutting local manufacturers. China has recognized opportunities in Latin America that the United States has overlooked. Chinese investments tell a similarly ambiguous story. Beijing’s foreign direct investment in the continent remains somewhat limited, at just six percent of the foreign capital that has flowed into the region over the last 20 years. This investment was concentrated primarily in natural resources, energy, and mining, only recently shifting a bit toward utilities and power generation. The loans that China provides are often opaque and onerous. They can feature high interest rates and provisions for immediate repayment if China or its companies feel slighted. The loans are often secured with natural resources as collateral at fixed and disadvantageous rates: between 2009 and 2021, when Ecuador had to send more than a billion barrels of oil to China to service some $20 billion in loans, it sacrificed nearly $5 billion it could have received on the open market. Many Chinese lenders to Latin America subordinate other creditors by demanding that they receive payments first in the event of a default, stymieing multilateral solutions to unsustainable sovereign debt loads. Chinese mining and other infrastructure projects are not known for their transparency—or for their adherence to domestic or international labor or environmental standards. Indeed, local communities and NGOs in Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, and Peru are fighting Chinese companies, citing deforestation, water pollution, environmental degradation, and poor working conditions in their numerous legal complaints. And China has used its growing importance to the region to pressure Latin American nations. In 2020, aligning himself with U.S. President Donald Trump, Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro intimated that Huawei would be excluded from Brazil’s 5G network. China then threatened to withhold COVID-19 vaccines from the country, and Bolsonaro had to relent. FRIEND WITH BENEFITS Since 2014, Latin America has lost its economic luster. Growth has lagged behind other emerging markets: Latin American economies have grown, on average, less than one percent over the last decade, far less than Africa, eastern Europe, and Southeast Asia. This sluggish performance has many drivers: COVID-19 arguably hit Latin America harder than any other region, and many governments there have struggled to ensure their populations’ basic safety. Tens of millions of Latin Americans have lost their middle-class foothold as gains in fighting poverty and inequality in the first part of the twenty-first century have largely reversed. But China has also played a role in this reversal of fortunes. China’s expanding economic importance to Latin America is, in fact, part of why many of the region’s nations have struggled to move up the value chain. Commodities now make up more, not less, of the region’s exports than they did in 2000, dangerously concentrating economies that already lacked diversity. Latin American countries, along with countries in Africa, have suffered premature deindustrialization as their manufacturing sectors shrank in size and economic importance before their economies matured. To be fair, the history of commercial engagements between the United States and the region has not always been pretty, either. Countries such as Argentina and Bolivia continue to perceive U.S. efforts with particular suspicion owing to the many damaging U.S. interventions throughout the region in the twentieth century. More recently, in the 1990s, IBM bribed Argentine government employees for contracts to modernize the computer systems in the country’s largest government-owned bank, and in 2003, Walmart paid off zoning officials in Mexico to place a superstore next to the historic pyramids of Teotihuacán. Latin America offers the United States its best hope to diversify its vulnerable supply chains. But expansive enforcement of the U.S. Foreign Corrupt Practices Act has vastly reduced the amount of bribery involved in deals with U.S. companies: both IBM and Walmart were punished. And given the disclosures that U.S.-based public companies make to the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission—as well as the myriad climate, labor, and governance promises that U.S. executives and company boards make to their shareholders and consumers—U.S. business operations and practices abroad tend to be more transparent, accountable, and mutually beneficial than commercial arrangements with companies not subject to these safeguards and legal requirements. The economic relations that Washington pursues with Latin America already differ sharply from those that Beijing has built. Latin America’s exports to the United States are more diverse and lean toward more sophisticated and more value-added products; the majority are in machinery and transportation. When U.S. companies invest in Latin America, they tend to put money into higher-value-added sectors such as manufacturing, financial services, and information technologies and services. This helps create more stable and better-paying jobs and supports educational advancements. And Western firms, unlike Chinese ones, often bring much-needed technology and intellectual property into the region. In July 2023, McKinsey estimated that nearly 90 percent of Latin America’s outside knowledge-based capital has come from Canada, the United States, and the European Union. Overall, engaging more closely with the United States offers Latin American countries a better path toward inclusive economic growth than does engaging with China. BETTER TOGETHER U.S. leaders must wake up to Latin America’s potential. The January 2023 Americas Partnership for Economic Prosperity was a start: 11 Latin American and Caribbean countries signed on to a U.S.-led initiative to boost trade, investment, and integrate regulations across the Western Hemisphere. In November of that year, APEP unveiled an agenda to expand and strengthen regional supply chains for clean energy, medical supplies, and semiconductors. It announced new financing mechanisms from the IDB and the U.S. International Development Finance Corporation (DFC) to build trade and energy infrastructure, $5 million in new USAID support to Western Hemisphere entrepreneurs, and $89 million in additional outlays for migrant-receiving nations such as Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, and Peru. These initiatives are positive steps. But much more must be done to unlock Latin America’s great promise. First, the United States needs to change the rules and practices that structure lending. The DFC is largely prohibited from lending to the higher-income countries that would be vital to building out successful Western Hemisphere supply chains. The IDB, meanwhile, leans toward blue-chip investments to maintain its triple-A bond rating. But for APEP to work, it will have to invest in riskier ventures that create and expand new industries and build the supply chains they entail. Through an act of Congress, the United States should give the IDB a substantial capital increase to help APEP fulfill its mission. Access to financing is just one hurdle. If U.S. companies want to compete with China on infrastructure or on other government contracts in Latin America, they need to be provided with more transparent ground rules. As a whole, Latin American countries rank below their Asian and Western European counterparts on Transparency International’s Corruption Perceptions Index and in measures of rule of law. U.S. government agencies should provide technical assistance and expertise to their local counterparts to draft public tenders with clear and transparent legal guarantees and anticorruption safeguards. Hemispheric supply-chain ecosystems cannot be developed through a handful of biannual meetings of heads of state. This complex commercial agenda needs a mandate and a dedicated staff to drive coordination, collaboration, and implementation. APEP must establish a secretariat akin to that of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation, which boasts a staff of over 50 at its Singapore headquarters. Standing committees, working groups, and task forces are funded by established member annual dues; APEP could do the same. U.S.-tied regional supply chains will not survive if they are not commercially competitive. Unifying and harmonizing rules of origin across the United States’ Western Hemisphere free-trade agreements would reduce costs. More than that, however, the United States needs to revive its interest in free trade as an international diplomatic and commercial tool. Even dedicated U.S. allies cannot substantially benefit the United States if they still face tariffs and cumbersome regulatory hurdles. As a first step, the Biden administration and the U.S. Congress should move to include all South American critical mineral producers in the IRA subsidy program, which currently covers only the United States’ free-trade partners. The United States’ security depends on Latin America’s broader social stability. Organized crime—powered by not just drug trafficking but also trafficking in migrants, kidnapping, and extortion—threatens the region’s fragile democratic development and terrorizes populations. Too often, the ill-gotten gains of Latin American crime networks flow through the U.S. financial system unimpeded. The U.S. Treasury’s Financial Crimes Enforcement Network needs more staff, and it needs to expand its attention beyond a narrow focus on antiterrorism. Moreover, Washington must support police forces and court systems in Latin America by providing equipment, intelligence, and training, as well as backing the local watchdogs that help keep governments and others honest. Organized crime not only suppresses economic growth in Latin America. Cartels help kill tens of thousands of Americans who die from drug overdoses every year, far more than the terrorist networks that now dominate the Treasury’s portfolios. The United States must work harder to curtail its own contribution to this security crisis by blunting its demand for illegal drugs. Crime lords would have fewer markets without American consumers. More funding for expanded drug-use prevention and rehabilitation programs is not just a social good: it is a top U.S. economic and national security priority. If Latin American nations prosper, their citizens will have more reasons to plan for futures at home. If Washington better understood the gains it could make by integrating Latin America more thoroughly into U.S. supply chains, it might also find it easier to address the hopelessly gridlocked, ideologically charged issue of immigration. Over 20 million people in the Western Hemisphere have been forcibly driven from their homes by violence, repression, extreme weather, and economic desperation. That accounts for 20 percent of displaced people worldwide, even though Latin America is home to less than ten percent of the world’s population. Many of these sojourners are trying to cross the U.S.-Mexican border. But Americans often do not realize that their country is not alone in receiving migrants: of the more than seven million Venezuelans who have fled their country since 2015, eight in ten live elsewhere in Latin America. Costa Rica is home to over half of all Nicaraguan refugees and asylum seekers. The United States must drop its siege mentality on immigration and start to understand it as a complex regional problem. If they work in concert, Western Hemisphere governments can more easily expand programs for humanitarian relief and housing, schools, and social services. They will also be better able to fund bigger policy shifts such as helping farmers in Central America plant more weather-resistant crops and providing seed capital for migrant-led business ventures. The same commercial investments that could address U.S. national security weaknesses could also help stem the forces now pushing millions of migrants to leave their home countries and pulling young people into organized crime. If Latin American nations prosper, their citizens will have more reasons to plan for futures at home. Latin America’s combination of proximity, bounty, and democratic bona fides make its countries better suppliers, producers, customers, and partners for the United States than nations in any other place in the world. Latin America has so much of what the United States needs—and vice versa.

### Novice Urgency

#### While there is no universal definition of a good or bad topic for novice recruitment and retention, it is worthwhile to listen to programs with historically rich novice participation. Overall, concerns have focused on making topics “too niche” or “wonky” to induce excitement in a typical freshman student. Latin America is a conversation any typical college student considering joining a debate team could expect that they would have, considering how often it is discussed on the news.

#### Beyond that, the Latin America controversy area is a richly contested topic that can truly connect to younger students, particularly younger students within the Latinx population who can see their own perspectives and background being invited to the table of debate dialogue.

#### I think this is particularly relevant in a world of the Trump administration, where prospective novice debaters EXPECT that joining a debate team means that they will have the opportunity to delve into CONTROVERSIAL discussions that are the opposite of actions they are seeing being taken in the news.

#### I will preface this topic paper with this statement: Both times we have submitted this proposal, more than half of the work was produced by the novices on the GMU debate team along with prospective novice debaters from GMU’s *COMM 362: Argument in Public Policy* class. I believe this proves a unique concept for the Latin America controversy, which is that new debaters will be able to grapple with this topic, not only on an argumentative level – but also a research level. The cards are quite easy to find and the discussion over the United States’ relationship to its Southern neighbor is an interesting one for a non-debate person.

#### Many topic papers lend lip service to their idea’s ability to garner novice participation, but in reality it is often just that – a false statement written by coaches who do not have much to do with novice debate. This paper requests voters to do a bit more.

#### Think about the topics being proposed and truly ask – will this topic genuinely support recruitment and retention of younger thinkers? More importantly, will the topic in question support recruitment and retention of a wide variety of populations of young thinkers? Or is the topic in question simply yet another example of debate cordoning itself off from the wider public in favor of “debate centric” topics that get us to existential crisis the fastest. Will it be interesting through an entire year of debate, or will novices feel like each round is the same discussion?

#### Debate does not need another topic that prepares students for law school or sets up varsity debaters for the best NDT finals affirmative, we need a topic that reaches across a multiplicity of audiences and truly places our activity at the heart of public dialogue.

### Resolutions

#### [1] Broad/Elegant Resolutions

#### [a] No List: The United States Federal Government should substantially increase its foreign policy engagement with Latin America.

We do not recommend this. As you can see in the Appendix, there are a lot of countries within this umbrella with distinct conversations about engagement. We think this would be too unwieldy. We also believe while there are definitions cards to be had about “engagement” it is not a big enough limiter to serve as the only mechanism word on a topic with no country limits.

#### [b] Yes List: The United States Federal Government should substantially increase its foreign policy engagement with Mexico, Nicaragua, Cuba, Venezuela, and/or Brazil.

We like the list addition, but think it suffers from the similar issue as above. We believe this would be a larger example of [4a].

#### [c] Yes List: The United States Federal Government should substantially increase its economic engagement with Mexico, Nicaragua, Cuba, Venezuela, and/or Brazil.

We like this list option. We believe this is a smaller subset of [1b], as it constrains mechanisms to solely economic. This would limit the Puerto Rico suggestion, as the affirmative identified in this paper (statehood) would not on face meet economic engagement. However, if the committee/voters believe (like we do) that Puerto Rico is an important addition to the topic, we would err toward the formal list topics included below.

#### [2] 2013 HS Topic Redux

#### The United States Federal Government should substantially increase its economic and/or diplomatic engagement with Cuba, Mexico, and/or Venezuela.

We think this resolution would still be sufficient to sustain aff/neg ground in the contemporary moment. Cuba, Venezuela, and Mexico are the three most commonly cited countries throughout the past decade about increasing engagement.

#### [3] Floor/Ceiling Resolution

#### The United States Federal Government should substantially increase its foreign policy engagement with Latin America by at least increasing economic diplomacy [could also use diplomatic engagement] with Mexico, Nicaragua, Cuba, Venezuela, and/or Brazil.

We think this structure eliminates too much affirmative shiftiness over the phrase “diplomatic engagement” and forces affirmatives to defend some sort of economic collaboration as a stable link mechanism. Because this also allows the broad “engagement” ceiling, we would not recommend adding another country.

#### [4] List Resolutions:

#### [a] No Ceiling/Floor/No Country Spec: The United States Federal Government should increase its foreign policy engagement with Latin America in one or more of the following ways: Migration Diplomacy, Lifting Sanctions, Health Diplomacy, Supply Chain Diplomacy

This is one of the smallest suggestions in terms of mechanism. We think these four affirmative areas are rather deep in terms of literature and are confident would sustain a year of debate.

#### [b] Yes Ceiling/Floor: The United States Federal Government should substantially increase its foreign policy engagement with Latin America through at least: Migration Diplomacy, Lifting Sanctions, Health Diplomacy, Supply Chain Diplomacy

This is a medium version of the no ceiling list of [4a]. A lot of the solvency advocates about lifting sanctions or engaging in climate diplomacy identify other things that should occur to solve the advantages. This allows the affirmative a broader scope to ensure advantage solvency.

#### [c] No Ceiling/No Floor, Yes Country Spec:

#### The United States Federal Government should increase its foreign policy engagement with Mexico, Nicaragua, Cuba, Venezuela, and/or Brazil in one or more of the following ways: Migration Diplomacy, Lifting Sanctions, Health Diplomacy, Supply Chain Diplomacy

#### [5] Normalization

#### The United States Federal Government should normalize its relations with Venezuela, Nicaragua, and/or Cuba.

This topic introduces the concept of relations normalization – thus constraining country options to the three most “limited engaged” or “negatively engaged” countries in Latin America.

#### \*\*\*Note: several of the topics below have country lists. We have provided evidence supporting the recommendations of those countries in the appendix as we think each provides a depth of ground for both sides and are unique in the present US engagement environment. However, there are some countries we have not included that we do not per se say should be excluded, but would require a bit more research investment to quality control. Those are included in the “alternative option countries” section of the appendix, and could supplement or replace any of our suggested list countries.

### Definitions

#### [1] USFG Actor Definition

#### Actor for foreign policy engagement is the Federal Government

University of York no date [What is foreign policy? https://online.york.ac.uk/what-is-foreign-policy/]

American foreign policy is overseen by the U.S. Department of State, which says its mission is to “protect and promote U.S. security, prosperity, and democratic values, and shape an international environment in which all Americans can thrive.” Domestic bills and legislation connected to foreign policy are managed by the United States House Committee on Foreign Affairs, a standing committee of the U.S. House of Representatives that has jurisdiction over matters such as foreign assistance, HIV/AIDS in foreign countries, and the promotion of democracy. It also has six standing subcommittees that oversee issues connected to human rights practices, disaster assistance, international development, and so on in different regions of the world, such as Asia or the Middle East.

#### [2] Foreign Policy Definitions

#### Foreign policy is actions toward another country – requires diplomacy

University of York no date [What is foreign policy? https://online.york.ac.uk/what-is-foreign-policy/]

What is foreign policy? Foreign policy is the mechanism national governments use to guide their diplomatic interactions and relationships with other countries. A state’s foreign policy reflects its values and goals, and helps drive its political and economic aims in the global arena. Many foreign policies also have a strong focus on national and international security, and will help determine how a country interacts with international organisations, such as the United Nations, and citizens of other countries. Foreign policies are developed and influenced by a number of factors. These include: the country’s circumstances in a number of areas, including geographically, financially, politically, and so on the behaviour and foreign policies of other countries the state of international order and affairs more widely (for example, is there war or unrest? Are there trade alliances to take into consideration?) plans for advancement, such as economic advancement or technological advancement **Guided by foreign policy, diplomats and diplomatic bodies** can **work across borders** to tackle shared challenges, promote stability, and protect shared interests. A nation’s foreign policy typically works in tandem with its domestic policy, which is another form of public policy that focuses on matters at home. Together, the two policies complement one another and work to strengthen the country’s position both within and outside its borders.

#### Four types of foreign policies – foreign policy is goal/objective oriented

NDISC 23 [Notre Dame International Security Center, What are the 4 types of foreign policy and how are they pursued, March 16, 2023, https://ndisc.nd.edu/news-media/news/what-are-the-4-types-of-foreign-policy-and-how-are-they-pursued/]

There are many goals and objectives states must pursue to maintain and improve their status within the global community, and different countries have different approaches toward these goals. These approaches are their foreign policies. To this end, there is a selection of foreign policy types for states to consider. What are the 4 types of foreign policy? That’s the question we’ll answer in this article. Broadly speaking, while there may be 4 foreign policy types, each brings with it deep complexities. Foreign policy specialists must also understand the tools available to them. Entire books have been written about foreign policies, so let's briefly explore the types of foreign policy and what each policy entails. 1. Imperialism: the practice or advocacy of extending power through either territorial annexation or through gaining political and economic control of other areas. The Post-Columbian 15th century through to the mid-18th century marked a sustained period of imperial Europe, characterized by the colonialization of the North and South American continents by western European powers. In the late 19th century, though, imperialism in central and eastern Europe contributed to World War I. Imperialism has been widely deemed reprehensible and contrary to the rules-based international order; however, imperialist states often use propaganda to discredit adversaries and their foreign policies. 2. **Diplomacy: the practice of peacefully negotiating with other nations.** While the broad definition of **diplomacy applies to political, commercial, and cultural relationships**, modern use of the term has become synonymous with any official acts of foreign ministries other than war. This can take the form of negotiating treaties, making official declarations, and presenting the government’s views on an issue. Though war is often viewed as the result of diplomatic failure, diplomats are still crucial for deescalating the conflict. In fact, there is a crossover between great military minds and diplomats: Generals George Marshall and Dwight Eisenhower are examples of leaders who have held both roles. 3. Isolationism/Neutrality: Avoiding wars and conflicts between other nations. Though isolationism advocates for neutrality, these are distinct models. Isolationism opposes any commitments to other countries including treaties and trade agreements—believing it can, instead, be wholly self-reliant. In a global economy, many states have left the concept of isolationism in the past. Taking its place is the concept of neutrality: which is the state’s intent to remain neutral in the event of an armed conflict, while reserving the right to become belligerent if attacked. Through the Hague Convention of 1907, neutrality is a narrowly defined status and specific constraints are applied. Famously, Switzerland holds itself to permanent neutrality. 4. Collective Security: groups of countries work together as allies to preserve mutual peace and/or security.

#### [3] Engagement Definitions

#### “Engagement” is only positive inducements --- negative pressure like sanctions, coercive diplomacy, or force aren’t topical but could be counterplans!!

Ikenberry 12 – G. John Ikenberry, Professor of Politics and International Affairs at Princeton University, Review of “The Logic of Positive Engagement”, Foreign Affairs, January / February, http://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/136888/miroslav-nincic/the-logic-of-positive-engagement-cornell-studies-in-security-aff

When the United States seeks to change the behavior of rival or adversarial states, what are the available tools and strategies? In this provocative study, Nincic observes that American foreign-policy makers tend to resort to “negative pressures,” such as the use of force, coercive diplomacy, and economic sanctions. Less appreciated and less understood, Nincic argues, are the tools and strategies of “engagement,” policies that use positive inducements to alter the incentives and orientations of other states. Nincic is surely correct: policymakers know more about the use of sticks than carrots. The book seeks to explain the bias in American foreign policy toward threats and punishments and argues that it is a legacy of the Cold War, which taught politicians to worry about charges of appeasement. Nincic also sees biases in the American security-studies community, where, he claims, realist understandings of the world shift attention away from nonmilitary tools of influence. The book’s most useful contribution is to spell out how strategies of engagement and positive inducements can work, using the United States’ experiences with Cuba, Iran, Libya, North Korea, and Syria as case studies.

#### [4] Diplomacy Definitions

#### Diplomatic engagement includes recognition, normalization of relations, expanded visits, and institutional membership. Economic engagement is trade agreements, promotion, and aid.

Resnick, 2001 (Evan Resnick, Resnick is an assistant professor at the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies at Nanyang Technological University, Singapore., “Defining Engagement,” Journal of International Affairs , Spring 2001, Vol. 54, No. 2, Rogue States: Isolation vs. Engagement in the 21st Century (Spring 2001), pp. 551-566 Published by: Journal of International Affairs Editorial Board Stable URL: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/24357749>, accessed on 4/26/2024)

A Refined Definition of Engagement

In order to establish a more effective framework for dealing with unsavory regimes, I propose that we define engagement as the attempt to influence the political behavior of a target state through the comprehensive establishment and enhancement of contacts with that state across multiple issue-areas (i.e. diplomatic, military, economic, cultural). The following is a brief list of the specific forms that such contacts might include:

DIPLOMATIC CONTACTS

• Extension of diplomatic recognition; normalization of diplomatic relations • Promotion of target-state membership in international institutions and regimes • Summit meetings and other visits by the head of state and other senior government officials of sender state to target state and vice-versa

MILITARY CONTACTS

• Visits of senior military officials of the sender state to the target state and vice-versa • Arms transfers • Military aid and cooperation • Military exchange and training programs • Confidence and security-building measures • Intelligence sharing

ECONOMIC CONTACTS

• Trade agreements and promotion • Foreign economic and humanitarian aid in the form of loans and/or grants

CULTURAL CONTACTS

• Cultural treaties • Inauguration of travel and tourism links • Sport, artistic and academic exchanges25

#### Economic diplomacy is a type of diplomatic engagement specifically over economic indicators like trade/investments

Diplo no date [https://www.diplomacy.edu/topics/economic-diplomacy/]

**Economic diplomacy is the use of government recourses to promote the growth of a country’s economy by increasing trade, promoting investments, collaboration on bilateral and multilateral trade agreements and etc.** It can also mean the use of the economy to promote foreign policy objectives. Most commonly known are foreign aid and economical sanctions. Current trends include increasing collaboration between state and non-official agencies, and increased importance given to WTO issues, the negotiation of free trade and preferential trade agreements, double taxation avoidance, and alike.

#### Migration diplomacy can fall into 3 distinct categories that the U.S can use to better engage with Latin America

**Robinson** (20**23**). [Agama has a International Master in Security, Intelligence and Strategic Studies from the University of Karlova Migration Diplomacy: US strategies with Mexico and its influence on Central America. 08/11/2023 <https://dspace.cuni.cz/bitstream/handle/20.500.11956/187400/120459738.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y> GMU JAF]

**Migration diplomacy** **involves a wide range of formal and informal practices** that can be seen in a variety of ways. **These practices can be divided into three categories**: 1**) the encouragement or deterrence of migratory flows**, as investigated by Teitelbaum (1984); **2) the development of international agreements**, as described by Geiger and Pécoud (2010) and Thiollet (2011); and **3) the formulation of norms governing expulsion and admission**, as investigated by İçduygu and Aksel in 2014. As a result, states use a combination of coercive and collaborative strategies within these categories, as Adamsom and Tsourapas noted in 2019. However, in addition to these elements, I include political discourse as a relevant variable within this framework.

#### [5] Latin America Definitions

#### Latin America country/dependency list

Cunningham 23 [John, Encyclopedia Brittanica Contributor, List of Countries in Latin America, https://www.britannica.com/topic/list-of-countries-in-Latin-America-2061416]

Latin America is generally understood to consist of the entire continent of South America in addition to Mexico, Central America, and the islands of the Caribbean whose inhabitants speak a Romance language. The peoples of this large area shared the experience of conquest and colonization by the Spaniards and Portuguese from the late 15th through the 18th century as well as movements of independence from Spain and Portugal in the early 19th century. This is an alphabetically ordered list of countries in Latin America. (See also Central America; North America; South America; West Indies (the Caribbean); Latin American art; Latin American architecture; Latin American dance; Latin American economic system; Latin American literature; Latin American music.) North and Central America Belize Costa Rica El Salvador Guatemala Honduras Mexico Nicaragua Panama South America Argentina Bolivia Brazil Chile Colombia Ecuador French Guiana (département of France) Guyana Paraguay Peru Suriname Uruguay Venezuela Caribbean countries Cuba Dominican Republic Haiti dependencies and constituent entities Guadeloupe Martinique Puerto Rico Saint-Barthélemy Saint-Martin

#### [6] Sanctions Stem Definitions

#### Sanctions by the US to Latin America list – Cuba, Venezuela, and Nicaragua

Kadel and Marco 23 [Eric J Kadel, Jr Partner Sullivan & Cromwell LLP, Jacob M Marco Jacob M Marco Associate Sullivan & Cromwell LLP, Sanctions in Latin America, September 29, 2023, <https://globalinvestigationsreview.com/guide/the-guide-sanctions/fourth-edition/article/sanctions-in-latin-america>]

*Introduction* In recent years, sanctions targeting Russia, Iran and North Korea have received significant attention. Yet, some of the longest-standing and most comprehensive sanctions programmes of the US target individuals and governments in Latin America and the Caribbean. Businesses with operations in the Americas must be aware of these risks and design effective compliance programmes to mitigate them. Companies (and their subsidiaries) operating in Latin America must navigate country-specific sanctions, such as those against Cuba, Venezuela and Nicaragua, and subject matter-related sanctions*,* such as narcotics trafficking sanctions under the Counter Narcotics Trafficking Sanctions or the Foreign Narcotics Kingpin Designation Act (the Kingpin Act)*,* and human rights sanctions under the Global Magnitsky Human Rights Accountability Act (the Magnitsky Act). It has been said that in Latin America, sanctions have become one of the central pillars of US policy to defend democracy and combat corruption. As discussed in this chapter, while many sanctions programmes have been consistently in force for years, other aspects of sanctions programmes have diverged between successive US presidential administrations. Legal advisers must maintain awareness of these developments when advising clients. This chapter surveys trends relating to sanctions targeting Latin America and certain considerations for legal advisers, with a focus on US sanctions. It also discusses certain sanctions programmes enacted by Latin American governments. Sanctions tend to be used by Latin American countries relatively infrequently, perhaps in part due to a history of non-alignment of foreign policy in the region. Country-specific US sanctions At the time of writing, three countries in the Latin America region – Cuba, Nicaragua and Venezuel*a* – are targeted by US sanctions. Cuba is subject to the longest-running and broadest set of sanctions. Venezuela is also subject to broad sanctions against its government, whereas sanctions on Nicaragua are targeted and directed solely at certain individuals and government entities. *Cuba* Since 1962, the US has implemented a comprehensive embargo against *Cuba,* which is now codified under the *Cuban Assets Control Regulations (CACR),* at 31 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) Part 515. The CACR restrict US persons, non-US persons within the US and non-US entities owned or controlled by US persons from trading or engaging in other transactions with Cuba. The CACR are generally maintained and enforced by the US Department of the Treasury’s Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC). *Venezuela* The *Venezuela Sanctions Regulations* are maintained at 31 CFR Part 591; they reflect a number of sanctions implemented against *Venezuela* in recent years. The US implemented broad sanctions against the government of *Venezuela* in March 2015 in response to human rights violations by the Nicolás Maduro regime and accompanying civil unrest and regime instability. *Nicaragua* US sanctions involving *Nicaragua* have been mostly limited to specific senior government leaders in connection with allegations of human rights abuses under the Daniel Ortega administration. *Subject matter-related US sanctions* **Human rights** The US has imposed sanctions under the *Magnitsky Act* targeting those responsible for serious human rights abuses and corruption around the world. **Narcotics trafficking** US sanctions related to foreign drug trafficking date to October 1995, when President Clinton signed Executive Order 12978 and created the *Counter Narcotics Trafficking Sanctions programme,* which targeted Colombian narcotics traffickers specifically. In 1999, President Clinton signed into law the *Kingpin Act,* which authorises sanctions against foreign narcotics traffickers regardless of country. and notably carries significantly higher penalties than the Counter Narcotics Trafficking Sanctions.[40] While the Counter Narcotics Trafficking Sanctions are limited to Colombian trafficking, the Kingpin Act has been used to target individuals in Ecuador,[41] Mexico,[42] the Dominican Republic[43] and Panama,[44] as well as Colombia.[45]

#### Lifting sanctions is the term agreed on in the literature – advocates use this phrase to discuss the Cuban embargo

UN 23 [Economic, Commercial Embargo Imposed by United States Against Cuba Harmful, Violates UN Charter, Speakers Underline in General Assembly, <https://press.un.org/en/2023/ga12552.doc.htm>]

The United States must lift its economic, commercial and financial embargo on Cuba and remove the Caribbean nation from its list of *State sponsors of terrorism* — policies which have had devastating effects on the Cuban people and created severe obstacles for countries looking to engage in trade and investment with Havana*,* speakers told the General Assembly today. As the 193-member organ kicked off its annual debate on the “Necessity of ending the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States of America against Cuba”, it had before it the Report of the Secretary-General (document A/78/84). The Assembly is scheduled to vote on a resolution on the matter on 2 November. During today’s debate, an overwhelming number of Member States underscored the multitude of detrimental and harmful long-lasting consequences the embargo was having on Cuba. Many cited the Secretary-General’s report that said that years of the blockade has had an impact on Cuba’s overall human development*.* They recalled that for over 30 years, the Assembly has disproportionately urged the United States to lift the blockade and allow Cuba to join the international community on equal economic and financial footing.

#### [7] Normalize Relations Definition

#### To normalize relations requires a process of conflict management

Brown 16 [Frederick Z., retired state department foreign service officer, Cuba, Vietnam, and “Normalization”, https://www.american.edu/centers/latin-american-latino-studies/implications-normalization-brown.cfm]

"Normalization" is not a fixed destination, it is a process—tedious, repetitive, frustrating, years-consuming, stage-by-stage, and often ending in failure. "Normalization" is not the absence of conflict, it is the management of conflict, or of policy differences which can be severe and even lead to war. The United States enjoys "normal" relations with the great majority of the nations in the world, many of whom are actually quite hostile. Even relations with close allies like Canada often involve disagreement on all sorts of issues. In short, there are a variety of "normal" relationships.

### Rotation

#### We identify this topic as fitting the international section of the rotation. However, we understand that the broad resolution options we suggest definitionally include Puerto Rico. We believe that this option is still international in scope, so if a resolution with Puerto Rico were to win the slate ballot, this topic should still be classified as an international topic. We have included defenses of Puerto Rico as international in the appendix

### Affirmative Ground

#### Most of this work will be expounded on in the appendix, but we have included several examples of affirmatives we believe should be topical under at least a majority of the resolutions chosen for the final slate:

#### [1] Migration Diplomacy with Mexico – a broader relation reset with Mexico is necessary and collaborative efforts to expand immigration access is critical to solve

Pacheco 21 [Jerry; Executive Director of International Business Accelerator, a nonprofit; “U.S.-Mexico's strained relationship in need of a reset”, March 26, 2023, <https://www.abqjournal.com/news/local/u-s--mexicos-strained-relationship-in-need-of-a-reset/article_1f08a689-4143-5d11-9b31-aa32b8164c3a.html>, Farjah]

The U.S.-Mexico relationship needs a reset. Relations were already strained when then-presidential candidate Donald Trump made comments that Mexico sends us rapists and criminals. He then turned up the rhetoric by saying that he would build a border-wide wall to prevent undocumented crossings and have Mexico pay the bill. He continued his jabs by threatening to close the border if Mexico did not do more to prevent Latin American asylum seekers from crossing into the U.S. He then threatened to take the U.S. out of the North American Free Trade Agreement if it couldn't be reworked into the U.S.-Mexico-Canada Agreement. After Trump lost his reelection, the downward spiral in the binational relationship seemed to have slowed down. However, in the last few weeks, the animus level between the two countries is again on the rise. Since taking over the House, Republicans have espoused a tough line on immigration and border security. On March 3, four Americans traveling to Mexico for a medical procedure were kidnapped and two were murdered in the Mexican border city of Matamoros. This has ignited a powder keg, and the insults and accusations are flying across the border. Rep. Marjorie Taylor Greene and some of her hard right-wing colleagues have called for the U.S. to put together incursions into Mexico to strike at drug-producing labs and cartel strongholds. In the Senate, Sen. Lindsey Graham, R-S.C., has stated that he will introduce legislation to designate cartels as foreign terrorist groups, and allow the U.S. to use military force against them. Even Rep. Dan Crenshaw of Texas, a border state, has sponsored a bill to authorize the U.S. military to use force against nine separate cartels in Mexico. Crenshaw also stated publicly that Mexican President Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador (AMLO) appears to care more about cartels than his own people. Needless to say, AMLO did not view these actions and rhetoric positively. He fired back that fentanyl is a U.S. problem, caused by the decay in its society. He stated that fentanyl is not being produced in Mexico. He also publicly stated that Mexico would not allow any foreign government to intervene in its territory, and that "Mexico is not a colony of the United States or one of its protectorates." He threatened to work against the reelection of the people in Congress that are proposing the legislation. As a final jab, he stated that Mexico was a safer country than the U.S. and more democratic. Does this sound like two good neighbors that share so much history and have so much at stake? The two countries trade approximately $1.7 billion dollars of products and services every single day. In 2021, Mexico was the U.S.'s No. 1 trading partner, and 16% of total U.S. exports are bought by Mexico. More than 300 million people cross the U.S.-Mexico border every year. Many companies leaving Asia to protect their supply chains are choosing to establish operations in Mexico, and U.S. suppliers will supply them with raw materials and components. Warehouses on the U.S. side of the border will distribute these products. Upon assuming office, AMLO said that his approach to Mexico's drug issue was "hugs not bullets." This strategy has been a failure. Our two nations need each other, and neither is moving away in the near future. We need cooperation, not rhetoric or grandstanding for political purposes. As Rep. Crenshaw stated when he was interviewed about his controversial legislation, "If I could choose one country outside the U.S. and just make it 10 times better, it would be Mexico. It's one of our most important trading partners. It's our most important ally. It's right here in our hemisphere. We need Mexico to be successful."

#### [2] Ending the Cuba Embargo - US engagement with Cuba is essential to reverse the path toward an escalating Cold War 2.0 – reversing sanctions enables economic gains, checks human rights abuses, and challenges Chinese and Russian influence

Manuzzi, 7-7-2023 (A.J. Manuzzi, Manuzzi is a Program Assistant for the John Quincy Adams Society, an independent national network of professionals and students focused on US foreign policy, with a common vision of restraint., "Engagement With Cuba Is Still In America’s Interest History Indicates That Instead Of Hawkish Policies, Diplomacy And Dialogue Have Improved Us Relations With The Island State.," Inkstick, https://inkstickmedia.com/engagement-with-cuba-is-still-in-americas-interest/, accessed on 4-23-2024)

Revelations in the Wall Street Journal that China is building a “spy base” and negotiating for a “military training facility” have Washington riled up. Presidential candidate and former ambassador to the UN Nikki Haley accused China of “infiltrating the Western Hemisphere” and “trying to turn almost every country [there] against us.” Senator Rick Scott (R-Fla.) tweeted, “The Biden administration’s weak appeasement policies have emboldened evil regimes like never before. Communist China and Cuba need to understand we will NOT tolerate this blatant act of aggression. It’s time the president gets a backbone and stands for America.” These catastrophizing sentiments stand in stark contrast to the potential impact of these facilities and grossly misrepresent the policy choices of the Biden administration. Former government officials have cast doubt on the utility of such a listening station to China given advancements in technology. Furthermore, six and a half decades of isolation and economic pressure have only driven Cuba deeper into the arms of US rivals. This policy has made Americans less safe. The Embargo Cuba has faced US sanctions for more than half of its existence as an independent nation courtesy of Washington’s comprehensive trade embargo against the country. Contrary to popular belief, the embargo is not a single law, but a collection of various laws, regulations, and presidential proclamations, parts of which were codified into law by the Cuban Liberty and Democratic Solidarity (LIBERTAD) Act of 1996. Ever since President Dwight Eisenhower responded to then-dictator Fidel Castro’s nationalization of most US businesses in Cuba by banning all US exports to Cuba, regime change has been the central policy of the United States, with economic pressure (and, during the Cold War, covert assassination attempts) as the vehicle of choice. A 1960 Department of State memo describes this cynical logic in its proponents’ own words, insisting that “the only foreseeable means of alienating [Castro’s] internal support is through disenchantment and disaffection based on economic dissatisfaction and hardship…Every possible means should be undertaken promptly to weaken the economic life of Cuba [and]…to bring about hunger, desperation and overthrow of government.” Put more succinctly by Eisenhower himself: “If [the Cuban people] are hungry, they will throw Castro out.” The Biden administration has yet to restore the vast majority of the Obama administration’s progress toward normalizing relations with Havana, though he relaxed the Trump administration’s restrictions on remittances and allowed more flights between the countries last year. Additionally, Biden also needs to reverse his predecessor’s designation of Cuba as a state sponsor of terrorism. This is hardly appeasement. Perhaps if the United States offered something to Cuba beyond stern lectures and economic misery, the Cuban government would be less receptive to China’s offer. Yet, the Castro government and its successor have endured and political repression has continued, while everyday Cubans continue to suffer. As early as 1981, the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) certified that the sanctions, “by themselves or in conjunction with other measures, ha[d] not met any of their objectives,” and instead gave Castro’s government a perceived external threat to point to and blame for “virtually every economic problem.” Even today, the Cuban government blames US sanctions alone for the nation’s problems when faced with protests and paints the protesters as American assets. US policy has failed to grapple with its counterproductive rally around the flag effect in this regard. At the same time, US policy has inflicted grave human suffering in Cuba while stifling potential American economic opportunity. Furthermore, the UN has estimated that the embargo has cost Cuba more than $130 billion over its lifespan. Restrictions on remittances punish Cuba’s citizens for their government’s faults. Cuba’s designation as a state sponsor of terrorism stymies foreign investment, tourism, humanitarian aid, and academic work. Within weeks of the re-listing, 45 banks and financial institutions halted all business with the island. The designation also sends conflicting signals, as the US government conducted recent meetings with the Cubans on counterterrorism. While the embargo theoretically contains a carveout for food and medicine, its complex licensing requirements and the tendency of financial institutions and businesses to over-comply with sanctions effectively prevent food, medicine, and medical equipment from reaching Cuba. This has fueled and exacerbated humanitarian and public health crises. This was on display during the COVID-19 pandemic when a Swiss company that had previously been allowed to sell ventilators to Cuba was barred from doing so after being bought out by an Illinois company. From the US perspective, government and academic studies have concluded that a more normal trade relationship would allow for more than $1 billion in new exports within five years and support thousands of jobs. Without the sanctions, the United States would be uniquely positioned to benefit, given the proximity of US ports to Cuba and the lower shipping costs it would face relative to other nations. Cut off from the United States, Cuba has unsurprisingly turned to other benefactors. Venezuela remains Cuba’s primary trading partner and diplomatic ally. Earlier this year, Russian foreign minister Sergey Lavrov and Cuban President Miguel Diaz-Canel exchanged visits, and Russia continues to trade with and provide humanitarian aid to Cuba. But with Venezuela sanctioned and Russia at war, Cuba needs more. Enter China. Beijing has been quick to help Havana, restructuring debt and providing trade and investment credits. Both countries also share a mutual distrust of the United States, as described in a 2022 joint communique condemning “foreign interference and blockade.” Understandably, much of the commentary about the Chinese base in Cuba will focus on great power tensions and a more globally assertive China, or comparisons between the base and the US military presence in the Western Pacific. But this episode is foremost an indictment of US Cuba policy. While tensions between Washington and Havana would continue over human rights and the rule of law even if they normalized relations, then maybe Cuba would not feel so threatened that it would draw closer to a US rival. Perhaps if the United States offered something to Cuba beyond stern lectures and economic misery, the Cuban government would be less receptive to China’s offer. Past As Precedent Critics like Scott and Haley will accuse any president who seeks a more normal and balanced relationship with Cuba of being an appeaser, making concessions on human rights and democracy to a government they cannot trust. This ignores the fact that periods of dialogue with Havana, rather than isolation, have proved more successful in promoting those two ends. When Jimmy Carter agreed to hold direct negotiations with the Cubans over fishing rights, travel restrictions, and establishing interest sections (in lieu of embassies) in the respective countries, Castro agreed to release more than 2,000 political prisoners. During the Obama administration thaw, Cuba released dozens of high-profile political prisoners and kept its promise to accelerate the expansion of the Internet on the island, growing Cubans’ access to information and vehicles for articulating dissent, like Cuba’s emergent blogosphere. As tensions between the United States and China mount and threaten the prospect of a second Cold War, US policymakers would be wise to reconsider the hawkish status quo on Cuba, which has produced the very consequences it sought to prevent. US policy risks again making Cuba a battleground of a Cold War after humanity barely survived the Cuban Missile Crisis. The precarity of that precedent should urge Washington to ensure that Cuba is not again a fault line for nuclear-armed great powers. Given that the sanctions regime has only incentivized Cuba to expand security ties with China, America should instead adopt a course that proves to Havana that there is something to gain by working with the United States before it is too late.

#### [3] Lifting Venezuelan Sanctions

Braslow ’23 [Jacqueline; JD Candidate, Georgetown University. U.s. economic intervention abroad: lift sanctions to relieve migratory pressure. Georgetown Immigration Law Journal, 36(2), 859-868.

The Biden administration has announced a commitment to addressing the 'root causes' of migration.' However, with respect to the recent and long- anticipated Temporary Protected Status (TPS) designation of Venezuela, the administration remains silent as to a root cause of migration well within its power to remedy: U.S. sanctions policy. There is no mention of the United States' harsh unilateral sanctions regime imposed against Venezuela within the March 2021 TPS designation. The economic sanctions by the United States have devastated the country's ability to generate state revenue to fund social programs and to import essential goods such as food, medicine, diesel fuel, and spare parts for public infrastructure systems. U.S. sanctions are a primary contributor to the years-long economic crisis that has spurred millions to migrate from Venezuela.' In light of the COVID- 19 pandemic, there have been calls from members of Congress for the Biden administration to review humanitarian impacts of its current sanctions policies. The Biden administration paid minimal lip-service to a humanitarian review, but ultimately did not heed this call. The Treasury Department review of sanctions policy released in October 2021 does not engage in an analysis of humanitarian impacts. The meager nine-page report doubles down on continuing harmful sanctions policies by urging 'modernization.' In light of the Biden administration's continuation of the current unilateral sanctions regime, popular mobilization against this economic warfare is needed. That mobilization should pressure the United States to reform how these international-law-violating" unilateral sanctions are implemented as well as delegitimize the animating imperialist logic that the United States has the right to interfere in the economic self-determination of sovereign nations. HUMANITARIAN IMPACTS OF U.S. SANCTIONS AGAINST VENEZUELA The most comprehensive U.S. sanctions against Venezuela were those imposed on the financial sector in 2017 and oil sector in 2019 by Executive Orders. These sanctions **devastated** production in the state-run oil industry and severed the country's "trade and financial links" to the global economy, crippling the state's ability to generate the export revenue previously relied on to pay for imports. As state oil revenues plummeted, so did the ability to import essential goods such as food and medicine." While there are supposed exemptions for medical supplies, the sanctions against Venezuela are so broad that medical suppliers and transport companies steer clear of doing business there. Essential public services provided by the state, such as healthcare, education, transportation, electricity, and internet have been hit hard by sanctions that prevent the import of necessary parts, as well as the overall decline in state oil revenue used to fund social programs." U.N. Special Rapporteur Alena Douhan concluded in her 2021 report to the Human Rights Council that the unilateral coercive measures against Venezuela "exacerbated the pre-existing economic and social crisis and had a devastating effect on the entire population" and recommended they be lifted. The report singles out U.S. sanctions for making it impossible to buy essential technological equipment and supplies for the repair and maintenance of public electricity, gas, water, transport, telephone and communication systems, and for schools, hospitals and other public institutions, undermining the enjoyment and exercise of the most fundamental rights to life, food, water, health, housing and education. A damning report from the Center for Economic and Policy Research estimated that U.S. sanctions potentially **caused** 40,000 excess deaths in Venezuela from 2017 to 2018. The deteriorating conditions caused by U.S. sanctions are a driver of mass displacement from the country. The current crisis of emigration from Venezuela-an estimated five million Venezuelans lived outside the country in 2019, up from 700,000 in 2015-traces back to the crash of global oil prices in 2014 and resulting economic fallout in the oil-dependent nation. The majority of migrants live in neighboring Latin American countries: primarily Colombia, Peru, and Chile. However, there has been a dramatic increase in Venezuelan migration to the U.S. border in 2021, with U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) data up from 461 "border encounters" in January 2021 to 24,961 in December 2021. Although increased migration began with the 2014 economic downturn, the number of Venezuelan migrants living in Colombia skyrocketed by 108 percent between 2017 (when financial sec- tor sanctions were imposed by the United States) and 2018.25 The imposition of U.S. sanctions made it impossible for the country to recover from the fall of oil prices in 2014 and stabilize its economy. The Congressional Research Service (CRS) report published in April 2021 (shortly after Venezuela was designated for TPS) admitted that U.S. sanctions contributed to the economic downturn and worsened the humanitarian situation in the country. U.S. UNILATERAL SANCTIONS VIOLATE INTERNATIONAL LAW AND THE PRINCIPLES OF HUMAN RIGHTS In April 2019, the United Nations Human Rights Council drafted a resolution urging all states to end "unilateral coercive measures" not in accord with international law, "in particular those of a coercive nature with extraterritorial effects." Reaffirming the principle of sovereign equality of states, the resolution emphasized that under international law no state can coerce another state by economic measures." The resolution expressed "grave concern at the negative impact of unilateral coercive measures on human rights, the right to development, international relations, trade, investment and cooperation" and underlined that "in each situation worldwide, unilateral coercive measures have a negative impact on human rights," including the right to life. This resolution was one in a long line of official condemnations of unilateral coercive measures by official U.N. bodies. Special Rapporteur Douhan expressed similar concerns specifically regarding the situation in Venezuela, reporting that unilateral sanctions undermined vital human rights, including the right to food, water, health, and education. She also singled out the U.S. "maximum pressure" sanctions campaign aimed at changing the government of Venezuela as a violation of the principle of sovereign equality of states." Another U.N. official commenting on the 2019 U.S. sanctions was "especially concerned to hear reports that these sanctions are aimed at changing the government of Venezuela," which violates international law. Economists Mark Weisbrot and Jeffrey Sachs suggest that the harm U.S. sanctions cause Venezuela's civilian population is so severe it would fit under "collective punishment" in violation of the Geneva and Hague conventions. Attorneys have urged the Biden administration to end sanctions against Venezuela, noting that the measures violate the Universal Declaration of Human Rights by interfering with the right to life and the rights to "food, clothing, housing, medical care, and necessary social services." An independent expert reported to the Human Rights Council in 2018 that U.S. sanctions can amount to crimes against humanity under the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court and compared economic sanctions to medieval sieges forcing a sovereign country to surrender.

#### [4] Removal of Cuba from the SSOT List - Removal of Cuba from the SSOT List is key to solve multiple internal links to instability and suffering in Cuba

Bare & Nodarse Venancio 23 [Mariakarla, Assistant Director for Cuba at WOLA, Alex, Program Assistant for the Drug Policy and Cuba programs, The Human Cost of Cuba’s Inclusion on the State Sponsor of Terrorism List, 3/28/23, https://www.wola.org/analysis/human-cost-cuba-state-sponsor-of-terrorism-list/, Herrity]

Cuba was redesignated as a state sponsor of terrorism on January 12, 2021 in the twilight of the Trump presidency. President Obama’s decision to remove Cuba from the list in 2015 represented an important step forward in his administration’s efforts to forge a more constructive relationship with Cuba. The SSOT list might be an important tool for countering global terrorism, but its application in the case of Cuba is questionable at best. Beyond serving as political fodder, the designation also has tangible effects that make life for Cubans—both on and off the island—more difficult. The Biden administration should make good on its promise to remove Cuba from the list as the human cost of the designation becomes clearer. What is the State Sponsor of Terrorism List? The State Sponsor of Terrorism List (SSOT) is a foreign policy mechanism that sanctions countries deemed by the U.S. Secretary of State to have provided support for acts of international terrorism. In addition to Cuba, three other countries are presently labeled state sponsors of terrorism: North Korea, Iran, and Syria. The designation is intended for countries that have “repeatedly provided support for acts of international terrorism,” but it is not imposed on the basis of human rights abuses, authoritarian backsliding, or military operations that lack an element of international terrorism. The profile of a state sponsor of terrorism is squarely defined in law but is often overlooked in the politically-charged debates over Cuba’s designation. The legal basis of the designation is enshrined in three laws: section 1754(c) of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2019, section 40 of the Arms Export Control Act, and section 620A of the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961. Taken together, the four main categories of sanctions resulting from designation include restrictions on U.S. foreign assistance, a ban on defense exports and sales, certain controls over exports of dual-use items, and miscellaneous financial and other restrictions. Designation also involves a wide array of sanctions that penalize persons and countries engaging in certain trade with designated sponsors of terrorism. What is the current rationale behind Cuba’s inclusion on the SSOT list? Cuba was first added to the State Department’s State Sponsors of Terrorism List (SSOT) during the Reagan administration in 1982 for alleged ties to international terrorism and support for terrorist groups in Latin America. With no requirement for regular review of SSOT designees, Cuba remained on the list until May 2015 when it was removed following an extensive State Department review shortly after President Barack Obama announced the U.S. would normalize relations with Cuba. At the time, Cuba was hosting peace negotiations between Colombia’s government and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), which was at the time a designated terrorist organization. The Biden administration revoked the designation of the FARC as a foreign terrorist organization on November 30, 2021. Starting in 2018, leaders from the National Liberation Army (ELN) were also in Cuba for peace talks with the Colombian government. Peace talks with the ELN, however, ground to a halt following a deadly car bombing that tore through a police academy in Bogotá in 2019. Cuba was re-added to the SSOT in January 2021 by the Trump administration, ostensibly for harboring American fugitives and rejecting Colombia’s extradition request for members of the ELN, which claimed responsibility for the bombing. Cuba refused to comply, contending that the extradition would violate established protocols as a guarantor of the peace talks between the ELN and the Colombian government. The Norwegian foreign ministry—another key guarantor of the peace talks—agreed. When Colombian president Gustavo Petro took office last year, he announced that the extradition request would be withdrawn as part of his “total peace” initiative. Cuba, for its part, is poised to again serve as a centerpiece of the peace talks as both a host and guarantor, hoping to replicate the success of the agreement it brokered with the FARC in 2016. Nevertheless, the Biden-Harris administration has preserved Havana’s status as a sponsor of terrorism. What impact does the designation have on ordinary Cubans? Cuba’s inclusion on the list goes far beyond isolating Cuba’s military and branding the country as an adversary. The most egregious consequences stem from the heightened specter of risk associated with any kind of humanitarian aid, business, investment, and trade that involves Cuba, and by extension, Cuban citizens. The Washington Office on Latin America has learned of several common ways **Cuban citizens have been impacted**. Some illustrative examples include: Cubans with Spanish citizenship have had their ESTA (Electronic System for Travel Authorization) visa waiver to the United States canceled or denied. Cubans residing in the European Union have been denied bank accounts or have had existing accounts frozen since their nationality makes them “high-risk” clients. Some universities in the United States are barred from supporting research or other work by Cuban, artists, writers, academics, activists, and journalists at risk who reside on the island. Faith based groups have had funds frozen and humanitarian supplies shipments blocked. People attempting to make a PayPal or Wise money transfer to family in Cuba may have their funds frozen and accounts locked. I. Humanitarian aid The terror list designation creates additional obstacles to delivering humanitarian aid at a time when the country is grappling with shortages of basic goods and medical supplies that have been **exacerbated by the pandemic’s lingering economic impact, the tightening of U.S. sanctions during the Trump administration, the decades-long embargo, and a global rise in food prices** following Russia’s invasion of Ukraine. Banks, financial institutions, and international vendors have stopped facilitating both regular trade and cooperation with faith groups seeking to provide humanitarian and development support to Cuba. Fearful of being accused of abetting terror and the mammoth fines that an infraction entails, most banks refuse to process Cuban payments and have frozen funds for permitted religious and humanitarian activities, requiring additional licensing. Recently, a U.S. faith group faced significant barriers to sending a medical shipment to Cuba. Their European partners had secured a shipper to take a container of supplies to the island. However, the U.S. bank that was acting as the agent froze the funds and required a special license from the U.S. Office of Foreign Assets Control. Three months have passed since the partners applied for that license without a response, effectively blocking the shipment. II. Financial and banking issues stemming from heightened risk and over-compliance As a result of the SSOT designation, banks, financial institutions, companies, and investors are hesitant to engage with Cuba—a practice known as over-compliance. Cuba’s presence on the list limits private individuals from opening bank accounts abroad, using instruments for international collections and payments, accessing fintech companies and digital banking, and contracting of online servers and services. These barriers not only stifle the few avenues available for Cubans to expand private sector growth and development, which the Biden administration has committed to support, but are also an obstacle for Cubans living abroad. The SSOT designation has a chilling effect on businesses, including banking or telecommunications investments, that are crucial to promoting the type of transformation essential to expanding freedom on the island. In turn, even when direct foreign trade expands, private companies will find restrictions on the purchase of products manufactured in the U.S. and even goods produced in third countries that incorporate a high content of inputs from the U.S. III. Academic exchanges and travel Academics in Florida have warned that the designation would obstruct their ability to conduct research. A 2006 Florida statute prohibits the use of public funds for travel to or from countries on the SSOT. Thus, the designation impedes not only the ability of state educational institutions to conduct important research, but also to provide support for Cuban scholars. For example, Florida International University cannot use its funds to pay for travel from the island, even for a program that is expressly designed for activists, artists, writers, academics and journalists, at risk of persecution. Additionally, Cuba’s position on the SSOT requires foreign travelers from countries included in ESTA—a visa waiver program for over 40 countries including the European Union, Japan, and South Korea, who visited Cuba on or after January 21, 2021 when Cuba was re-added to the SSOT—to request a visa at the Consulate General or Consular Section of the U.S. Embassy in their home country. This policy was implemented by the Biden-Harris administration and will likely have a negative impact on Cuba’s tourism industry. Spain, Germany, France, and Italy are among the top eight nationalities of tourists visiting the island. Why would **removing Cuba from the SSOT list benefit the Cuban people**? Humanitarian and faith-based organizations would be able to provide aid to address the severe challenges the Cuban people are facing, including shortages of food and life-saving medicines. Reducing limits on financial transactions would benefit the private sector and enable it to expand. **Increased tourism could thereby boost the economy, benefiting Cuban families facing a very dire economic crisis**. The atmosphere would improve for U.S.-Cuba bilateral dialogue to expand beyond migration and law enforcement to include discussions on human rights. The latter is very important given the increase of repression, disproportionate sentences, and violation of due process rights, persisting after the July 11 protests. **Now more than ever, constructive dialogue is necessary to advocate for the release of political prisoners and the improvement of human rights conditions on the island**. It would allow for expanded protection programs for artists, academics, activists, and journalists who are current targets of persecution or in prison. Where does the case to remove Cuba from the SSOT list stand? Shortly after taking office, Biden administration officials indicated they would revise Cuba’s designation as a state sponsor of terrorism. U.S. Secretary of State Anthony Blinken reiterated this point in October 2022 in a press conference with President of Colombia Gustavo Petro, who voiced his own objections to the U.S. terror designation. Despite these promises, real progress has remained elusive. While the president has the authority to review and rescind a country’s designation under section 6(j) of the Export Administration Act, the FORCE Act has been reintroduced in the current Congress. If passed into law, it would block the executive branch from removing Cuba from the list at will. On March 28, the House Foreign Affairs Committee will consider the bill for recommendation to the full House. For the time being, the White House has an upper hand in shaping Cuba policy. The Biden administration and members of the House Foreign Affairs Committee should follow the recommendations of policy analysts, human rights advocates, and faith-based groups that argue that Cuba’s inclusion on the state sponsor of terrorism list is not sound and has a negative impact on the Cuban people.

#### [5] Other areas of engagement and diplomacy are covered in the appendix. We have found a large amount of evidence supporting climate diplomacy and lithium/supply chain engagement amongst distinct Latin American countries.

#### Collaboration with Latin America is necessary for economic resilience AND safeguarding US leadership

Mia 25 [Irene Mia, Editor, Armed Conflict Survey; Senior Fellow for Latin America, and Conflict, Security and Development, 3/12/2025, "Trump’s Latin America agenda: the risks of short-termism", The International Institute for Strategic Studies, https://www.iiss.org/online-analysis/online-analysis/2025/03/trumps-latin-america-agenda-the-risks-of-short-termism/, accessed 4/20/25, AWright]

The limitations of a one-dimensional agenda

The above developments represent early progress in Trump’s efforts to reassert US hegemony in Latin America, while curbing insecurity risks originating from the region. However, long-term success is far less certain. Tackling armed violence and drug trafficking in Mexico (and Latin America more broadly) will require more than just a crackdown on DTOs and fentanyl trafficking. A purely punitive and militarised strategy is bound to fail unless it is paired with a comprehensive approach that addresses socio-economic drivers of violence, creates opportunities in the legal economy, reinforces institutional resilience and governance standards in Mexico, and reduces drug demand and arms smuggling across the border. Reducing the financial flows that sustain illicit economies and maintain the power of organised crime is also a sine qua non for sustainable progress.

Without this broader approach, the likely outcome will be an escalation in violence, as criminal groups retaliate against the state and vie for control of new trafficking routes and criminal economies (including booming opportunities in people smuggling and human trafficking), adapting their operations to the changing reality. The designation of a few DTOs as FTOs may ultimately prove more harmful than beneficial, as it will not significantly limit the activities of these groups and will probably strengthen other DTOs that have not been labelled ‘narco-terrorists’ but are equally powerful. It will also fuel Latin American nationalism and resentment towards the US, and create additional legal and compliance risks for businesses operating in Mexico and across Latin America.

Trump’s China-containment strategy is also likely to backfire. Without concrete measures to support Latin America’s economic growth and diversification, and to bolster its democratic institutions, China will remain a dominant economic force in the region. Additionally, trade tariffs and deportations of undocumented migrants to their countries of origin – particularly through the economic blow of lost remittances – will wreak havoc on Latin American economies, making China’s trade and investment even more attractive. For instance, it is estimated that Mexico’s export losses from a 25% blanket tariff will be around 1.15% of its GDP over the medium term (the next three to five years). Increasingly strained relations between the US and China will also undermine any anti-fentanyl strategy, given the critical role China’s organised criminal organisations play in providing chemical precursors and money-laundering support to their Latin American counterparts. Furthermore, limiting China’s presence in the Panama Canal may prove to be a Pyrrhic victory in the broader geopolitical context of the region, given China’s widespread involvement in key Latin American ports and its development of the (recently inaugurated) Chancay mega port in Peru as its gateway to South America. The deepwater Chancay port will cut shipping times from China in half and enable South American countries to bypass Mexican and US ports when shipping goods to Asia, cementing China’s importance in strategic shipping and supply chains to and from the region.

Ultimately, the Trump administration’s current strategy prioritising dominance over partnership – while ignoring the multidimensional character of the security challenges coming from Latin America and their interconnections with US policies (including on fighting arms smuggling, reducing fentanyl demand at home or supporting global efforts to fight corruption) – may achieve some tactical wins. However, in the longer term, it risks strategic failure and the continued erosion of US influence in the region, which will provide an opportunity for other powers to fill the void.

#### Current US engagement with Latin America is not equipped to deal with climate change OR China. Increased engagement is key.

Scotland 25 [Jennifer Scotland, Research Analyst in the Organised Crime and Policing team at RUSI. She holds an MSc in International Relations from the London School of Economics and Political Science, 2-27-2025, "How Trump’s Environment and Aid Policies Undermine His Latin America Agenda", Rusi, https://www.rusi.org/explore-our-research/publications/commentary/how-trumps-environment-and-aid-policies-undermine-his-latin-america-agenda, accessed 4/24/25]

Latin America has retaken centre stage in US national security priorities. The FTO designation of OCGs indicates that the second Trump administration seeks to adopt a punitive, deterrence-first migration and organised crime policy. However, such policies are reminiscent of the ill-fated ‘war on drugs’ that has long been widely perceived as ineffective for tackling drug-related organised crime and highly detrimental to the rights of vulnerable communities in the region. The effectiveness of migrant deterrence strategies has been similarly critiqued, given that they fail to consider the root causes of migration.

The Trump administration’s blanket suspension of foreign aid and apparent disdain for environmental policies indicates a disregard for the socioeconomic factors driving OCG expansion and irregular migration in Latin America, which is likely to ensure their continuity and proliferation. To meet its national security priorities, the US will need to be attuned to the interconnected risks of crime and environmental degradation and consider holistic, preventative approaches instead of reactionary policies that fail to address the root causes of organised crime and migration flows.

Furthermore, US foreign policy in Latin America cannot be one-sided. Trump’s engagement with the region so far has pushed an ‘America First’ approach without an appreciation for the country’s longstanding partnerships in the region. Beyond concerns about crime and migration, imposing unilateral counter-crime measures on the region and freezing aid without first consulting and respecting these partners risks exacerbating Trump’s other major security concern: China’s increasing influence on the world stage. If the US fails to demonstrate its willingness to work with Latin American leaders to build mutual security, they are likely to seek out China as an alternative option.

#### Increased aid to Latin America is crucial for funding cybersecurity operations in the region

Contreras & Kotz 25 [Belisario Contreras, Senior Director, Global Security and Technology Strategy at Venable LLP. & Andy Kotz, Cybersecurity Policy Analyst at Venable LLP. 2-19-2025, "U.S. Cybersecurity Funding to Latin America: A Critical Investment for Regional and National Stability", CCPL, https://www.centerforcybersecuritypolicy.org/insights-and-research/u-s-cybersecurity-funding-to-latin-america-a-critical-investment-for-regional-and-national-stability, accessed 4/24/25, AWright]

The relationship between United States foreign policy and cybersecurity in Latin America has long been a critical factor in the region's ability to defend against cyber threats. U.S. funding has played a significant role in strengthening Latin American cybersecurity efforts, from technical training and infrastructure development to fostering regional partnerships.

Historically, funding for international development and aid in Latin America has been relatively constant. The U.S. also contributes to multilateral organizations, like the United Nations and the Organization of American States, which work to increase the cybersecurity capabilities of the entire region. In recent years, the U.S. has ramped up funding for cybersecurity capacity development, understanding that in order to keep our country safe from malicious actors, we need to help keep our neighbors safe.

The Trump administration's planned drastic decreases in foreign aid, though, will leave gaps in U.S. engagement in the region, leading to potential vulnerabilities. With China continuing to increase its presence in the region through its Belt and Road Initiative, this will likely increase Latin American countries' involvement with Chinese companies. And with fewer opportunities for American support, the risk of Chinese and Russian-sponsored cyberattacks on the region rises. Understanding the impact of diminished U.S. support highlights the need for continued U.S. involvement to ensure a robust cybersecurity framework in Latin America.

#### Foreign aid to Latin America is crucial to sustain democracy and promote anti-corruption movements.

Padgett 25 [Tim Padgett, Americas Editor for WLRN, covering Latin America and the Caribbean, 3-11-2025, "As USAID exits Latin America, will more people exit for the U.S. border — and will China move in?", WLRN, https://www.wlrn.org/americas/2025-03-11/usaid-cuts-latin-america-immigration, accessed 4/24/25]

On Monday, Secretary of State Marco Rubio confirmed the U.S. will eliminate 83% of the foreign aid projects carried out by USAID — the U.S. Agency for International Development — and cancel almost $60 billion in foreign assistance.

The Trump Administration has already laid off all but a few hundred of USAID's 10,000 employees around the world.

Although Rubio himself has long been a booster of USAID and the "soft power" goodwill it affords the U.S. around the world, President Trump says its work doesn’t align with his “America First” agenda.

Either way, the news is a blow to people in Latin American countries like Honduras, where one TV news report forecast that USAID will now "probably disappear.”

That means the loss of yanqui help with everything from schools to economic development to public security to pro-democracy and anti-corruption struggles — and, along the way, helping to keep communist China's influence in check in the region.

### Disadvantage Ground

#### [1] Multilat DA – new international movement over the last year has emphasized multilateral alignment in Latin America. Negative teams can identify the affirmative as a perceived bolt from the blue back to aggressive/coercive unilateralism

Soliman 1/10 [Mohammed Soliman is the director of the Strategic Technologies and Cyber Security Program at the Middle East Institute and a visiting fellow with the National Security Program at Third Way. America re-engages Africa and Latin America in a reimagined Atlantic, https://www.fpri.org/article/2024/01/america-re-engages-africa-and-latin-america-in-a-reimagined-atlantic/]

The United States is forging a new transatlantic partnership emphasizing Africa and Latin America, shifting its focus from the traditional US-Europe axis. This aims to address shared economic challenges and opportunities in the Atlantic basin, like sustainable ocean economy and resource management. The Partnership for Atlantic Cooperation is not a standalone strategy but a placeholder framework for engagement with Africa and Latin America. It reflects a humbled US engagement with the two continents overshadowed by the Indo-Pacific, Europe, and the Middle East. The Atlantic Partnership is **part of a wider shift in US foreign policy, including initiatives like IMEC** (India-Middle East-Europe Corridor), Indo-Pacific Economic Framework for Prosperity **(IPEF), and the** I2U2 **(India-Israel-UAE-USA**). This shift **prioritizes national security alongside economic interests and embraces** **minilateral blocs** against emerging rivals like China and Russia. It marks a move away from the pure market-driven Washington Consensus of the past. Building on its new global economic initiatives, such as the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework and the India-Middle East-Europe Corridor (IMEC), the United States, alongside thirty-one nations, launched the Partnership for Atlantic Cooperation, a transcontinental initiative, at the UN General Assembly in September. The Partnership for Atlantic Cooperation gathers nations across Europe, Africa, and the Americas, forging a new path in transatlantic cooperation. Economic powerhouses like Brazil, the United Kingdom, and the United States stand alongside regional leaders like Ghana, Nigeria, and Argentina, and stable democracies like Canada share the table with strategic gateway countries like Morocco and the Netherlands. This partnership ushers in a new era of transatlantic cooperation, venturing beyond the traditional US-Europe axis. It tackles broader economic—and, by extension, geopolitical—challenges facing the Atlantic basin, demanding a more integrated North-South approach. According to the White House announcement on the Partnership for Atlantic Cooperation: Coastal Atlantic countries share direct and interconnected interests in the Atlantic Ocean. The Atlantic Ocean is the world’s most heavily traveled ocean with critical trade routes and global energy reserves. The World Bank estimates that the ocean contributes one-and-a-half trillion dollars annually to the global economy—and expects this figure to double by 2030. Sustainable ocean economy sectors are estimated to generate almost fifty million jobs in Africa and to contribute twenty-one billion dollars to Latin American GDP. Meanwhile, challenges like illegal, unregulated, and unreported fishing, natural disasters, and illicit trafficking threaten this economy. We recognize that no country alone can solve the cross-boundary challenges in the Atlantic region or fully address the opportunities before us. The emphasis on the Atlantic’s benefits for Africa and Latin America anchors a humbled US engagement strategy with these continents, previously neglected in favor of a dominant American focus on the Indo-Pacific, Europe, and the Middle East. While the Partnership for Atlantic Cooperation isn’t a standalone strategy for Latin America and Africa, it serves as a temporary framework while Washington develops a cohesive vision for their integration in a US grand strategy in an era of great power competition. Furthermore, the White House, says in its statement, “It is also the first time that so many Atlantic countries have come together to establish a forum through which we can work together on a more regular basis and to lay down, via the Declaration, a set of shared principles for the Atlantic region, such as a commitment to an open Atlantic free from interference, coercion, or aggressive action.” The language used in describing the Atlantic Partnership echoes President Joe Biden’s strategic vision for the Indo-Pacific, stating at the Quad summit: “The future of our nations—and the world—hinges on a free and open Indo-Pacific, thriving and enduring for decades to come.” **The Partnership brings together the nations of Latin America and Africa as active participants in shaping the region’s future**. The North-South framing of the Atlantic Basin isn’t entirely unprecedented in global geopolitics. It echoes the strategic logic of Shinzo Abe’s expansion of the Asia-Pacific concept to the Indo-Pacific, a move conceptually aimed at balancing China’s influence through India’s inclusion. At least, this is the theory of the case in Tokyo and Washington and it is yet to be tested. Moreover, West Asia is a new term gaining traction in the Middle East, emphasizing transregional security and economic interconnectedness with South Asia. Notably, increasing integration across the broader Asian rimland points towards a more overarching Asian order. Washington’s new Atlantic initiative shouldn’t be seen as a separate initiative but a new add-on to the existing roster of minilateral formats that the United States has established recently, such as the India-Middle East-Europe Corridor (IMEC) announced during the G20 summit, illustrating a significant strategic shift in US foreign policy. The IMEC, I2U2, Atlantic Partnership, and IPEF are not mere economic initiatives; **they represent a calculated recalibration of American statecraft**. **Globalization’s cracks become visible in the shaky grounds of the Washington Consensus**, which was once seen as a blueprint for prosperity in a post-World War economic order. Washington, with a dose of Kissingerian realism, is adjusting its economic discourse. Market access loses its shine in a world of rising nationalism and broken supply chains. Simply put, granting market access to junior trade partners to gain their geopolitical alignment, is increasingly perceived as hurting the American working class and increasingly less appealing politically to the American voters. Furthermore, industrial policy, once a Cold War relic, has resurfaced, draped not in ideology but in the cloak of national security. Economic blocs, reminiscent of Henry Kissinger’s spheres of influence, solidify against a revisionist Russia and rising China. **The Partnership for Atlantic Cooperation is not a triumph of idealism, but a calculated adjustment to US engagement strategy with the rest of the world that ensures America’s favorable position in an emerging multipolar world order**.

#### [2] Diplomatic Capital DA – The plan shifts time, resource AND focus

Powell ‘22 – Career member of the United States Foreign Service who served as Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Human Resources (2016-2017), U.S. Ambassador to Mauritania (2010-2013), and Consul General in Frankfurt, Germany (2006-2009).(Jo Ellen Powell; "Bringing America’s Multilateral Diplomacy into the 21st Century"; Academy of Diplomacy; https://www.academyofdiplomacy.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/Bringing-Americas-Multilateral-Diplomacy-into-the-21st-Century-FINAL.pdf; 2-2022, Accessed 7-12-2022)

All of Secretary Blinken’s foreign policy priorities listed above have global impact and must be addressed in global fora. Is it even possible to consider a U.S. strategy for dealing with China that does not include a multilateral diplomacy dimension? Establishing our priorities means putting resources to work on their achievement – beginning with the time and focus of the Department’s senior leadership. And if, as we believe, these urgent global issues can only be successfully addressed through multilateral diplomacy, then we must devote more resources there as well.

To achieve priority U.S. foreign policy objectives in the coming decades, the Department will need to strengthen its commitment to multilateral diplomacy at the policy and operational levels. This will require sustained policy attention and guidance, trained and resourced staff, and clear priorities. Yet, multilateral diplomacy cannot be executed in isolation. The U.S. conducts diplomacy with organizations, but also with the member states of those organizations. Bilateral and multilateral diplomacy, therefore, must be strategically coherent and complementary, even when advancing global priorities causes occasional friction in bilateral relations.

The State Department’s policy orientation, training, and assignment incentives are heavily weighted to bilateral, not multilateral, diplomacy. In contrast, many other countries prioritize multilateral diplomacy, and their best diplomats often have extensive experience working in international organizations or serving in diplomatic missions to them, particularly the UN and regional organizations such as the European Union or the African Union. U.S. diplomats, on the other hand, may have highly successful careers without ever having served at a mission to an international organization, much less in the governing body of an international organization. Both career and non-career chiefs of missions to international organizations shared their concern that members of their staffs did not receive recognition in terms of onward assignment, promotion, or performance awards for the inherent difficulty and unique challenges of serving in a mission to an international organization. This needs to change.

The Department of State should develop a cadre of staff that is adept and deeply experienced in negotiations at international fora; understands how to work with and influence international organizations, their member states, and their staffs; and knows how to reach out to other parts of the U.S. government or the American private and academic sectors for expertise on specific issues relevant to dealing with multilateral challenges. Those serving in bilateral assignments are increasingly asked to engage and seek support for multilateral projects and actions. Achieving success will require a commitment to enhance training, encouragement and reward for assignments to international organizations and multilateral missions, and the development of a core cadre of multilateral expertise within the Foreign Service (FS) and the Department’s Civil Service (CS).

#### [3] Alignment DA – Latin American countries are attempting to take a non-aligned position amidst Cold War era competition over the region. The negative could argue the plan forces Latin American countries to shift away from non-aligned status. This discussion of non-alignment is HOTLY engaged over the past two years. We foresee this being a core negative argument.

Aguirre 3/2 [Mariano Aguirre Associate Fellow, International Security Programme, Is non-alignment possible for Latin America?, https://www.chathamhouse.org/2023/03/non-alignment-possible-latin-america]

Last January, Commander of US Southern Command General Laura Richardson explained that the Argentinian, Brazilian, Colombian and Chilean governments rejected a US offer. That offer: if they donated their ageing military equipment, some made in Russia and Germany, to Ukraine, Washington would replace it with superior American weaponry. This rejection together with Brazilian president Lula da Silva’s peace proposal for Ukraine that he announced last January illustrates how Latin America as a region is looking for a non-aligned position. Their effort will likely be a growing source of frustration for governments in the US and Europe. Can Latin America and the Caribbean negotiate equidistance with the United States and China that allows governments to build a foreign policy that serves its interests in the midst of a growing ‘new Cold War’ climate that threatens again to polarize global alliances? Waning US interest and the rise of China Latin America and the Caribbean spent most of the 20th century under the hegemony of the United States, even as US attention shifted elsewhere and narrowed its focus within the region. Since the 1980s, Washington has turned its attention more towards the Middle East and the Asia-Pacific region, while within the US, investments and political relationships in the Americas become concentrated on Mexico, Colombia, and Brazil. China is now the most important or second-most important trading partner in many Latin American countries, overtaking the US and the EU. Against this backdrop of waning US interest, since 2000, China has ramped up its investments in commodities and more recently in other sectors such as infrastructure across Latin America and the Caribbean. China is now the most important or second-most important trading partner in many Latin American countries, overtaking the US and the European Union (EU). With these increased commercial and investment relations has come greater diplomatic and development engagement. 21 countries in the region are part of the ‘New Silk Road’ initiative, among them: Argentina, Uruguay, Ecuador, Venezuela, Chile, Uruguay, Bolivia, Costa Rica, Cuba, and Peru. The idea of active non-alignment The war in Ukraine, energy-related geopolitics, technological confrontations over issues like the production of microprocessors and the control of communication markets are leading Washington and Beijing to attempt to gain allies and alienate their opponent. Today alliances are flexible and political and economic loyalties are driven more by pragmatism than ideology. Unlike during the Cold War, the international system is no longer bipolar, but has increasingly become multipolar after the fall of the Berlin Wall. Today alliances are flexible and political and economic loyalties are driven more by pragmatism than ideology. In their Latin American Foreign Policies in the New World Order: The Active Non-Alignment Option, former Chilean ambassador Jorge Heine and political scientists Carlos Fortín and Carlos Ominami argue how and why Latin America and the Caribbean must avoid being caught between the growing competition between China and the United States. Their argument rests on the need to independently establish governments’ foreign policy priorities, based on the calculations that Asia is fast becoming the main pole of world economic growth. Such a view also calls for Latin American and Caribbean states to explore and deepen relations with others, not only with Europe but also with other regions traditionally outside their field of interest, like sub-Saharan Africa. Pros and cons of non-alignment Such an orientation for Latin America and the Caribbean’s foreign policies is not without its drawbacks. The active non-alignment advocated by Heine, Fortín and Ominami risks diluting regional coherence to negotiate mainly with the US, China, and Europe on issues such as norms of international trade, the relationship between global economic governance and national autonomy, and between foreign investment and technology transfer. Non-dependence on the US and a broader array of close economic and diplomatic relations globally can help create the platforms to address modern global threats. As commercial and investment relations with China are based overwhelmingly on commodity exports and commodity-linked investments, doubling down on the relations with Beijing also risks becoming even more trapped on natural resource-based production, weakening incentives and investment for industrial and high-tech economies. A China- or even Asia-concentrated commercial strategy would also reduce the opportunities for intra-regional trade by both orienting economic development around commodities and reinforcing regional divisions, with South American economies and foreign ministries more oriented toward Beijing while Mexico and Central America are still largely locked in North American markets and initiatives. But there are also opportunities and mutual interests in maintaining balanced relations not just between China and the US, but also with other states and regions. Non-dependence on the US and a broader array of close economic and diplomatic relations globally can help create the platforms to address modern global threats, such as future pandemics, climate change, nuclear proliferation, and regional conflicts, including transnational crime. Former Mexican foreign affairs minister, Jorge Castañeda, argues that active non-alignment could be built around climate change, democracy, human rights, international justice, corruption, and cross-border tax evasion. Latin American countries could also be in a more powerful position influence international organizations when it comes to creating global regulations. Those who have endorsed the debate generated by Heine, et al. argue that to be effective and positive, such a shift in the region’s foreign policy must be centred on fundamental principles of good governance, inclusive economies with effective norms, and procedures to promote human rights and environmentally sustainability. Creating these basic agreements and instruments to guide a new more multipolar foreign policy would also help strengthen multilateral cooperation and institutions. Integration or competition? Celso Amorim, former Brazilian foreign and defence minister during the earlier presidency of Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva (2003-2011), thinks that Latin America and his country can ‘act independently’, but that ‘regional integration is needed, at two different levels (…) in fields such as health, outer space cooperation, science and technology’. However, defence, ‘is difficult, given the geographic proximity of certain countries to the United States’. Key issues are the relationship with the United States, uncertainties about its future foreign policy, and how Washington would react to active non-alignment. Leslie Elliot Armijo (Simon Fraser University, Vancouver) believes the US needs Latin America even more given the US’s ‘relative decline’. This would give the region the opportunity to negotiate advantages with Washington. For example, US companies speculate about moving factories from China to Mexico or other countries in the region, but this requires skilled labour and legal and political stability. Key issues are the relationship with the United States, uncertainties about its future foreign policy, and how Washington would react to an active non-alignment. Across Latin America and the Caribbean, integration has long been considered a strategic goal but one that has remained elusive. For this reason Castañeda recommends starting with cooperation around soft power issues. One key strategy needs to be economic diversification. Part of this will require greater integration and harmonization of the multiple trade initiatives and blocs in the region, like NAFTA, Mercosur and Caricom. Both of these pragmatic recommendations can serve to ease the process of meaningful integration around concrete shared interests and by doing so, better position states within the region, and the region itself, away from any alignment on either side of the growing geopolitical divide between Washington, DC and Beijing. Amitav Acharya (American University) considers that ‘building a unified and supportive Global South is highly unlikely, because pragmatism and national interests are the priority’. Subregional entities or ‘regionalized orders’ made up of state and non-state actors could be created. In line with this, Juan G. Tokatlian (Torcuato di Tella University) highlights in the Heine, et al. volume that ‘the degree of diplomatic fracture is such that to think of a collective aggregation of interests and goals is unrealistic. (…) It is more reasonable to lean on a multilateralism of small numbers’. Active non-alignment has many controversial angles, not least going against the current request of weapons to Ukraine. For the moment, most countries in Latin America and the Caribbean maintain their traditional relationship with the US and Europe, while pursuing agreements with China, in an exercise of flexible pragmatism. But this formula can be contentious if tensions between the United States and China intensify, and consequently the pressures to align with one or the other around technological disputes, investments, and loans. Active non-alignment has many controversial angles, not least going against the current request of weapons to Ukraine. It also pushes Latin American countries to face the challenge of competing in the strategic framework of integration, a well know-problem in the EU. But the concept, grounded in historic diplomatic thinking in the Americas, has helped to focus attention and reflection on Latin America’s future, potential trade-offs, and how the region can remain relevant in the 21st century.

#### [4] China SOI DA - Current US inaction in Latin America has allowed Chinese influence to expand in the region

Shullman 2/12/2024 [David O. is senior director of the Global China Hub at the Atlantic CouncilChina pairs actions with messaging in Latin America. The United States should do the same. <https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/in-depth-research-reports/issue-brief/china-pairs-actions-with-messaging-in-latin-america-the-united-states-should-do-the-same/> Accessed 4/24/2024]

China’s rapidly deepening economic engagement with Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) during the past decade is well documented. Less studied is Beijing’s coordination of mounting trade, financing, and investment with concerted focus on diplomatic engagement, public diplomacy, and information operations to cultivate greater influence across the region. This short paper addresses China’s multifaceted approach to LAC countries and increased engagement with the region in recent years, contrasting China’s approach with that of the United States. The paper then turns to the shifting dynamics in China-LAC relations, potential implications for the region and the United States, and how Washington should pair diplomatic engagement and strategic messaging with greater attention to LAC countries’ needs to better compete with China in the future.¶ China’s multifaceted engagement in Latin America¶ China’s increasing role in the economies of LAC countries in recent years is well documented. China’s state-directed “policy banks,” including China Development Bank and Export-Import Bank, provided more than $138 billion in loans to Latin America between 2005 and 2020. Regional trade with China grew from $12 billion in 2000 to a staggering $445 billion in 2021.1 The resulting economic boon to developing regional economies—and the potential political benefits to local leaders keen to claim credit for addressing very real development needs—has been significant. Not surprisingly, China is now perceived as an indispensable partner in many LAC countries.¶ But China’s growing sway in Latin America is neither simply a result of these economic ties, nor is Beijing’s interest in the region’s considerable resources the sole driver of its expanded engagement in the region. China has effectively paired investment and trade with strategic diplomacy and public messaging, amplifying its regional influence in the process just as it has for decades in Africa and other developing regions. China’s active participation in Latin America’s public tenders, through which Chinese construction firms have won numerous high-profile bids, are all the more valuable because such visible and strategic projects are paired with highly effective messaging and diplomacy underscoring China’s economic leadership.2¶ China’s public messaging in the region underscores consistent themes emphasizing a mutually beneficial (“win-win”) arrangement with countries irrespective of their politics or internal affairs. China’s message to the Global South that it doesn’t lecture countries is an indirect reference to US admonitions on democracy and governance. Chinese leaders view the expected protracted competition with the United States in decades to come as their top strategic priority—and see inroads in the LAC region in the context of that competition—but Beijing assiduously paints its involvement in the region as unrelated to these concerns or in any way aimed at Washington.3 This approach has remained consistent since the release of the People’s Republic of China’s second policy paper on LAC in 2016, which noted that China’s stepped up cooperation with the region “does not target or exclude any third party.”4¶ China’s messaging approach is remarkably monolithic, with identical narratives simultaneously issued by news outlets in different countries and by diplomats and company representative throughout the region. This suggests a highly centralized, coordinated decision-making process involving elements of the Chinese Communist Party’s Central Propaganda Department—as well as limited capacity to tailor China’s messages to particular contexts in the region.5 The PRC propaganda and information operations approach in LAC countries has become more systematic and diverse over the past decade, including opinion pieces, media content-sharing agreements, coproductions, press trips for Latin American journalists, and diplomatic accounts on social media platforms.6 Paid insertions and supplements in local outlets celebrating CCP achievements and legitimizing the Chinese government and leadership are also becoming more frequent and reflect a determination to present counternarratives to those of China’s critics. These interventions highlight the Chinese understanding or redefinition of such concepts as “freedom,” “democracy,” “harmony,” and “human rights.”7¶ China has also paid a remarkable level of high-level diplomatic attention to LAC. Since 2012, Chinese leader Xi Jinping has visited Latin America eleven times. In comparison, during his two terms, US President Barack Obama visited twelve times, whereas President Donald Trump went once. President Joe Biden, limited by the pandemic, made his first visit to the region just this January when he visited Mexico. China is an observer at the Organization of American States and a member of both the Inter-American Development Bank and the Caribbean Development Bank.. China has signed comprehensive strategic partnerships with Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Ecuador, Mexico, Peru, and Venezuela. Since 2015, Xi has participated in three summits with leaders and foreign ministers of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC), which does not include the United States and Canada. Twenty-one Latin American countries have so far signed on China’s Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), Xi’s signature global infrastructure program tied to China’s geostrategic aims.8¶ China is also engaging at the local level, investing in local projects while meeting officials and sending coordinated messages. China’s pitch is that it is interested purely in doing business—and offers deals others won’t.9 In many countries, China has deepened subnational-level relations through parliamentary exchanges and is building relationships directly with governors and mayors.10¶ Taken together, China’s economic, diplomatic, and strategic propaganda and messaging efforts combine to pose a significant challenge to US influence in the region. As noted in a recent Atlantic Council report, the pandemic accelerated the trend of China using its growing economic and diplomatic muscle to provide an alternative to US activities and interests. In particular, China’s pairing of vaccine shipments with official diplomatic engagement with local leaders and ministers, public diplomacy, and comprehensive media engagement to ensure positive headlines exemplifies China’s approach to aid and assistance throughout the Global South. China also engaged more effectively with LAC leaders during the pandemic, with Xi calling LAC leaders directly when they were infected with COVID-19 to promise vaccine donations and raise other items including new loan agreements.11

### Counterplan Ground

#### [1] Multilat CP – Debating over the best mechanism for grand strategy between continued unilateral and bilateral engagement or re-aligning to multilateral collaboration

Brown 23 [Gordon Brown, a former prime minister of the United Kingdom and the U.N. special envoy for global education., A New Multilateralism, September 11, 2023, https://foreignpolicy.com/2023/09/11/us-china-russia-multilateralism-diplomacy-alliances-trade/]

The United States, the undisputed leader of the nearly 80-year-old global institutions designed to enhance international cooperation, seems to be absenting itself from a serious debate about their relevance and potential reform. And as trade wars become technology wars and capital wars and threaten to descend even further into a new kind of economic cold war marked by competing global systems, an America that was, generally, multilateralist in a unipolar world is closer to unilateralism in a multipolar world. Clubs, large or small, will not give the world the stability it needs. We cannot reduce international policy to merely the sum of regional and bilateral relationships. What happens if there’s another global financial crisis? What happens if there’s again a worldwide contagion? What happens when droughts, floods, and fires reveal a global action that needs to be taken? What happens if, as U.S. President Ronald Reagan once mused to Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev, an asteroid is hurtling toward Earth? A ship in stormy seas needs steady anchors, and today there are none. The world used to be anchored by U.S. hegemony. Those unipolar days are now behind us. But after a unipolar age comes a multipolar age, which requires a multipolar anchor. This anchor—and the stability it provides—must be built on reformed multilateral institutions. Indeed, such an overhaul of the global architecture is the only way to repair a global liberal order that is now neither global nor liberal nor orderly—and to overcome a geopolitical recession that has given us a global no man’s land of ungoverned spaces. A multilateral reform agenda is all the more important because alternative world orders envisaged by commentators are hardly inclusive and thus not viable. A U.S.-led free trade zone is likely to be opposed not only by those excluded from it but by the more protectionist U.S. Congress. A coalition of democracies would, by definition, have to exclude U.S. allies from Rwanda and Bangladesh to Singapore and Saudi Arabia, which Washington would be loath to do. And a Concert of Great Powers—akin to the post-1815 Concert of Europe—or a G-2 comprising just the United States and China would also provoke an angry response from most of the world’s other 190-odd countries. Clubs, large or small, will not give the world the stability it needs, making a reinvigorated multilateral system a far better way to arrest the slide toward a “one world, two systems” future. Chinese President Xi Jinping understands well the benefits that can accrue to Beijing from shifts in geopolitical power. Just as the United States has moved from multilateralism to bilateralism and regionalism, China has introduced its own new overarching idea onto the global stage. A decade ago, China focused on professedly regional structures such as the Belt and Road Initiative, which has succeeded in attracting 149 members, and the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank, with 106 members, including most of Europe, the U.K., and Canada—and which the United States has refused to join, giving the impression it will not join any club it does not lead. Buoyed by this, China’s focus has shifted toward joint international initiatives, including the New Development Bank and the BRICS group of Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa. Now, China has gone global, reaching out on its own with the boldly named Global Security Initiative and the Global Civilization Initiative. With their focus on joint action on crime, terrorism, and domestic security, they follow on from what China considers to be the success of its first fully independent global program, the Global Development Initiative (GDI). All three interventions are far more Parthenon-like and certainly more structured and ambitious in their rhetoric, if not in reality. All told, some 60 countries have already joined the GDI’s Group of Friends. As detailed in Dawn C. Murphy’s China’s Rise in the Global South, China is using these global initiatives to build spheres of influence that could one day become a competing global order. A new multilateralism powered by persuasion and not dictation would bring people together. And this surge in Chinese global engagement is not passing propaganda from China but an enduring endeavor on Xi’s part—a deliberate display of political ambition and an attempt to present China as the true defender of the international order. Having just brokered a deal between Saudi Arabia and Iran to restore diplomatic relations, and potentially end the war in Yemen, Xi has now been sufficiently emboldened to push a peace settlement proposal to end Russia’s war in Ukraine, not to mention murmurings of a leading Chinese role in a two-state Israeli-Palestinian peace settlement, all under the umbrella of upholding the U.N. Charter. There’s fine print, of course. While China supports the Charter’s commitment to the territorial integrity of states and noninterference in the domestic affairs of member countries, it is silent on the sections of the Charter and subsequent U.N. resolutions that focus on human rights, the responsibility to protect, and the principle of self-determination—and China does little to uphold rulings made by the International Court of Justice and the International Criminal Court or, for example, the U.N. Convention on the Law of the Sea. The logical response is clear. Rather than retreating further, the United States must respond to a changing global order by championing a new multilateralism—not the old hub-and-spoke multilateralism that assumed unchallenged U.S. hegemony and could be upheld by instructing allies and suitors. A new multilateralism powered by persuasion and not dictation, and founded on the realities of our global economy, would bring people together through reforming the international institutions that the United States has the potential to once again lead. Washington has yet to fully comprehend the sheer scope and power of three seismic geopolitical shifts—what Xi calls “great changes unseen in a century”—that are creating a fractured and fragmented world in which Pax Americana is no more. And such a world still requires attention to be given to the provision of global public goods if we are to combat the disruptions that come from climate change, pandemics, financial instability, and excessive inequality. The first seismic shift is, of course, recognized by Sullivan, at least as far as it affects the White House’s domestic ambitions. Neoliberal economics, dominant for three decades, bequeathed a globalization that was open but not sufficiently inclusive. That economic order, in which half the world enjoyed higher living standards but many in the United States and the West stagnated, is being replaced by neo-mercantilist economics as states redefine their economic self-interest in terms of security protection. Resilience now trumps the old desire for efficiency; guaranteed supply trumps cost; and “just in case” matters more than “just in time.” Where once economics drove politics, politics is now driving economics—as evidenced by the trade, technology, investment, and data protectionism gripping the globe. The second shift is not so well understood in Washington. Policymakers have failed to wake up to the full implications as the 30-year-old certainties of a unipolar world are giving way to the uncertainties of a multipolar world. This is not, of course, a world that can be described as “multipolar” in the narrow sense that three or more countries have equal power and status—and some writers have therefore concluded that there is still a “partial unipolarity.” Rather, multipolarity means a world of multiple and competing centers of power, with huge implications for future U.S. relationships around the globe. We have seen this at work in dramatic form in the resistance of half the world—most non-Western countries—to supporting Ukraine in its war against Russia. Only around 30 are imposing sanctions against Moscow. Yet another more menacing measure of multipolarity reflecting the growing group of multiplayers, as described in Ashley J. Tellis’s book Striking Asymmetries, is the possible proliferation of nuclear weapons. If Iran secures a nuclear weapon, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Turkey, and Egypt will all likely seek to go nuclear. And as China’s nuclear weapons arsenal expands from around 400 warheads to more than 1,500 by 2035, South Korea and Japan will need more definitive assurances from the United States if they are not to become nuclear weapon states in their own right. Perhaps more worryingly, an India increasingly worried about China’s growing power is looking to acquire reliable thermonuclear weapons designs, given that its most reliable weapon has a yield 100 times smaller than China’s. All this risks a different kind of domino effect in the form of a deepening relationship between a Pakistan seeking more lethal nuclear weapons and China. Multipolarity means a world of multiple and competing centers of power, with huge implications for future U.S. relationships around the globe. Mainly as a result of the move away from neoliberalism and unipolarity, from one hegemon and one hegemonic world-view, a third seismic shift is underway. The hyperglobalization that characterized much of the last 20 years is being superseded by a new kind of globalization. It is not deglobalization, for trade is still growing (not at twice the rate of the world economy, as before, but keeping pace with it). In fact, global merchandise trade hit record levels in 2022. It is not even “slowbalization”—globalization at a snail’s pace—as global supply chains in digital services grew by an average of 8.1 percent annually between 2005 and 2022, compared with 5.6 percent for goods. Global exports of digital services reached $3.8 trillion in 2022, or 54 percent of total export services. As professions such as accountancy, law, medicine, and education are unbundled, many of the technical services that are now capable of being delivered from any part of the world will, like call center work, be offshored. “Globalization-heavy,” the presumption that globalization through trade would make your country’s citizens better off, has been superseded by “globalization-lite”—that restrictions on trade may be a better guarantee of protecting national living standards. There is a common thread underpinning all three seismic shifts and which appears to bring together these new developments: It is a resurgent nationalism best reflected by the country-first movements worldwide. Even Biden’s “Buy America” label, a watered-down version of the “America First” label of the Trump years, does not seem to dilute this economic nationalism. It is a nationalism characterized not just by more border controls, more customs duties, and more immigration restrictions but by tariff wars, technology wars, investment wars, industrial subsidy wars, and data wars. Globally, we are seeing more civil wars (around 55 in number), more secessionist movements (around 60), and more walls and fences physically separating countries (70 as of 2019, more than quadruple the number in 1990). This resurgent nationalism is expressed in an even more aggressive way. More and more governments and peoples are thinking in terms of a struggle between “us and them”: insiders versus outsiders. This new focus on a narrow and not enlightened self-interest has come at the expense of international cooperation at precisely the moment it is most needed to deal with global challenges. Fragmentation comes at an economic cost, too. WTO researchers have estimated that a “one world, two systems” future with reduced international trade and diminished benefits from specialization and scale would cut real incomes by at least 5 percent in the long run. Low-income countries would suffer even more, with a 12 percent fall in incomes, undermining any hopes of their convergence with middle- and higher-income economies. The IMF has done a similar study, suggesting that global losses from trade fragmentation could range from 0.2 to 7 percent of GDP. The costs may be higher when accounting for technological decoupling. Consider this: Whereas trade between the United States and the Soviet Union remained at around 1 percent of both countries’ total trade in the 1970s and ’80s, trade with China today makes up 16.5 percent of United States’ and about 20 percent of the EU’s imports, respectively. The geopolitical fallout from these seismic changes gives us a world in flux—or worse, one that is fracturing and in danger of breaking up. The old global architecture that gave us fixed allegiances and unbreakable alliances is under strain. A new global pathway is being laid, and old alliances are being reassessed, with the notable exception of an expanded NATO through which the United States has, to its credit, brought trans-Atlantic security cooperation back to life. The G-7, not the G-20, is now seen by Sullivan as the “steering committee of the free world.” But that leaves a G-180+ feeling unimpressed and unrepresented. And with other long-enduring relationships under strain, the geopolitical landscape is strewn with ragged, overlapping, and competing arrangements. Without any new plan to bring people together, we face a decade of disorder before the cement will set. Already countries released from the unipolar straitjacket are enjoying and making a virtue of their distance from the great powers, practicing what the Singapore-based scholar Danny Quah calls “Third Nation agency”—not only breaking free from traditional loyalties and partnerships but creating new and often transitory alliances. Jared Cohen at Goldman Sachs has described these countries as “swing states” whose allegiances are blowing in the wind. They prefer to form what Samir Saran, the president of India’s Observer Research Foundation, has labeled “limited liability partnerships,” which in their own right are a different form of what political scientists are calling minilateralism, where a group of states get together not to pursue long-term shared goals but short-term economic or security interests. Take India, now governed by a leader subscribing to Hindu-nationalism, authoritarianism, and religious intolerance. But as India’s and America’s shared values—support for democracy and religious freedom—have grown weaker, the two countries’ shared material interests, particularly in relation to China, have for now grown stronger. Even while fearful of China’s growing influence in Asia, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi is playing the United States and Russia off each other, making them battle for the country’s arms contracts and favorable trade deals. Then there’s Indonesia, where resource nationalism is on the agenda as Jakarta takes control of its main mineral asset—nickel. However, Indonesia’s resource nationalism also means pitting the main purchasers of not just its nickel but its copper and other minerals against one another. Or consider the Middle East, where countries such as Saudi Arabia and the UAE are taking advantage of a U.S. pivot to the Indo-Pacific by exploiting the very different interests of the United States, China, and Russia. But one-off trade and security deals and playing friend against foe will only get countries so far. Their economic future depends more on a stable international system than on ad hoc and opportunistic deals that suit the conveniences of the moment. Each country for its own different reasons needs a new multilateralism, not an old opportunism. Africa has a new bargaining power, too, derived not just from mineral resources but untapped markets and labor pools, and the recognition that our climate crisis cannot be met and mastered without its involvement. Bringing Africa closer to the heart of a reformed multilateral system—a bigger role in the G-20, enhanced representation at the World Bank and IMF, the beneficiary of new climate finance—is a better and more durable answer than forcing countries across the continent to choose between China, Russia, and the United States. Indeed, each of these blocs would benefit from multilateral coordination through the international institutions, as would Europe. Every European country has a reason, if a different reason, for wanting to maintain trade with China: Germany to sustain its manufacturing exports, France to further its ideas of strategic autonomy, Eastern Europe because of its dependence on the Belt and Road Initiative, and the Iberian countries because of their links with Latin America, which does not want to break with its biggest trading partner—and so Europe does not want to end up squeezed between the United States and China. And with the United States needing Europe to moderate China, and China needing Europe to moderate the United States, Europe is in a stronger position to champion multilateralism than perhaps it realizes. It is not just in the interests of Africa, the Middle East, and Europe to promote a more stable multilateralism. To be more effective globally, the United States must start by losing its bias against the international institutions it created and has led. Why? Because the lure of the old version of Pax Americana is no longer strong enough to entice the rest of the world to respond to U.S. power. But a new multilateralism with the United States in the lead could. If that were not reason enough, China’s Global Security Initiative should be a wake-up call for Washington, summoning it to reach beyond bilateral and regional initiatives. I have found over the years that even when reforms have been urgently needed to recognize, for example, the rising economic strength of emerging countries on the boards of the IMF and World Bank and to recapitalize these institutions, the United States has had a habit of dragging its feet. Too often, Washington has been silent as calls have grown even from its closest allies such as the U.K. to update global institutions or end stalemates at the U.N., and the reason for this is almost certainly the survival of a unipolar mindset long after it has become anachronistic and even naive. Today, the United States lacks the power it had in the past to direct these unreformed institutions through the back door when, as most members are painfully aware, the institutions cannot flourish without fundamental reforms upfront. Washington continues to give the impression that it will not join any club it does not create and control. Consider this: It is because the United States is too often trapped in the old mindset of the unipolar era that it walked away from the very trade agreement—the Trans-Pacific Partnership—that the Obama administration forged to contain China. It is indeed an irony that the group the United States envisioned to exclude China is now under pressure to bring China on board. It makes sense for an America that has pivoted to the Pacific to be part of the continent’s biggest trade partnership; however, it continues to give the impression that it will not join any club it does not create and control. And that same unilateralist mindset led to the botched Afghanistan exit that was ordered without any substantive consultation with the allies that formed the Afghan coalition. The United States is selling itself short. The country that led a unipolar world can still lead in a multipolar world, not by issuing orders to its fellow countries as if they were vassals but by persuading them as allies. Only through the power of cooperation can we square the circle whereby the United States champions a multilateral order and enlists countries to stand with it. If Washington can no longer successfully impose, it can successfully propose. And if it does so, the United States—the country that most of the world still looks to for leadership and wants to continue to do so—could and would be the only country able to rally a majority of the world around a rejuvenated multilateralism: global solutions to global problems through global institutions. Two conclusions follow. The United States has to build alliances worldwide, taking time to bring countries on board. Benign neglect is an innocent explanation for the problem. For example, in the last 100 years U.S. presidents have visited fewer than two dozen of Africa’s 54 countries. We must find common cause with them by listening to them as equals and not labeling them and viewing them through the hackneyed lenses of old. We need to think of a world where the West cannot just lecture developing economies but instead have to sign up as partners in a common set of global causes. And second, if the United States renewed its historical support for the global institutions that it played a major part in creating, China’s bluff would be called. It would force Xi to either defend the international order—which includes support for the U.N., IMF, WTO, and WHO—or admit that his Global Security Initiative is founded on propaganda, not truth. The fate throughout history of “new world orders” can largely make for depressing reading. The new world orders of 1815, 1918, and 1945 show that changes in the global architecture tend to happen only after a war or breakdown. Indeed, 1990 was hailed by U.S. President George H.W. Bush as the start of a “new world order” as the Cold War ended. In reality, it was a turning point when history did not turn in a sufficiently decisive way. You could argue that Germany wanted German unity and was thinking only of Germany; that France wanted to contain Germany through European unity and was thinking only of France; and that the United States wanted to maintain NATO and its leadership of it and was thinking only of the United States. A humiliated Russia was never brought into the new world order. And little thought was given, at this moment when change was on the agenda, to the future role that China, India, and the developing world would play. The existential challenges that we now face—starting with climate change and the seismic shifts we are living through—are creating a rare global moment when the bedrock shifts beneath our feet and the international architecture has to be remade once again or it shall wither. The international architecture assembled in the 1940s must be reimagined for the needs of the 2020s, when in a more economically integrated economy, a more socially interconnected and geopolitically interdependent world, every country’s independence is qualified by global interdependence. We may not be able to build a wholly new Parthenon, but we must find a way to avoid camping out in the ruins of an Acropolis. To avoid that, change must follow. In a world in which financial contagion is always a risk and where global supply chains link countries and continents like never before, we cannot view countries the old way—as nations sufficient unto themselves—but as part of a web of networks and relationships where the spillovers from one can have devastating effects on others. So, the IMF can no longer be the body that waits to act when individual nations hit balance-of-payments crises but must be in the business of crisis prevention as well as crisis resolution. And to forestall future slumps, its global surveillance arm will have to be strengthened, in concert with the Financial Stability Board and the Bank for International Settlements, to undertake the monitoring and reporting of all risks that threaten the world economy. The World Bank has to become a global public goods bank focused on both human capital and environmental stewardship. And given that the World Bank will need resources of around $450 billion a year—three times its current outlays—to perform these roles, its dynamic new president, Ajay Banga, will need U.S. support in the process of reform. What is more, shareholders must agree to allocate more capital to reforms such as the merger of the bank’s low-income and middle-income facilities, to innovations in its use of guarantees as well as loans and grants, and to see the bank as a platform for mobilizing private sector investments. From the 1940s to the 1990s, the WTO worked by consensus and through often painful negotiations and uneasy compromises. Since the neoliberal reorganization of the WTO in the mid-1990s—and for the first time for 50 years—no world trade deal has been possible. And under its widely respected director-general, Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala, a greater focus on diplomacy and a reformed appeals system will be essential to deal with the least regulated areas of trade: in services, data, and information technology generally. And a new international framework will have to be developed to deal with the regulatory and ethical issues raised by the dangers of a free-for-all in artificial intelligence as well as the internet. The United States could win the battle with China but in doing so lose the war for support worldwide. In the aftermath of COVID-19, no one who looks seriously at WHO—which has a budget equivalent to three medium-sized U.S. hospitals—can now underestimate the imperative for adequate funding to confront an ever-expanding list of risks. The G-20 needs to become more representative of the other 175 states, develop a proper secretariat so that it exists between annual meetings, and pay more attention to interlocking crises in the poorest parts of the world. And the United Nations must evolve. As long as Russia holds a veto on all issues, including punishing war crimes, genocide, and crimes against humanity within the exclusive Security Council, the whole organization can be frozen into inaction. If we cannot reform the Security Council by reducing or eliminating the power of the veto, the United States should encourage the U.N. General Assembly and its 193 members to take a more responsible leadership role. At the least, under the diligent leadership of U.N. Secretary-General António Guterres, we can achieve reforms to the peacekeeping work of the U.N. and build a better way of delivering a humanitarian aid budget that, for the increased number of refugees and displaced people worldwide, requires $41 billion a year and never receives more than half of what is needed. A starting point would be Washington proposing and championing a burden-sharing agreement to adequately finance climate action, pandemic preparedness, and humanitarian commitments. In particular, at this year’s U.N. Climate Change Conference in Dubai, the Middle Eastern petrostates that have benefited from massive windfall profits should join historic and current carbon emitters in financing the mitigation and adaptation necessary in low- and middle-income countries. A U.S. agenda for reforms such as these could put multilateralism back on track. Scholars of international relations often talk of the Thucydides trap, where a rising power takes on an entrenched hegemon just as Athens took on Sparta in the fifth century B.C. But it is often forgotten that Sparta did not lose out because of the power of Athens, which it actually defeated in that war. Sparta lost years later as states smaller than Athens destroyed its hegemonic power. There is a lesson here for a United States whose attention is increasingly focused on China. For a while, its capacity to outrival its biggest competitor can be calculated and proved. What is less under the microscope is the fallout from the loss of U.S. influence in Africa, Asia, Latin America, and the Middle East. The United States could win the battle with China but in doing so lose the war for support worldwide. Far better for the United States is to take the lead in rebuilding the global order, and here it has the best possible hand. If Washington were sufficiently bold in confronting global problems that need global solutions, then it would not need to obsess so much about Beijing’s increasing influence. Instead, China would be faced with a defining choice: either work with the United States, as it says it wants to, or be exposed for talking about international cooperation and the importance of global institutions while only being interested in a “China first” policy. Today, it looks as if China has the interest needed to be a global beacon but not the values. America has the values but not, as things currently stand, sufficient interest. Values don’t change overnight, but interests can. It’s your move, America.

#### [2] International Actor – the EU wants to be Latin America’s “partner of choice” to collaborate on a swath of international issues

Borrell 23 [Josep Borrell, High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy / Vice-President of the European Commission, A new EU agenda with Latin America and the Caribbean, November 6, 2023, https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/new-eu-agenda-latin-america-and-caribbean\_en]

HR/VP Blog – Last Wednesday, together with the European Commission, I set out a new agenda for strengthening relations between the EU and Latin America and the Caribbean. We already have strong ties with the region but in the new geopolitical context, we need a qualitative leap forward. For that purpose, the EU-CELAC summit next month will be crucial. Since I became HRVP in 2019, I made it part of my mission to strengthen our “other transatlantic relationship”, the one with Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC). This region has traditionally been a foreign policy priority for some of our member states, such as Spain and Portugal, who have strong historical ties, but I am determined that it become a strategic priority for the Union as a whole. We already have a dense network of agreements with 27 out of 33 countries of the region. Our economic ties are also strong: European Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) in the LAC region is bigger than our FDI in India, China and Japan combined. Millions of people from the LAC region live in the EU and vice versa and our two regions are also closely aligned in terms of interests and values. However, in recent years, other actors, notably China, have been very active in strengthening their economic and political footprint in the region. We cannot just rely on our traditional ties with the LAC region We need to speed up and cannot just rely on our traditional ties. This was already true before Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine, but it is all the more true today when the quality of our bilateral relations with the so-called “Global South” has become so crucial for our future and the future of the rules-based world order. Paying more attention to the region also makes a lot of sense at a time when we are seeking to diversify our value chains and reduce our excessive dependencies, by working with reliable partners. Latin America and the Caribbean are central in the fight against climate change and represent a global power in terms of biodiversity, renewable energies and strategic raw materials for the green transition. However, the region does not want to return to the past. It wants to take advantage of these transitions to industrialise and add value to its exports. Latin America and the Caribbean are central in the fight against climate change and represent a global power in terms of biodiversity, renewable energies and strategic raw materials for the green transition. Since 2019, I have invested quite a lot of energy to strengthen our ties with the region. I have travelled to Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Cuba, the Dominican Republic, Panama, Peru and Uruguay, to promote closer relations and stronger collaboration. Last October, I co-chaired the first CELAC-EU ministerial meeting since 2018 in Buenos Aires. We are now in the final stage of preparations for the EU-CELAC summit that will take place on 17 and 18 July in Brussels, the first since 2015 and a major milestone to set a common agenda. It is in that context that last Wednesday I presented with the Commission a New Agenda for Relations between the EU and Latin America and the Caribbean. We want to open a new era of cooperation in today’s fast-changing global context. To achieve this goal, we need renewed political engagement at all levels: between the two regions, with individual LAC countries, with sub-regions and in multilateral fora. We also need a more structured relationship, with regular summits and a permanent coordination mechanism between the EU and CELAC to ensure continuity and follow-up. Regular high-level political dialogue is indeed key to provide focus, agree on priorities and joint actions and to address differences if they arise. Moving from “natural partners” to “partners of choice” We propose to move from being “natural partners” to being “partners of choice”. Being “partners of choice” is about political will: the will to work together to address global challenges and strengthen the rules-based order - with the ultimate goal of promoting peace, security and democracy. The upcoming EU-CELAC Summit offers a great opportunity to build trust and inject momentum into our relationship. Reinvigorating the EU-LAC relationships will be one of the key achievements of this geopolitical Commission.

#### [3] Track 2 is germane to Latin American diplomacy, especially in technology transfers and scientific development

Polejack & Fernandes Coelho, 2021 (Andrei Polejack and Luciana Fernandes Coelho, WMU-Sasakawa Global Ocean Institute, World Maritime University, Malmö, Sweden, Ministério da Ciencia, Tecnologia e ˆ Inovações, Brasília, Brazil, Research Group Natural Resources, Law, and Sustainable Development, Brazilian Institute for the Law of the Sea, Salvador, Brazil., “Ocean Science Diplomacy can Be a Game Changer to Promote the Access to Marine Technology in Latin America and the Caribbean,” Front. Res. Metr. Anal., 12 April 2021 Sec. Research Policy and Strategic Management Volume 6 - 2021 | <https://doi.org/10.3389/frma.2021.637127>, accessed on 4/29/2024)

In practice, marine technology transfer has relied less in formal intergovernmental diplomatic routes and more in peer-to-peer exchange. Peer-to-peer cooperation is a basic mechanism of the scientific endeavor. It has produced advancements in our common knowledge of the marine realm allowing society to make better informed decisions (Fischhoff and Scheufele, 2013). Research centers, universities and individual researchers have fostered technology transfer for problem-solving, aiming at progressing in scientific discovery. Agreements signed between research institutions and universities often include the exchange of human capacities and technology transfer at some level (Dolan, 2012). Drivers of such agreements are opportunities presented by the growing internationalization mechanisms adopted by those institutions (Qiang, 2003). Such mechanisms aim at projecting national capacities and competencies abroad to attract human and financial capital for further institutional developments, as a form of investment. In the context of Latin America and the Caribbean, internationalization has also provided the means to access foreign research funding and assets, placing an important opportunity to foster partnerships, but also to overcome national budget constraints. This practice is more common in the context of technologies developed by publicly funded research, mainly targeting scientific discovery. Privately funded research assets, in particular those aimed at exploring the marine resources such as oil, fisheries and minerals, are less common on those agreements because these technologies raise industry’s competitiveness and profit (Ruffini, 2020a). There are, however, a few privately funded organizations that use advanced technologies to promote open access information to society [e.g., Global Fishing Watch (Nugent, 2019)]. It is therefore fundamental that scientific cooperation in informal pathways is continued and promoted so science can profit from the free thinking and foster technology transfer. In fact, diplomacy should acknowledge and promote these informal channels where applicable, supporting actions that have been successful over time, such as cooperation agreements between research institutions. This informality is addressed as a form of Track 2 diplomacy in International Relations scholarship. The term can be understood as a parastatal informal diplomacy in which stakeholders are not necessarily bound to Governments (Jones, 2015). Track 2 diplomacy can use the science international cooperation to progress on addressing community and common interests in a more flexible way than the official, Government-led track 1 diplomacy. At the end of the day, both forms of negotiations should be interlinked and supportive of one another if we are to see change in the transfer of marine technologies during the Decade of Ocean Science, for example.

#### [4] Military Engagement - The topic authors have specifically crafted the list options of the resolutions to avoid allowing military engagement to be on face topical. We believe this should be reserved for counterplan ground. A large chunk of the solvency advocate evidence outlines a multiplicity of actions, many identifying military engagement as alternatives to diplomatic responses.

#### [5] Coercion – Affirmative teams being required to defend positive engagement protects punitive forms of foreign strategy (sanctions, punishments, removal of aid, removal of diplomacy) as core negative counterplan options.

### Kritik Ground

#### We are at a point in the debate topic process where big schools or blockade formations of power house card cutters are forming collectives to monopolize the topic process. We are being duped into thinking topics are “great for K ground” due to a collective of policy researchers finding the only actual topic K links that will exist for a controversy during the entire season of debate but asserting there is a rich array of research beyond what they included.

#### And we are being convinced to make these decisions by rejecting topics that obviously have a deeper critical connection, but maybe the paper was not as deep on it. To evaluate a potential topic like “should we increase engagement with Latin America” – one must acknowledge the truth of the statement that this topic has deep avenues for critical inquiry.

#### The US’ relationship to its Southern neighbor has been anything but neighborly. The US/Latin America engagement history has been one filled with biopolitical coercion, disrespect, colonization, conquest, displacement, antiblack violence, neoliberal control, manipulation, and violence. We have students debating at tournaments who have experienced the true legacy of US imperialism in their own lives. Yet we have avoided any discussion of Latin America in collegiate debate over the past 30 years.

#### There’s ample grounds for critical investigations into Latin America & its relationship with the Global North

Tussie & Acharya, 2022 (Diana Tussie & Amitav Acharya, Tussie is head of the Department of International Relations at FLACSO/ Argentina, where she teaches in the areas of International Political Economy, Economic Diplomacy and Global Economic Governance. Dr Tussie holds a PhD in International Relations from the London School of Economics. Her contributions to the debate and practice of International Political Economy and International Development are widely recognized. She has published extensively in English and Spanish. She has been co-editor of Global Governance in the period 2014–2018. From 2006 to 2009 she served on the Committee for Development Policy of the United Nations. She has been a visiting scholar at the University of Chile, de la República, Manchester, Oxford, Córdoba and the German Institute of Global and Area Studies. In 2017, she was awarded the Distinguished Scholar, Global South Caucus Award from the International Studies Association., Acharya is the UNESCO Chair in Transnational Challenges and Governance and a distinguished professor at the School of International Service, American University, Washington, DC. He is the first non-Western scholar to be elected (for 2014–2015) as the president of the International Studies Association (ISA). Previously he was a professor at York University, Toronto, and the University of Bristol, UK. He was the inaugural Nelson Mandela Visiting Professorship in International Relations at Rhodes University, South Africa; the inaugural Boeing Company Chair in International Relations at the Schwarzman Scholars Program at Tsinghua University; fellow of Harvard’s Asia Center and John F. Kennedy School of Government; and Christensen Fellow at Oxford., “Introduction: Latin America and the Caribbean in Global International Relations” in Latin America in Global International Relations, Edited by Amitav Acharya, Melisa Deciancio, & Diana Tussie. New York: Routledge, ISBN: 978-1-003-02895-6 (ebk)) NOTE: LAC = Latin America and the Caribbean

Arie Kacowicz and Daniel Wajner start off showing how LAC contribution interacts with debates from the Global North. The premise here is that we should engage in an intellectual dialogue across the virtual or constructed North– South academic divide. This dialogue challenges the prevailing hegemonic assumption that only Northern world order concepts have a global reach, whereas Southern inputs are minimal or non-existent. Getting rid of that hegemony, in scholarly terms, means that we have to see and understand the world from the perspective of the South in general, and Latin America in particular. The authors examine the LAC responses to alternative world orders in analytical and normative terms. They assess general attempts of theorizing in the region and from the region and show approaches to world order(s) along three issue-areas: peace, security, international law and institutions; international political economy, development and globalization; and foreign policy formulations.

Carsten-Andreas Schulz, in turn, explores the strategies of state actors seeking to influence the “rules of the game”. He elaborates the concept of agency (as distinct from autonomy). Agency denotes actors’ ability to act upon and transform structural constraints, whereas autonomy is an ability to pursue foreign policy aims. The chapter then elaborates on the scope conditions of non-hegemonic agency. Schulz applies this discussion to the three crucial cases of Latin American agency: the role of delegates at the Second Hague Conference of 1907; their contributions to institutionalizing the human rights regime after WWII; and the more recent influence in the Law of the Sea.

The chapter by Matias Spektor looks at the practice of regional hegemony by introducing the concept of regional social compacts—hierarchical assemblages that establish networks to bind governing elites. These points are illustrated through a regional social compact led by the United States in Cold War South America that established terror regimes. The chapter brings to the fore the manner and pervasiveness of US influence in the region. By the same token it stands apart from prevalent understandings of security regionalism as a force for good. Telling the story through this prism, we can honor one of GIR’s most valuable intellectual contributions to our field: establishing an explicit connection between the global organization of political authority in practice and its vast human consequences for people worldwide.

Kristina Hinds develops further the interconnectedness of the world order to its human consequences. She takes us to the Caribbean to expose the racialized way in which the world system has been fashioned through colonization. The Caribbean is an intriguing region, being a meeting point (voluntary and involuntary) of cultures and peoples and because of its bond to Africa. The proposition that the world is ordered around racialized exclusions is a common thread that runs through Caribbean analyses. The state appears as secondary to the racialized structure based on white supremacy. This historicist approach is the pillar of the theoretical contribution that Caribbean thought makes to GIR. We can glean that power relations across the state system cannot be separated from oppressive and racialized histories, as the history of the Caribbean–European relationship exemplifies. On this note, Franz Fanon deserves a mention as a founding father of the postcolonial tradition. In the area of international political economy, Caribbean scholars have also provided systemic theorizing about the nature of underdevelopment. Pride of place is held by conceptualizations offered from Nobel Laurate Sir Arthur Lewis, such as industrialization by invitation and development with unlimited supply of labor. The point here is to understand race and development are not addenda but lie at the core of GIR, an invitation to unsettling understandings of the field.

The invitation to unsettling understandings is further taken by Querejazu and Tickner. They argue that GIR needs to unearth the triad of theology, pedagogy and methodology of liberation rooted in the narrative of underdevelopment, inequality and injustice. The triad cultivates an epistemological “siding with” the oppressed, akin to that propounded by Caribbean and feminist thought. The triad had a profound effect on the critical social sciences, offering an alternative toolkit for thinking and acting conceived primarily in terms of the emancipation and empowerment of oppressed groups. A second strand taken by this chapter is relational indigenous and Afro-descendent thought, key precursors of decolonial theory. These ontological claims, present in “land-based” struggles, from the Zapatistas in Mexico, the Mapuches in Argentina and Chile, or the Sin Tierra in Brazil, challenge traditional categories of space and territory. Such knowledges resonate internationally, as suggested by the Universal Declaration of Mother Earth Rights or the idea of vivir bien/buen vivir. They can be expected to acquire salience as a result of the pandemic.

Stuenkel picks up on the advent of the post-Western World shaking political and economic dynamics and the academic debate in a region that has been boxed as the US sphere of influence. The term “post-Western World” here refers to a world in which the West is no longer economically and politically dominant, and where non-Western actors possess system-shaping capacity and significant agenda-setting power. It is closely related to Amitav Acharya’s concept of the “multiplex order” in which elements of the liberal order survive but where order is produced by a much larger number of actors. The multiplex or post-Western order offers strategic opportunities as well as opportunities for academia in contributing to the growing debate about how to update theory, helping us navigate a less Western-centric world. Yet there are unprecedented challenges. A key factor that limits LAC agency and increases vulnerability is a toxic combination of economic crisis and domestic political instability, which obliges governments to be cautious and to focus on domestic challenges. LAC, as much of the developing world, have been obliterated from Western theory because they are categorized as inherently unstable and hence incapable of thinking beyond the short term. Such boxing neglects the uneven development that lies at the root of instability or the long-handed great power interventions. Yet the emerging system of sticks-and-carrots, no longer centered on the United States, has induced fertile academic discussion with the potential to strengthen the construction of GIR.

Loza’s chapter expands on how feminist analyses led to an epistemic turn in all social sciences. Offering a tour d’horizon, she shows that the jumpstart took place in development studies, a starting for contributions of significance. The paradigm then opened the box of gender hierarchies which do not focus exclusively on the state system. The decolonial school of thought, a major contribution from LAC that both compliments postcolonialism and supports the aspirations of GIR, indicates the conquest of America as the launching pad for the construction of modernity. The conquest gave rise to Latin America, constituted it as a region and as a political project. Thus, LAC feminism cannot be understood separately from theories that reveal the persistence of colonialism. A genuine making of GIR must by force become gender sensitive and gender inclusive. Feminisms propose tools to recognize themes, actors and actions that happen in spaces outside the West, in an attempt to overcome ethnocentrism and exclusion.

Quiliconi and Rivera show how what we now call international political economy is a brand in LAC theorizing. Structuralism and theories of development exposed the center–periphery structure of the world order which provided theoretical or state-led rather than laissez faire or market-led development. Analyses of the “peripheral condition” promoted a new way of understanding IR. They showed that commodity-exporting developing countries experienced declining terms of trade over the long run, meaning that the economic gap between core and periphery would grow rather than narrow over time. Prebisch and colleagues inaugurated a structuralist approach in order to understand the peripheral condition in world politics, which in turn led to a global push to reform the international economic order. The study of LAC political and economic history fleshes out how trade and politics have been tied together at the hip. Regionalism has been a cross-cutting issue embedded in a number of discussions.

Regionalism is taken upfront in the chapter by Arturo Santa-Cruz. The author shows how regionalism has been a key concept in Latin American thinking and a “dominant strategy” for political elites due to social identification. Efforts at integration move with the tide but persist through time, speaking to the value attached to thinking regionally. Regionalism follows LAC as a shadow while the shadow of the US endures as well. The integrative ethos is an important part of the contribution of LAC to the theory and practice of regionalism. The normative structure has been successfully “exported” to other regions—and to the international system as a whole. The study of extra-European experiences is at the core of GIR, putting a premium on the diversity of methodological and theoretical approaches.

Palestini develops the specific contribution of dependency theories to GIR. Dependency theory evolves from the center–periphery toolkit, and its originality is its starting point. While theories of imperialism did not exclude the developing world as other theories of IR have, they started from the dynamics of the Global North before moving on to explain the consequences for the Global South. The Global South was at the receiving end. In contrast, dependency theory considered how the Global North posed a particular problem to the Global South, but it went further by addressing the economic, political and social problems that affected postcolonial societies when they integrated into global capitalism. Dependentistas put theories of imperialism upside-down and influenced research in the Global North, such as world-systems theory, the developmental state and the first studies on global commodity chains. As a seminal contribution to GIR to be stressed is the analytical stance which contends that “the international “consists of more than the big powers merely missing those chains of dependence, value extraction, cooperation and competition “out there” in which peripheries only appear when they emerge and hence gain entitlement to become objects of study.

Taking up this notion, Chagas Bastos presents the concept of international insertion. The concept has heuristic value insofar as it refers to the missing piece in dependency. Insertion is about creating agency spaces. From a Northern point of view the argument that a state must be “inserted” undoubtedly sounds alien. This is not true, however, if we consider that agency with respect to the international in the South has its starting point in marginalization, and is commonly dominated by the need to expand or affect the spaces of agency in which they articulate—precisely, their insertion. The problem of managing insertion is common to all those not in privileged positions. It implies moving the focus from “emergence” or from autonomy (as opposed to dependence) to a status for agency that must be theorized from its material, ideational components but also the psychological aspects of contempt and prejudice intrinsic toward the South.

Miguez’s chapter reviews the concept of autonomy which has had wide currency in foreign policy analysis, especially in the southern tip of LAC. The concept was born in the midst of the North–South debate and the push for the reform of the international economic order. Autonomy like insertion is alien in mainstream foreign policy studies. Insofar as they are given there is no need for a quest. The problematique of autonomy stemmed from a reading of center– periphery development and dependency, marked by the need to defend policy spaces. As defined by one of the founding fathers, autonomy is the maximum capacity for self-determination that can be achieved, considering the structural conditions. It depends on the capacity of elites to desire and sustain it. Autonomy was not conceived as revolutionary delinking, yet it has strong elements of contestedness. It surfs through spaces of permissibility, but it is inspired by a critical social drive, ethical questioning and open confrontation regarding inequalities in the world system. The importance of concepts such as these is their ability to travel and leave the silos to which they have been relegated by the politics of knowledge. This is what GIR broadening is about.

#### We have a large amount of country specific K link cards focused on settler colonialism, feminism, security, empire, afropessimism, and capitalism in the appendix of this document.

### What about Trump?

#### Zero topics can isolate themselves from the unpredictable nature of President Trump. Assuming they can do so is a fools’ errand. The Latin American controversy at least situates uniqueness in the opposite direction of Trump actions now AND is still a conversation scholars on both sides of the aisle are engaging. Beyond that, Trump’s more isolationist nature means the most likely action he could take that affects the Latin America topic is an increase in sanctions, which is still topic uniqueness.

#### Another note that is a benefit to the Latin America topic is that even if Trump takes an action that harms one potential country on a country list topic for a Latin America resolution, he would not completely ruin the whole topic as teams can pivot to other country options. However, alternative proposal options are incredibly vulnerable to a single Trump change ruining aff ground for the entire resolution. For example, let’s investigate some scenarios:

#### [Scenario A] Trump invades Mexico---this would be very harmful for a Mexico affirmative if Mexico is in the country list. However, affirmative teams would be able to continue a year of debate with some minor tweaks to their evidence sets if they are reading another country in the topic. The democracy promotion topic encountered a similar issue when one of the major affirmative countries became undefendable, but teams were able to pivot to other countries on the list.

#### [Scenario B] Trump invades China---this would be harmful for ANY affirmative under a China topic, as the resolution is structured to only have one country to engage with bilaterally.

#### [Scenario C] Trump refuses another major court ruling---current flouting of court rulings seems to gut any potential solvency mechanism for overturning distinct court cases.

#### [Scenario D] Trump guts the Federal Reserve, does another wave of firings, or bans unions---unsure how any labor affirmative can survive or any case negative on the monetary reform topic has uniqueness.

#### [Scenario E] Trump withdraw the US from NATO or the UN---this would highly complicate affirmative/negative arguments about international law and treaties

#### I give these wonky scenarios not to malign any one topic, but solely to say as much as many debaters and coaches have been blustering about trying to Trump-proof topics, we can’t and to a point we shouldn’t.

#### Overall, we survived a second semester of debate over a climate policy topic with a climate denier as president. Trump makes research difficult---not impossible---under any topic we choose.

# \*\*\*Appendix\*\*\*

# AFF/NEG Ground

#### NOTE: Below are just a few pieces of general evidence to give a flavor for the wide arching literature conversations. Please go to the specific sections of the appendix for a better read of topic discussions

## AFF General

### AFF Ground---Laundry List

#### AFF Ground listed

Kroenig, Marczak, and Cimmino 2/12 [Matthew Kroenig, Vice President and Senior Director at Scowcroft Center for Strategy and Security, Jason Marczak, Vice President and Senior Director at Adrienne Arsht Latin America Center, Jeffrey Cimmino, Deputy Director and Operations Fellow at Scowcroft Center for Strategy and Security, A strategy to counter malign Chinese and Russian influence in Latin America and the Caribbean, https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/content-series/atlantic-council-strategy-paper-series/a-strategy-to-counter-malign-chinese-and-russian-influence-in-latin-america-and-the-caribbean/]

Executive summary

The United States and its allies are engaged in a global strategic competition with China and Russia. The primary theaters for this contest are Europe and the Indo-Pacific, but China and Russia also are increasing their malign influence in the Global South, including Latin America and the Caribbean. Their malign actions threaten the United States in its own hemisphere and must be a high priority for US foreign and defense policy.

The United States must actively compete with Russia and, especially, China; otherwise, nations in the region may continue to be persuaded to prioritize engagement with these autocratic rivals over the United States in all or most sectors. Unfortunately, the US approach to the region has been marked by strategic errors, including a problematic lack of attention and inadequate efforts to use all tools of national power to compete with China and Russia.

The consequences of inaction are too high. What might start, for example, as a set of seemingly harmless infrastructure projects could end up with Chinese control of vital chokepoints for sea lines of communication, such as the Panama Canal. More broadly, a failure to act appropriately now will leave the region under the influence of America’s chief authoritarian rivals.

China and Russia have different goals and capabilities in the region. China seeks to leverage its economic power to increase its influence in the other areas of competition, with significant success to date, whereas Russia continues to support anti-American authoritarian regimes militarily and spread disinformation throughout the region to undermine US interests. China’s economic engagement often aims to cement access to resources or shift the policies of countries in the region: guaranteeing access to critical minerals in Peru,1 for example, or pushing countries to loosen ties with Taiwan.2 China also operates spy stations in Cuba and has a hand in the US fentanyl epidemic that continues to cost tens of thousands of lives, with chemical precursors reaching Mexico via China. Russia, for its part, has pursued military partnerships with Cuba, Venezuela, and Nicaragua, including sending Russian forces to the region.3

A note on terminology: This paper is focused on malign forms of Chinese and Russian influence. Not all engagement between Latin American and Caribbean countries and China and/or Russia is inherently harmful from the perspective of US interests. This paper is concerned with countering those forms of influence that undermine the security, prosperity, and freedom of the United States and the region.

In addition to Chinese and Russian malign influence, however, the region also presents many opportunities for the United States to cultivate, fruitful partnerships in the western hemisphere built on shared values. Outside of Europe and North America, the western hemisphere has boasted the highest proportion of democratically elected governments for the past three decades.4 Most of the population of the region lives in a democracy, and support for democracy remains high.5 There is a window of opportunity for a renewal of regional commitments to democracy and reform that the United States can—and should—capitalize on to reorient its relationship with the region.

Moreover, Latin America is home to major multinational firms that play a growing role in the global economy, and Panama Canal serves as a vital transit point for US and global trade. The region’s diverse and dynamic commercial landscape presents a compelling opportunity for mutually beneficial economic partnerships. On top of that, the region is rich in biodiversity, and regional partners could play a vital role in transitioning to clean energy and a green economy.

To address these challenges and opportunities, the Atlantic Council launched an eighteen-month project spearheaded by the Atlantic Council’s Scowcroft Center for Strategy and Security in collaboration with the Adrienne Arsht Latin America Center. The project included a working group of experts, strategists, and former US and Latin American officials that met for three workshops. In addition, we commissioned five background papers that have been published alongside this final report. The project benefited greatly from the insight, experience, and expertise of the working group, and the authors are grateful for their input.

This strategy paper both reports on the depth and varied dimensions of the threats posed by China and Russia in the region and proposes a strategy to counter these threats while advancing US and regional interests.

Importantly, global and regional allies and partners will be critical to the success of this strategy. US allies in Europe and the Indo-Pacific have an interest in countering Chinese and Russian malign influence in the Global South, and Washington should harness its free world alliances and partnerships in this strategy. In addition, advancing US national interests in the hemisphere will depend on cultivating closer ties in the region by leaning into overlapping priorities and interests. Governments and populations in the region share an interest in countering malign forms of authoritarian influence. There is, of course, substantial heterogeneity across countries and operationalizing this strategy requires actions tailored to specific contexts.

This report identifies several goals to advance the security, prosperity, and freedom of the United States and Latin America and counter the malign influence of China and Russia.

First, the United States and regional partners should advance security in Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC). This will require reducing or eliminating Chinese and Russian military and intelligence activities in the region. It will also require preventing Chinese and Russian investments in sensitive national security areas. As this strategy will make plain in the following section, the United States and its allies and partners in Europe and the Indo-Pacific need to provide alternative avenues for security and intelligence cooperation and for infrastructure and technology investments.

Second, the United States should work alongside global and regional partners to enhance US and regional prosperity, predicated on free and fair trade, transparency, anti-corruption, the rule of law, and high labor and environmental standards. While the United States has already taken steps to limit ties to China in key sectors, both the United States and LAC countries will need to build on efforts to systematically “derisk” economic relationships with China and Russia including: a hard decoupling in areas of sensitive national security concern, countervailing measures such as tariffs to offset their unfair practices, while allowing or even promoting free and fair trade in nonsensitive areas such as agriculture. To reduce their vulnerability to economic coercion, countries of the region should diversify their economic partnerships, even in nonsensitive areas, to avoid becoming too dependent on potentially hostile autocratic actors. To make up for potentially reduced Chinese and Russian trade and investment, the United States and its free world allies must offer attractive and affordable alternatives for regional economic development.

Finally, the United States and its global and regional partners should work to promote freedom, democracy, and human rights in the region. This will partly be the natural result of efforts to advance security and prosperity as Chinese and Russian malign influence is reduced and the influence of the United States and free world allies is enhanced. Advancing freedom in the region will also require countering Chinese and Russian disinformation and pressuring autocratic states in the region, while promoting democratic opposition movements.

To achieve these goals, the United States should implement a strategy made up of the following four pillars:

Prioritize: The United States must prioritize strategic competition with China and Russia in the western hemisphere, and in other regions around the world beyond the border regions of the Indo-Pacific and Eastern Europe. For too long, the United States has devoted insufficient attention to Latin America and the Caribbean. If the United States is to advance its interests, it must effectively counter malign influence from two adversaries in its home hemisphere.

Invest: The United States must invest in American and regional innovation, private enterprise, and economic competitiveness. Much of this effort should focus on investment alternatives to companies and programs backed by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). The United States will need to ensure it implements the appropriate domestic and foreign policies to encourage American innovation, investment in the hemisphere, and growth alongside regional partners.

Message: The United States must compete more effectively in the information domain, spotlighting positive US engagement in the region, while highlighting negative forms of Chinese and Russian influence. This effort will require strategic messaging and a more robust public diplomacy apparatus.

Align: While challenging today, the United States must work toward building multilateral frameworks of like-minded nations in the region (and globally) that advance mutual prosperity while being based on shared principles of respect for the rule of law, transparency, sovereignty, and the free market. There is, and for the foreseeable future will be, resistance in the region to joining coalitions with an explicitly anti-China orientation, as countries favor a diversity of partnerships. That, however, does not preclude the United States from constructing new frameworks in which to engage countries in the region, while also cultivating people-to-people connections and including other allies and partners to deepen ties in the region.

Strategic context

The strategy proposed in this paper seeks to counter Chinese and Russian malign influence across several domains: economic, technology, governance and diplomacy, and security. The strategy recognizes that the forms of influence undertaken in the region by China and Russia differ in nature. As the 2022 National Security Strategy states, China presents a more strategic, longer-term threat, while Russia is a more acute threat to the United States. Both powers seek to undermine US interests throughout Latin America and the Caribbean even though their regional efforts are not usually coordinated.

The most concerning elements of China and Russia’s growing presence in the region are summarized herein.

Chinese regional influence

The goal of the People’s Republic of China (PRC) is to supplant the United States as the world’s dominant power.6 In pursuit of this goal, the CCP leverages different instruments to seek greater influence in all regions of the world, including Latin America and the Caribbean. In February 2023, the CCP fleshed out a vision for its Global Security Initiative, an effort to “to present a more comprehensive vision of a new world order and formulate the ideological backbone for a global governance system that elevates Chinese influence at the expense of American power.”7 Increasingly, China has used its formidable economic capabilities, bolstered by Chinese activities in the energy and technology spheres, to dominate other major areas of competition, such as governance and security, which have significant and acute effects on regional stability. China’s activities have made the CCP a powerful actor in the region and, depending on the issue and the country, the preferred partner over the United States.

China’s engagement in the region is primarily economic, including substantial investments over time, which strengthens commercial ties between the region and China. Chinese economic engagement occurs through programs such as the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and more direct forms of bilateral trade and investment. Economic engagement often aims to cement access to resources or shift the policies of countries in the region; for example, guaranteeing access to critical minerals in Peru,8 or pushing countries to loosen ties with Taiwan.9 Recently, China’s support for LAC nations has included both military aid and support for nations emerging from the COVID-19 pandemic, including through the provision of vaccines.10 From the perspective of many in the region, China has posed as a productive and beneficial partner.

The threat posed to the US homeland by China has become clearer over the past year: a Chinese surveillance balloon traversing the United States prompted a dramatic Air Force downing off the East Coast as national news stations streamed coverage; China operates spy stations in Cuba and in the US homeland; China has a hand in the US fentanyl epidemic that continues to cost tens of thousands of lives, with chemical precursors reaching Mexico via China; and China has increased cooperation with transnational criminal organizations in the western hemisphere.

Unless the United States actively competes with China, regional nations may continue to prioritize engagement with the CCP over the United States in all or most sectors.

Economic domain

China’s economic influence in the region is likely the most expansive and destabilizing for US interests.11 These economic ties provide opportunities for malign influence in other areas, including governance, intelligence collection, and security. In the first two decades of the twenty-first century, China’s trade with the region rose a dramatic twenty-six fold from $12 billion to $315 billion, with projections estimating that these ties will more than double by 2035, reaching more than $700 billion.12 Several Latin American nations are part of the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank, and twenty-one are now participating in the BRI.13 Beijing has numerous free trade agreements with nations in the region; and PRC companies are involved in dozens of port construction projects throughout Latin America.14

As Laura Richardson, commander of the US Southern Command, noted in March 8, 2023, testimony before the House Armed Services Committee, China’s investments in South America in “critical infrastructure, including deep-water ports, cyber, and space facilities,” have the potential for dual use.15 The CCP could, for example, use regional ports to restrict US naval activity.16 Particularly concerning in this regard are Chinese companies working on, or attempting to bid on, projects related to the Panama Canal.17 If China were to gain control over parts of the Panama Canal through seemingly benign infrastructure projects, then Beijing would control a vital waterway with the potential to constrain both US trade and military operations. Chinese economic activity in the region often occurs through state-owned enterprises, companies subsidized by the Chinese government, giving them a significant advantage in competing with local and international entities for various projects.18

China’s economic threat to the region extends to other areas as well, including illegal and unregulated fishing, a consequence of the depletion of resources along China’s own shores.19

Technology domain

China’s growing investments in twenty-first century technology and infrastructure create a number of challenges for the United States, including for intelligence and securing supply chains. The Chinese technology company Huawei is responsible for sixty percent of the region’s telecommunications infrastructure.20 Major regional players, such as Argentina and Brazil, are dependent on Huawei technology for their cellular networks.21 Huawei is bound by PRC laws that obligate companies to provide information relevant to China’s security to national security bodies within the PRC.22 Other Chinese technologies that may pose a threat include the increasing prevalence of Chinese rideshare companies and scanner technology that collects personal data, and the emergence of “smart cities” throughout the region where Chinese companies have a significant presence.23

China also is making major investments in the region in the critical minerals necessary to many emerging technologies. Lithium is a strategically important material, essential to battery production and other technologies.24 Half of the world’s lithium reserves are contained in the “Lithium Triangle” nations of Argentina, Bolivia, and Chile, making the region a particularly attractive market.25 Between 2000 and 2018, China poured $73 billion into Latin America’s raw materials sector with significant recent investments in lithium production.26 If China gained a monopoly on critical minerals in Latin America, it could further restrict US access to vital materials needed for both the green energy transition and to develop and power emerging technologies.

Moreover, Latin America’s green transition is largely funded by Beijing, with approximately 90 percent of all wind and solar technologies installed in the region having been produced by Chinese companies.27 While Latin America’s green transition is beneficial for the global environment, its dependence on China increases risks of coercion.

Governance and diplomacy domain

Chinese economic investments allow China to exert malign influence in other ways, including on regional governance. Specifically, China has used its economic influence to push countries to end diplomatic recognition of Taiwan.28 In the spring of 2023, Honduras announced that it would sever diplomatic relations with Taiwan, becoming the fifth Central American nation to switch recognition to Beijing in the past few years, a trend indicative of Beijing’s growing power.29

China is targeting international and regional institutions, such as the Organization of American States, the Inter-American Development Bank, the Caribbean Development Bank, and the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation, in an effort to exert greater power and control throughout the hemisphere. It does so by both diminishing US influence in these bodies and promoting its own alternative institutions such as the China Development Bank.30

China’s prioritization of in-person diplomatic engagements and exchanges in the region further amplifies its malign influence. Since coming to power in 2013, President Xi Jinping has repeatedly traveled to the region, visiting at least a dozen countries.31 Then-President Barack Obama made several trips to the region during his eight-year term, but presidential travel to the region has waned in recent years. President Biden has traveled to the region once since taking office in 2021, and from 2017 to 2020, President Trump made only one visit to the region, to Argentina for the Group of Twenty (G20).

China arranges other exchanges across Latin America and the Caribbean with political, business, and military leaders.32 Concerningly, China also hosts meetings through CCP institutions, including the CCP International Liaison Department, to meet with political parties across the region.33 Around 300 such meetings were held between 2002 and 2017, with little publicly available information on what was discussed.34 Between 2020 and 2022, the United States had an opportunity to dramatically outpace China in regional engagement, given that COVID-19 restrictions significantly hampered the ability of senior Chinese officials to travel overseas. While US travel was also restricted, the constraints were less severe and did not last as long as in China. Now, however, that window has closed, and China may strive to make up for lost time in the region.

China also has branched into the educational sphere, establishing Confucius Institutes across Latin America and the Caribbean to promote a positive view of China among the next generation of regional leaders.35 In 2020, the United States designated the Confucius Institute US Center as a foreign mission of China due to the “opacity” and “state-directed nature” of the organization.36 Chinese propaganda—through Xinhua News Agency, The People’s Daily, China Radio International, and other news and media agencies—bolsters these initiatives, amplifies CCP propaganda and misinformation, and expands China’s regional influence.37

Furthermore, competition for Chinese investment has exacerbated already pervasive networks of corruption and elite capture in the region, especially in countries with authoritarian or authoritarian-leaning regimes.38 In Ecuador, for example, faulty and dangerous infrastructure projects have been negotiated in exchange for oil contracts.39 Corrupt leaders, such as Nicolás Maduro in Venezuela, are buoyed by Chinese loans and investment, at the expense of oppressed citizens.40

Security domain

In the security domain, increased Chinese military presence in the region is particularly alarming for US national interests given its proximity to the United States. China has targeted authoritarian and populist regimes in particular, having provided significant arms to Bolivia, Ecuador, and Venezuela.41 China also supports militaries and police forces more broadly throughout Latin America and the Caribbean with training and equipment, in addition to participating in regional peacekeeping missions, exchanges, and humanitarian support through a People’s Liberation Army (PLA) hospital ship.42

In June 2023, news broke of an agreement between China and Cuba to establish a spy station to monitor signals intelligence and eavesdrop on US electronic communications.43 It was later revealed that the base had been running for at least four years.44 Beijing maintains ground satellite stations in Bolivia, Brazil, Ecuador, and Venezuela, and the largest space facility outside of China is in Argentina.45 The space stations could be used to collect intelligence and intercept information from the United States.46 The station in Argentina is particularly worrisome given the lack of access and oversight for Argentine officials.47 A subentity of the PLA’s Strategic Support Force (overseeing space, cyber, and electronic warfare) had been allowed access to two antennae out of the Santiago Satellite Station in Chile, which is owned and operated by the Swedish Space Corporation (SSC). In 2020, the SSC announced that it would not renew contracts allowing Beijing use of its Australian facilities due to concerns about intelligence gathering and surveillance, but there was no indication this would affect contracts with China in other parts of the world.48

Russian regional influence

Russia’s activities in the region center on primarily two objectives: first, orienting nations away from the United States, especially with military equipment and security cooperation and often in the service of buttressing authoritarian governments; and second, using propaganda and information warfare to curry favor with local governments and fuel anti-American sentiment. Russia does not have the economic and military might of China, and its activities in the region therefore are not as pervasive. Although Russian activity poses a less serious threat to US strategic interests in the region, countering Russian malign influence will advance American national security objectives and complement efforts to mitigate the threats posed by the increasing CCP presence throughout Latin America and the Caribbean.

In contrast to China’s approach, Russia’s engagement in the region is more opportunistic and sporadic in its effort to orient countries away from the United States. Russia has pursued military partnerships with Cuba, Venezuela, and Nicaragua. This has included dispatching Russian troops, planes, and ships to the region.49 In the aftermath of Russia’s invasion of Ukraine, Russia has sought to convey that it does not want countries to have to choose sides between Russia and the United States when, in fact, it has used its war to drive a wedge in Western relationships with countries in the region.50 Russia has encouraged the idea that US support for Ukraine and attempts by the United States to persuade Latin American countries to condemn Russia and support Ukraine is a form of modern-day imperialism.51 This view has been amplified through Russia’s use of disinformation and misinformation, which is primarily spread through media organizations, such as Sputnik Mundo and RT en Español. In the energy sector, Russia has its most significant investments in Venezuela, where Russian oil companies are well represented. In the wake of a full European Union embargo on Russian oil products, Russia has significantly boosted its exports to Brazil, Panama, Uruguay, Cuba, and other countries in the region.52

Economic domain

Russia’s economic inroads in Latin America and the Caribbean, though less extensive than China’s, cannot be ignored. Through the BRICS group (i.e., Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa, with six additional nations to join in 2024), Russia has sought to undermine the US dollar through the establishment of a rival BRICS currency. The feasibility of this initiative is questionable, but its support among BRICS nations—and other countries harboring dollar-denominated debt—should be cause for concern to the United States.53 While many factors militate against a complete transition away from US dollar dominance, the Atlantic Council’s Carla Norrlöf has warned, “For the first time since the collapse of the Bretton Woods gold standard, we are seeing a systemic limit on the dollar centered economic order and US foreign policy.”54

Cultivating economic ties with economies in Latin America has helped Russia bolster its resilience against Western sanctions and restrictions. Following the invasion of Ukraine, Russian exports to Brazil, one of the largest economies in Latin America, surged by 106 percent.55 In April 2023 alone, Brazil’s imports of Russian oil rose by 53 percent, compared to a less than 1 percent surge the prior year.56 US-led global efforts to economically isolate the Kremlin have not resonated in Latin America as they did in Europe.

Governance and diplomacy domain

Russia’s most prominent activity in the region arguably concerns the spread of disinformation and propaganda, which pumps out anti-American sentiment. Russia’s messaging apparatus is among the region’s most formidable,57 leveraging social media platforms including Twitter, Instagram, Facebook, and WhatsApp, bot technologies, and state disinformation outlets such as RT and Sputnik to spread narratives favorable to Moscow, undermine democratic institutions, and foment discord.58 Russian information warfare has had notable success in Latin America, leveraging Spanish-language news media. RT en Espanol, for example, has sixteen million Facebook followers, which is triple the number of its English-language alternative.59 Russia’s efforts have borne fruit. In Mexico, 34 percent of people in one survey said they had a somewhat or very favorable view of Russia.60

Russia has focused particular attention on a concentrated set of anti-American, authoritarian states. Under Putin, Russia has continued close cooperation with Venezuela, Cuba, and Nicaragua, supporting these regimes through the use of military, economic, and political aid. Nevertheless, since launching its full-scale invasion of Ukraine, Russia has made overtures to states across the region, trying to diminish support for Washington and Kyiv. This has included deepening ties with Argentina, Mexico, and Brazil, all three of which abstained from a resolution approved at the Organization of American States to expel Russia as an observer nation.61

Security domain

A legacy of Russia’s Cold War foray into the western hemisphere is the continued use of Soviet-era military equipment by countries across the region, including US partners. Since the end of the Cold War, Russia has continued military sales to its allies in the region. Russia’s military support to the region has primarily centered on assistance to Cuba, Venezuela, and Nicaragua. Russia has provided substantial security support to all three regimes in the form of advanced equipment, arms, training, and troops.62 American partners in the region including Colombia and Peru continue to use Russian equipment, and Brazil has explored modernizing its military through Russian equipment in the past.63 Overall, the share of Russian arms sales to Latin American was approximately 20 percent between 2000 and 2017—about the same percentage as US sales to the region.64

Although Russian military activities are limited in scope in Latin America and the Caribbean, particularly as compared to China, they still provide a potential “port of entry” for Moscow.65 For example, Russia maintains a permanent military presence of between 200 and 300 troops in Nicaragua.66 Nicaragua is also home to a base for the GLONASS satellite system, Moscow’s homegrown equivalent to the US-developed Global Positioning System (GPS).67

Through opaque organizations created under the guise of fostering economic and trade partnerships, the Kremlin has expanded its already extensive intelligence and cyber capabilities to the western hemisphere. A prime example is Russia’s National Committee for the Promotion of Economic Trade with Countries of Latin America (NC SESLA), chaired and led by former high-level officials involved with Soviet and later Russian intelligence security services.68 NC SESLA is a grouping of companies that provide intelligence and surveillance, including one that built a multibillion-dollar secure communications network for the Russian military.69

Regionally, Russia has expanded the use of its surveillance tool, the System for Operative Investigative Activities (SORM), which has the ability to intercept phone conversations, written communications, and track other internet-based communications. SORM has been exported to countries including Nicaragua and Venezuela.70 In Russia, SORM is regularly weaponized against political opponents, dissidents, and activists to monitor and clamp down on their activities.71

Opportunities for positive US and allied engagement in Latin America and the Caribbean

In addition to the challenges posed by increasing Chinese and Russian influence, there are many positive reasons for the United States and its global allies and partners to engage the region. Latin America and the Caribbean are home to just under 660 million people, many of whom share a commitment to democracy, human rights, and sovereignty, as laid out at the Inter-American Democratic Charter, adopted in 2001 by all members of the Organization of American States.72 In 2018, 25 percent of immigrants to the United States were from Mexico and another 25 percent were from elsewhere in Latin America. Across the region, 84 percent of the population still lives in a democracy, and while the percentage is declining, a large share of Latin Americans still see democracy as the ideal form of government.73

Latin America is home to major multinational firms that play a growing role in the global economy. In 2019, Brazil ranked third worldwide among countries that had companies attain “unicorn status,” with valuations of $1 billion or more.74 The region also contains the Panama Canal, which is critical for US and global trade. Forty percent of US container traffic makes its way through the Panama Canal, which transports $270 billion in goods every year. The canal is especially important for US agricultural and energy exports, reducing the cost and time needed to transport goods to Asia.75 The region’s diverse and dynamic commercial landscape presents a compelling opportunity for mutually beneficial economic partnerships.

Latin America and the Caribbean contain 40 percent of the world’s biodiversity and 57 percent of its primary forests. The region’s forests and mangroves act as a carbon sink, holding ten times the amount of carbon that China creates each year.76 Moreover, collaboration is urgently needed to address the effects of climate change on shipping through the Panama Canal, where low waters and changing weather patterns are negatively affecting trade.77 When President Biden made his first calls to leaders in Argentina, Chile, and Costa Rica, he discussed climate change with his counterparts.78 The LAC region has a vital role to play in the transition to clean energy and a green economy.

Strategic errors by the United States

The United States has made four strategic errors that have enabled China and Russia to develop increasing influence throughout Latin America and the Caribbean. These errors can and should be corrected.

The United States has paid a problematic lack of attention to the region, which has resulted in the United States ceding unnecessary ground to China and Russia. This has been driven by a lack of adequate prioritization of Latin America and the Caribbean in strategic competition. This lack of attention has resulted in diminished resources and focus that could have been devoted to building strong, results-oriented partnerships that counter Chinese and Russian malign influence. Correcting this problem is a necessary step to success in the region and the United States must reprioritize the region amid new realities of strategic competition with China and Russia.

In addition, the United States has inadequately utilized all tools of national power to compete with China and Russia in Latin America and the Caribbean, especially with regard to fully utilizing economic tools and strategic messaging to counter Chinese and Russian malign influence.

Furthermore, there has been a failure to develop serious alternatives to the proposals and partnerships offered by China and Russia in the region. The United States must develop alternatives to Chinese regional projects, particularly in the economic sphere, and be clear that partnering with the United States offers a better path for independence, growth, and sovereignty.

Finally, the historic policies of the United States toward the region have bred distrust. During the height of the Cold War, and in the early part of the twentieth century, the United States regularly interfered in the domestic affairs of Latin American nations. Trust between many countries in Latin America and the United States is still low. Both China and to a lesser extent Russia lack the previous history of intervention in the region.

Failure to correct these errors and turn to a better strategy will have grave consequences for the United States. Should Chinese and Russian malign influence continue to grow unabated in the region, the geostrategic picture will be bleak for the United States. Technology and digital infrastructure in Latin America and the Caribbean will be closely tied to Chinese enterprise. This could increase vulnerability to Chinese intelligence gathering, while also enabling China to embed autocratic norms in the region’s technological infrastructure. The net effect will be to corrode democracy and bolster authoritarian actors. The region will increasingly depend on China for trade and investment, including in sectors critical to national security. Democracy will retreat as China and Russia buttress authoritarian regimes and sow disinformation that undermines support for democracy. The consequences of inaction are too dire to keep making the same mistakes.

Goals

To correct past mistakes, seize opportunities in the region, and counter Chinese and Russian malign influence, the United States and its global and regional allies and partners should pursue a new strategy for the western hemisphere. A good strategy starts with clear goals.

This report identifies several goals to advance the security, prosperity, and freedom of the United States and LAC and counter the malign influence of China and Russia.

Security: The United States and regional partners should advance security in LAC. This will require reducing or eliminating Chinese and Russian military and intelligence activities in the region. It also will require preventing Chinese and Russian investments in sensitive national security areas. As this strategy will make plain in the following section, the United States and its allies and partners in Europe and the Indo-Pacific need to provide alternative avenues for security and intelligence cooperation and for infrastructure and technology investments.

Prosperity: The United States should work alongside global and regional partners to enhance US and LAC prosperity, predicated on free and fair trade, transparency, anti-corruption, the rule of law, and high labor and environmental standards. The United States should build on its existing efforts and work with the region to derisk economic relationships with China and Russia. To make up for potentially reduced Chinese and Russian trade and investment, the United States and its free world allies must offer attractive and affordable alternatives for regional economic development.

Freedom: The United States and its global and regional partners should work to promote freedom, democracy, and human rights in the region. This will partly be the natural result of efforts to advance security and prosperity as Chinese and Russian malign influence is reduced and the influence of the United States and free world allies is enhanced. Advancing freedom in the region will also require countering Chinese and Russian disinformation and pressuring autocratic states in the region, while promoting democratic opposition movements.

In pursuing this strategy, the United States should consider the following four benchmarks of success over the coming decade and beyond:

Chinese and Russian malign influence across critical domains identified in this paper (e.g., economy, governance, etc.) does not significantly advance and, in fact, is reduced. The United States must take steps in the immediate term to prevent irreversible advancement by China and Russia across the domains under study. These efforts will be particularly important in sectors of acute relevance to US national security, such as the military and technological domains. Evidence of this objective being achieved would include a slowdown in new BRI or other Chinese investments and infrastructure projects, reduced or nonexistent efforts at further space and satellite cooperation, etc. At the same time, the United States would have begun working in earnest with regional partners to strengthen cooperation in these and other areas.

Critical national security sectors are secure. The United States has secured key sectors from malign Chinese and Russian influence, ensuring that foreign competitors and adversaries do not have undue access to critical components of regional infrastructure, technology, and security. The United States is therefore insulated from potential vulnerability in areas that could have direct and significant effects on US national security. Through partnerships with regional nations, the United States and the region enjoy secure supply chains, communication lines, critical infrastructure, and resource access.

America is the partner of choice for the region, economically and in other areas. Much of China’s malign influence in the region is linked to its economic relationships. Russia, albeit at a smaller scale, has also indicated a willingness to invest in multiple sectors across Latin America and the Caribbean. If successful, the United States will achieve measurable improvement in its level of trade, investment, and commercial partnerships in the region built on the basis of fairness, reciprocity, free market principles, transparency, and mutual benefit. It will have stepped up significantly on bilateral trade, investment, and other economic engagements throughout the region. The United States and US companies are also the favored partners in technology and security agreements. Respect for free markets, private-sector development, and innovation is increasingly the norm across the region in concert with expanded US-regional economic partnership.

Democratic principles and human rights are strengthened. Democratic backsliding initially recedes, reversing recent trends towards autocracy. Indexes show authoritarian inroads diminishing, and even signs of democratic improvement on benchmarks assessing rule of law, open markets, and governance. Ultimately, governance in the region trends toward increased accountability, transparency, and respect for the rule of law, and away from authoritarianism, with increases in civil liberties and individual freedoms across the region.

Elements of the strategy

To achieve the goals outlined above, this strategy consists of four elements: prioritize, invest, message, and align. These pillars of action will make the United States and its free-world allies more competitive as a partner for Latin American and Caribbean countries, not only because of the values the United States espouses—importantly including respect for the rule of law, sovereignty, and independence—but also because the United States and its allies can offer compelling alternatives that will benefit these nations in multiple ways, including boosting economic prosperity, safeguarding democracy and freedom, and improving security. Some actions may need to precede others, though they should not necessarily be interpreted as sequential pillars.

Within these pillars, the United States and its allies should employ all tools of national power, including: economic, diplomatic, and military. Competing economically helps counter China in all domains. Improved diplomacy, including public diplomacy, counters the malign influence of China and Russia in the disinformation sphere and helps to ensure that the nations of the region understand the United States seeks to meaningfully engage the region as a trustworthy, reliable partner. Military engagement also has an important role to play, though the United States should eschew an overly militaristic approach, which risks fostering distrust given the history of US interventions in the region.

One key idea that cuts across the pillars outlined below is the need to derisk relations with China and Russia. Derisking is predicated on four components: First, the United States and Latin American countries should decouple from China in areas sensitive to national security. This includes leveraging tools such as investment screening and export restrictions. Second, in areas where unfair trade practices are employed, the United States and regional countries should counter with tariffs or other countervailing measures. Third, consistent with the principle outlined at the start of the paper that not all forms of Chinese and Russian influence are malign, free and fair trade can continue in areas of minimal national security risk. Finally, as a rule, the United States and Latin American allies and partners should diversify economic relationships, even in nonsensitive areas, to reduce vulnerability to coercion.

Prioritize

The United States and its allies must begin to prioritize the strategic importance of the western hemisphere in their broader national security strategy. US leadership in the region is critical to advancing US national security and prevailing in strategic competition around the world. The United States and its allies must place a high priority on dialogue and partnerships with nations in this region even as they continue to advance their interests in other important regions, such as Europe, the Indo-Pacific, and the Middle East.

For too long, the United States has taken the Latin American and Caribbean region for granted and failed to adequately recognize that the countries in the region are important partners. Success in strategic competition will demand a change in mindset that highlights the urgency of countering Chinese and Russian power in the home hemisphere of the United States. Nevertheless, the United States should not frame its engagement in the region only as a means to counter China and Russia; rather, the United States must also recognize the broader strategic importance of strong relationships with its Latin American and Caribbean neighbors.

Applying the aforementioned tools, the United States can prioritize Latin America and the Caribbean in several ways. Economically, the United States needs to devote substantial attention to the strategic sectors of energy, technology, space, and critical minerals, among others, where Chinese dominance and malign influence could more significantly undermine US interests. Already, the United States has taken some steps toward this end in recent years. For example, both the Trump and Biden administrations called for reviews of the US critical minerals supply chain and directed federal resources to strengthen the US mining sector. The launch of the Minerals Security Partnership in June 2022 was a good step,79 but the failure to include any South American nations is a key oversight, and the United States should work to engage regional partners in the effort.80

Relatedly, the United States can reform its bureaucracy to better enable it to compete in the region. The Treasury and Commerce Departments, along with various economic entities in the US government, should be empowered and encouraged to lead efforts to more effectively engage in the region. While the State Department and Defense Department are vital for US foreign policy, economic institutions will be particularly important given China’s leveraging of its economic heft in the western hemisphere. For many countries in the region, economic aid and fruitful commercial partnerships are a priority over other forms of engagement.

Still, the State Department, in particular, has an important role to play. Congress and the executive branch need to come to terms on ambassadorial appointments, ensuring the United States does not leave its embassies underserved in the region. Currently, seven ambassadorial appointments in the region are vacant.81 In general, the United States must place a higher priority on direct engagement with the region by increasing the number of bilateral and multilateral engagements between regional actors and leading US national security, foreign policy, and economic officials. This LAC outreach includes, but is not limited to, increasing the number of state visits with nations, presidential and cabinet-level travel, and interagency cooperation as applicable. The United States must also prioritize attendance of high-ranking officials at regional and international fora. Since taking office, President Biden has visited Mexico but not South America. Secretary of State Antony Blinken has traveled more broadly, visiting nine countries in the region. A presidential trip to South America should be top of mind for President Biden and would be a clear way to show a commitment to the region.

The United States should also develop positions or offices within bureaus dedicated to addressing the challenge of strategic competition in Latin America. US officials should encourage allies and partners to develop similar, counterpart entities in order to facilitate coordination on policy toward the region.

This could also bolster US efforts to promote democracy in countries such as Venezuela, Cuba, and Nicaragua. As our colleagues Hardy Merriman, Patrick Quirk, and Ash Jain suggest in the context of advancing democracy broadly, “Departments and agencies within the US government should set up working groups to review options and establish improved processes for supporting [pro-democracy civil resistance] movements.” The executive branch should position itself to be able to jump into action to support civil resistance movements, including through training.82

In the context of security cooperation, the United States can streamline provisions that make it harder to compete with Russia, which has been a willing supplier of military equipment and training across the region. One such way to do so would be by reforming the “Leahy law,” the US government provision that prevents funds from going to train or equip armed forces accused of human rights violations. The process by which the State Department evaluates partner countries’ suitability for military assistance is lengthy and opaque, potentially causing yearslong delays to the establishment of security partnerships. Finding ways to make the process transparent and shorter—while maintaining its efficacy and integrity—would facilitate greater US military cooperation in the region. One way to do so would be to amend the condition that aid be suspended to an entire unit if one member of the unit is implicated in violating human rights. The current law states that aid cannot resume until the recipient country deals with the alleged offender, a process that is lengthy and may not ever occur. Streamlining access to arms sales, training, and intelligence cooperation would position the United States as a compelling alternative to China or Russia and demonstrate a commitment to regional security.

Moreover, and also in the security domain, the US Southern Command is underfunded relative to other commands, despite the fact that its responsibilities focus on areas in proximity to the United States.83 Congress should increase funding for SOUTHCOM so that it can advance its mission and facilitate security partnerships in the region. SOUTHCOM also has a role to play in securing freedom of navigation in the western hemisphere and countering illegal or unregulated fishing that threatens maritime ecosystems and resource access for Latin American countries. This could take the form of more frequent deployment of US Navy or Coast Guard vessels to the region. Allies and partners with sufficient naval or coast guard capacity could also contribute, demonstrating broader, free world resolve to uphold free seas and protect resources from predatory actors.

The United States also needs to prioritize border security to control migration and the flow of fentanyl and other drugs. While tougher security measures will help, this strategy will also incentivize migrants to stay in Latin America, as fruitful partnerships foster freedom and prosperity in the region.

Furthermore, the United States and its free world allies can increase development aid to the region. Between 1946 and 2019, the United States provided over $93 billion of assistance to Latin America and the Caribbean.84 While US assistance to the region peaked following President John F. Kennedy’s 1961 introduction of the Alliance for Progress (an anti-poverty initiative aimed at countering Soviet and Cuban influence), assistance steeply declined following the dissolution of the Soviet Union. Following its substantial fiscal year 2022 request, the Biden administration “requested more than $2.4 billion of State Department- and USAID-managed foreign assistance for Latin America and the Caribbean in FY 2023, which (in current dollars) is more funding than has been allocated to the region in any single year in more than a decade,” according to the Congressional Research Service.85 While this is a positive trend, just over $2 billion is not much money for a region comprising more than thirty countries.

Finally, the United States should reinvigorate its capacity to engage in robust public diplomacy and strategic messaging. This was an essential component of the US victory in the Cold War, and the US government should leverage strategic messaging to sound the alarm frequently and loudly on China’s predatory economic practices. The State Department’s Global Engagement Center and Voice of America (VOA), which enjoys wide reach in the region, should be adequately resourced and employed to promote US interests in the region. The Global Engagement Center, for example, is a critical player in US efforts to combat disinformation and propaganda. Beyond naming-and-shaming instances and perpetrators of disinformation, additional resources for Latin America-focused initiatives could buttress the center’s efforts to develop programs that build societal resilience to authoritarian narratives.

Invest

Countering malign influence in the region will require the United States and its allies to diminish China’s troubling economic partnerships and investments in the region while boosting US and allied investment. To compete effectively, however, the United States must offer compelling alternatives. Competing will be more difficult in certain instances given the advantages the CCP has in exerting government control over business and society in China.86 However, to date, the United States has not truly prioritized such competition.

Whereas the first pillar focuses on prioritizing engagement through, for example, high-level visits, adequately resourcing tools such as foreign aid and public diplomacy, and reforming regulations, this pillar explores ways the United States can invest in the region to offer compelling alternatives to China and Russia.

Toward this end, the United States and its allies should pursue trade, investment, and market integration with nations in the region based on principles of fairness, reciprocity, mutual benefit, and transparency. These will provide frameworks that will help to facilitate greater private-sector interaction between countries. Whereas China is more apt to leverage the power and wealth of the state, the United States’ prime economic asset is its strong private sector. Thus, any action that unleashes the US private sector to engage directly in the region is a boon to US efforts to encourage investment.

To achieve this, the United States must invigorate the various agencies that support US enterprises seeking to do business with foreign partners. The Export-Import Bank of the United States’ China and Transformational Export Program (CTEP), for example, aims to aid exporters facing unfair competition from the PRC in foreign markets.87 These entities elevate the competitiveness of the US private sector in international markets and actively compete with the global expansion of PRC investments and funding. Increased investment, support, and promotion of CTEP and other similar funding mechanisms will make the United States more competitive in the region.

The US International Development Finance Corporation (DFC) is another entity the United States can leverage to invest in the region and spur economic development. It can play an important role, for example, in supporting a healthy economy of small- and medium-sized enterprises. Just last year, for example, the DFC provided financing for small- and medium-sized enterprises in Paraguay.88

There also are opportunities to work through multilateral entities to advance commercial ties and encourage fruitful engagement between the public and private sectors. The Biden administration has begun taking steps to do this by, for example, committing in 2022 to provide a capital increase for IDB Invest, the private-sector arm of the Inter-American Development Bank.89

Relatedly, US government officials should work with regional counterparts and private-sector leaders to promote cooperation and joint ventures, particularly in sectors with critical national security implications. These actions would strengthen supply chains by advancing ally- and partner-shoring in the region. For example, the United States should deepen its relationships with countries in the Lithium Triangle, especially Chile and Argentina. Argentina’s acceptance into the BRICS group of nations should serve as a wake-up call for the United States. In response, the United States should double down on economic aid and investment in the country, offering alternatives to China through investing in infrastructure and helping to modernize the Argentine military.

The United States and its allies should take an active role in promoting and building up local tech companies across the region, offering incentives for small start-ups to partner with American and allied tech giants. Currently, Huawei, the Chinese telecom giant, has cemented itself as a major player in the region due to its cost efficiency. Chinese subsidies make the cost of infrastructure and network service significantly lower than that of unsubsidized competitors, and the company operates on a massive scale relative to global competitors in its space. To technologically compete, the United States and its allies must present a viable, more cost-efficient alternate. Given its size, dislodging Huawei will be difficult in the near term; therefore, the United States should first work with allies and partners to promote cost-effective digital-infrastructure partnerships with companies such as Nokia, Ericsson, and Samsung, both seeking ways to scale up Huawei competitors and make alternatives to Huawei more financially viable.

In addition, the United States and its allies should promote investment in and partnerships with the local technology ecosystems of countries across the region. This approach will have multiple benefits: it leverages engagement with allies and partners, including regional partners, to create a more diverse digital ecosystem that China is less capable of dominating.

One criticism of derisking is that countries cannot afford to derisk (e.g., Huawei is a more affordable partner than Samsung). As this section outlines, however, the way to address this is by investing in a diverse ecosystem of alternatives. For the sake of preserving democratic norms, derisking is an imperative, not a choice.

Most of the world’s identified lithium reserves are found in this region, and lithium is critical for myriad technologies today, including electric vehicle batteries. Prospects for closer ties with Chile and Argentina may be more realistic in the near term than with Bolivia, the third country in the triangle, given tensions over human rights and drug trafficking.

Congress has a critical role to play in supporting capacity-building efforts and deepening security partnerships. Pending legislation such as the 2023 Western Hemisphere Partnership Act and the Caribbean Basin Security Initiative Authorization Act aim to strengthen the institutional and technical capacities of regional partners’ military and law-enforcement institutions and advance democratic governance. There are provisions for arms sales, military aid, training, and more and both the Senate and the House must work to pass this legislation.

Similarly, the United States should strive to position itself as a more attractive partner in emerging domains such as outer space. China has pursued a bilateral model of engagement with Latin American countries when it comes to space, signing agreements with Argentina, Bolivia, Chile, Ecuador, and Venezuela.90 Cooperation on space topics is realized through China’s Space Information Corridor, part of the BRI.91 Russia, for its part, has focused on space cooperation through the BRICS group.92 Whether through government-to-government engagement (e.g., via NASA) or through private-sector partnerships (e.g., via SpaceX), the United States should pursue closer ties to the region on space. NASA Administrator Bill Nelson had a fruitful trip to the region earlier this year, for example, during which Argentina signed onto the Artemis Accords, a US-led multilateral effort to expand space exploration. The US government should build on this progress, promote deeper regional engagement via the Artemis Accords, and expand multilateral astronaut training programs.93

Message

The United States needs to compete more effectively in the information space, denying China and Russia opportunities to shape narratives in the region that are favorable to them without pushback. This requires robust diplomatic engagement, and a strengthened public diplomacy apparatus. The United States should make its presence in the region felt, proffering democratic norms, spotlighting its positive engagement, and warning of the dangers of negative forms of Chinese and Russian influence.

Toward this end, there are a number of steps the United States should take. Active, regular engagement in regional multilateral fora will be important for the United States to shape the direction of these entities. The United States should also confirm a regular timeline for the Summit of the Americas to convene.

It is unrealistic and impractical to expect Latin American and Caribbean countries to cease accepting investments from China or Russia, especially as LAC countries do receive some tangible benefits from engagement. On the other hand, in addition to making itself an attractive partner, the United States can provide input on best practices to build a robust regional infrastructure for reviewing foreign investments in areas critical to national and regional security. Currently, countries in the region, with the exceptions of Mexico and Brazil, have some of the lowest restrictions.94

As noted earlier in the paper, the United States should reinvigorate institutions dedicated to strategic messaging and public diplomacy. VOA maintains significant capabilities to circumvent restrictions in areas where access to information is restricted.95 A key part of this strategy will require that VOA prioritize the LAC region as a domain for strategic messaging. This messaging should stress that there is a clear difference between partnering with the United States versus with China or Russia, as the former can offer partnerships built on shared democratic principles and a heightened emphasis on transparency and respect of sovereignty, while the latter will seek a predatory advantage even if there is some near-term economic gain for both parties.

This messaging can use as its foundation the clear success of the rules-based international system over the past seven decades. Indeed, since the end of World War II, there has been unprecedented peace, prosperity, and freedom throughout the world when looking at metrics such as wartime casualties, gross domestic product per capita, and the increasing number of democracies globally.96 Adherence to the norms and institutions of the rules-based international system has, and will be, a boon to human rights, anti-corruption efforts, and the rule of law in Latin America.

The US government should also leverage strategic messaging to counter Chinese and Russian disinformation in Latin America and the Caribbean. These messaging efforts should aim to prevent China and Russia from undermining democratic norms and institutions.

Empowering and engaging with local civil-society organizations is one means toward this end. For example, nongovernmental organizations and grassroots-led groups across Latin America have raised concerns about the environmentally harmful impacts of Chinese investments in the region.97 Through entities such as the National Endowment for Democracy, the United States can strengthen these voices and also support other programs, including digital literacy efforts to build resilience to disinformation.

Finally, the United States should make clear what it is doing to support the region. For example, the United States substantially leads China in providing humanitarian assistance and disaster relief to the region. The United States must learn to highlight the real benefits it provides to nations across the region.98 Furthermore, the United States remains the largest trade partner in Latin America as a whole, despite China’s inroads.99

Public diplomacy efforts should also be complemented by behind-the-scenes, senior engagement between US officials and their counterparts, in which negative potential consequences of partnering with China (and the benefits of partnering with the United States) are repeated frequently. As noted earlier in this paper, the United States does not do a good enough job convincing countries of the risks posed by malign influence. Even reports from earlier this year of a Chinese spy base in Cuba were met with little publicly expressed concern by countries in the hemisphere, apart from the United States.100 As one study noted, projects associated with Chinese infrastructure investment regularly posed several challenges to recipient nations, including severe financial burdens, a lack of transparency, and harm to local economies and environments. These risks need to be stated clearly and repeatedly, while positive alternative options for partnership are put forward.101

Align

The final pillar of this strategy is for the United States to work toward building multilateral frameworks, cultivating people-to-people connections, and deepening ties in the region with the help of other allies and partners. Any multilateral framework must offer tangible results to all partners and should be based on shared principles of respect for the rule of law, transparency, sovereignty, and the free market.

Toward this end, beyond just cultivating one-off trade agreements, the United States should seek to bring countries together, in either broad regional partnerships or minilateral groupings around matters such as equitable labor and environmental standards. China has faced protests in the region due to its support of projects with weaker environmental safeguards, for example, and partnerships around common principles could reduce Beijing’s ability to compete in the region. Indeed, by forming coalitions around high standards for economic partnerships, the United States and regional partners can ensure a level playing field for their citizens to challenge lower quality CCP projects.

At the 2022 Summit of the Americas, the United States unveiled the Americas Partnership for Economic Prosperity.102 However, the partnership has several shortcomings: it does not include the lowering of tariffs or offer other market incentives.103 The Biden administration should prioritize making the Americas Partnership into a robust, lasting entity with continuity across future presidents, and a goal of the next summit should be to work toward concrete steps to open markets.

The United States should rally its allies in the free world to address the threats posed by Chinese and Russian malign influence in LAC. US officials should put concrete steps for countering these adversaries in the region on its agenda during bilateral and multilateral engagements with allies and partners.

The United States also should nurture people-to-people connections with the broader regional populace. One way to do this would be increasing the number of Fulbright scholarships that the United States offers and broadening the number of countries across the region in which Fulbright scholars can study and teach. Currently, Fulbright grants are not available to a number of countries in the region; expanding access to these grants can allow for the creation of greater and more lasting cultural connections. The United States should also devote additional resources to exchange programs, allowing more students from the region to study in the United States.

If the United States is able to offer compelling alternatives to China and Russia, particularly as an economic and security partner, then it should be in a stronger position to build formal or semiformal multilateral partnerships in the region. Absent mutual benefits and transparency, the United States has little hope of bringing together regional partners. Key to this is building resilience among like-minded states so that they are able to resist the incentives offered by China and Russia.

In addition, apart from forming formal or ad hoc coalitions, the United States should play a leading role in regional organizations to ensure they are resourced sufficiently to execute their missions and that malign regional actors do not undermine these institutions’ respect for principles such as rule of law and open markets.

Finally, the United States should engage its European and Indo-Pacific allies and support their existing endeavors aimed at fortifying their respective relationships with Latin America and the Caribbean. For the past decade, foreign direct investment from the European Union has outstripped that of the United States.104 As part of its Global Gateway scheme, the European Union has sought to establish a rival BRI, with a €45 billion investment.105 By combining their efforts and enacting joint region-specific strategies, the United States and Europe could collectively engage Latin America and the Caribbean and reduce authoritarian influence.

The Biden administration’s announcement in September 2023 of a new Partnership for Atlantic Cooperation is a welcome step in the direction of greater transatlantic integration, including African partners. For now, the Partnership will focus on science and technology, a sustainable ocean economy, and climate change, with initial work “including scientific cooperation and shared research, information and maritime awareness, and development of a cadre of young Atlantic scientists.”106 This could serve as a stepping stone to deeper, formalized North and South Atlantic integration around a broader array of issues.

America’s Asian partners, such as Japan and South Korea, should also play a role going forward. Both countries have recognized the value of engaging with LAC nations. Japan’s then foreign minister, Yoshimasa Hayashi,107 visited five countries in the region in spring 2023.108 South Korea has an impressive trade relationship with the region, reaching a value of $57 billion in trade in 2021.109 The United States could promote engagement between its Asian partners and LAC nations through the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership. Chile, Mexico, and Peru are all members, while Ecuador, Costa Rica, and Uruguay have applied to join. South Korea is seen as a potential applicant and its joining would further bind a key Asian ally with US partners in the western hemisphere.110

As a step toward integrating democratic allies and partners into a common alliance or partnership focused on technological innovation and norms, the United States and European Union should include regional representatives from Latin America in meetings of the US-EU Trade and Technology Council.

The United States also should work closely with allies and partners in the political realm, coordinating responses to violent repression by governments in the region and responding with multilateral punitive actions, including sanctions.111

In the long term, the United States should work toward integrating Latin American partners into a broader Democratic Trade and Economic Partnership, as proposed by one of the authors, Matthew Kroenig, and our colleague Ash Jain.112 Toward this end, as the United States and its allies derisk their supply chains to minimize the involvement of China and Russia, they should encourage production on friendly shores in Latin America. A formal partnership or framework for cooperation would strive to better integrate democratic economies across the world in order to reduce strategic dependence on China and secure supply chains, while reducing trade and investment barriers.113

In sum, these four elements of the proposed strategy rely heavily on three particular tools of statecraft: economic influence, strategic messaging, and diplomacy. These recommendations are not intended to be at the expense of other important avenues of activity or potentially useful tools of implementation. However, this report does recommend the prioritization of these tools for maximum impact in targeting the key areas of Chinese and Russian malign influence in the region. US activity will enable Washington to achieve the objectives defined in the goals section of this report.

Guidelines for implementation

Coordination and elevation of the Latin American and Caribbean bureaus within the US government. Successful execution of the strategy outlined in this paper requires robust staffing and resourcing of western hemisphere bureaus in the US government. The National Security Council, the Departments of Defense, State, Treasury, and Commerce, and the intelligence agencies, at a minimum, should increasingly look to invest in policies and personnel that emphasize expertise and focus on Chinese and Russian malign influence. It is essential that these agencies work in partnership, via coordination through the National Security Council, to ensure that goals are pursued in concert. It will be particularly vital that the economically focused staff at the Treasury and Commerce Departments, USAID, and the Development Finance Corporation, as well as within the White House and NSC, are closely integrated with bureaus and directorates focused on the security and technological implications of malign Chinese and Russian influence in the region.

Engagement with private-sector enterprises. This strategy also depends on significant engagement with the private sector to ensure that the United States and its allies can offer competitive development, investment, and technological alternatives to those offered primarily by China. The US government must also work with companies to encourage “friend-shoring” supply lines to the western hemisphere and away from China through tax incentives or other means that boost their competitiveness when competing for contracts abroad. The US government should adopt domestic policies that favor innovation, business growth, and investment within the hemisphere.

Focus on substantive outcomes over mere rhetorical inroads. Strategic messaging is a key component of the strategy outlined herein, but such messaging must be utilized to attain substantive outcomes. As such, it must be complemented by the economic and diplomatic tools of American power (outlined above). The United States must make real progress on developing sustainable partnerships. The Americas Partnership for Economic Prosperity, in its current form, is an example of a rhetorical inroad that has so far failed to advance key substantive outcomes. Announcements of future US engagement must include concrete policy developments that clearly boost investment and engagement in the region while having the buy-in of local partners.

Risks, criticisms, and alternatives

Risks of economically based strategy relying on nongovernment efforts. Relying on cooperation between the US government and the private sector must contend with the difficulty of executing this effort in a democratic system. In contrast, the Chinese Communist Party, a totalitarian regime, exerts full control over every facet of Chinese society. The CCP’s ability to promote its companies through state-owned enterprises and subsidies puts US companies at a strategic disadvantage in certain instances. At the same time, the CCP can exert leverage over its companies and private industry in a way that the United States simply cannot do by virtue of its free and democratic system of government. Nonetheless, the US task does not have to be so complex. In fact, Washington needs to have national security priorities brought into its economic policy decision-making. The government should step up on this. Moreover, over the long term, the advantages of the US system of government should result in more innovation and prosperity: the key will be developing the right incentives and domestic policies to spur American innovation, research, and business. It is therefore essential that the national security apparatus of the US government work in concert with the economic agencies and Congress to ensure that American business thrives.

Opportunistic fence-sitting by countries in the region. Countries in Latin America and the Caribbean may seek close ties with both the United States and its competitors. Indeed, countries may voice support for US policies while still pursuing investments from or partnerships with China or Russia. This is a reality that the United States currently faces in Asia, where many of its key trade and security partners continue to maintain ties to Russia and China. To overcome this, the United States needs to pursue the strategy outlined here in a sustained, deliberate manner, with particular concentration on serving as an attractive partner that can offer greater benefits than others.

Conclusion

Countering Chinese and Russian malign influence in the western hemisphere is an urgent and important challenge for the United States. Addressing it requires a clear set of goals, which this paper has sought to outline, as well as a defined set of pillars for achieving those goals. The United States needs to respect regional agency and diversity as it pursues this strategy, acknowledging that countries will likely still choose to engage with China and Russia to a certain extent.

Nevertheless, by following the strategy outlined here, the United States and its allies will be able to strengthen partnerships in the region, while diminishing Chinese and Russian malign influence across the economic, technology, governance and diplomacy, and security domains. In short, the United States and its free world allies will emerge as a favored partner and advance peace, prosperity, and freedom in the region for decades to come.

#### This is a scholarly focal point – ensures deep research potential. Here is an aff card listing a ton of advantages for area engagement along with many solvency mechanism suggestions

Hernandez-Roy 23 [Christopher Hernandez-Roy Deputy Director and Senior Fellow, Americas Program at CSIS, Countering threats posed by nation-state actors in Latin America to U.S. homeland security, June 21, 2023, https://www.csis.org/analysis/countering-threats-posed-nation-state-actors-latin-america-us-homeland-security]

Chair Pfluger, Ranking Member Magaziner, and distinguished Members of the Subcommittee on Counterterrorism, Law Enforcement, and Intelligence, I am very grateful for this opportunity to testify before you today. The views represented in this testimony are my own and should not be taken as representing those of my current or former employers.

The democratic, relatively prosperous and largely pro-U.S. nature of Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) has been a strategic asset for the United States for decades. Yet, the region today is at a tipping point; there is a significant risk that it could become a liability in strategic competition with China and to a lesser extent Russia in the next decade. In particular, the influence of extra-hemispheric authoritarians, including Iran, has been on the rise throughout LAC. These actors pose interlocking challenges to regional, and by extension U.S. security. While each possesses different capabilities and long-term objectives, they often coordinate both informally and formally to challenge U.S. influence in the region. It is therefore important to view these three actors not in isolation, but how their behaviors reinforce and interrelate. Moscow, Beijing, and Tehran each espouse different geopolitical goals and world views, yet they have shown an alarming degree of convergence when it comes to efforts at fomenting discord and disruption within the United States’ shared neighborhood. Such efforts come both through support for overt authoritarians, especially the dictatorial regimes in Cuba, Nicaragua, and Venezuela, but also where they cannot totally pull countries out of the U.S. orbit, these regimes seek to peel away once staunch U.S. allies and convert them into comparatively neutral bystanders. This can be seen with the rhetoric of the government of Brazil, ascribing blame to both Ukraine and Russia for the war, and in Argentina, Brazil and longstanding ally Colombia’s refusal to sell Soviet legacy weapons to help Ukraine defend itself. It is noteworthy that no LAC country, save Costa Rica, has joined the international sanctions effort against Russia for its war of aggression.

Russia’s brutal and illegal invasion of Ukraine has caused autocracies the world over to close ranks and sharpen their competition with the United States and fellow democratic allies.[1] Indeed, recent developments in the region, from the docking of Iranian warships in Brazil, to revelations about Chinese espionage activities in Cuba, and overtures to Haiti by the notorious Russian Wagner group, have plainly illustrated the risks to U.S. security that come from allowing dictatorships to proliferate and coordinate their activities. Another comparatively under-appreciated dimension is the role of authoritarian alliances in helping dictators remain in power and repress their populations more effectively, accelerating mass irregular migration to the detriment of the region at large.

The most dramatic example of this comes from Venezuela, where over 7.3 million people have left the country as a result of the profound economic, security, and humanitarian crises brought on by the regime of Nicolás Maduro’s gross mismanagement and repression.[2] Maduro nevertheless remains in power, shored up by arms and intelligence from Russia and China, and a sanctions-evading oil trade with Iran. Nicaragua has also seen dramatic upticks in outward migration, creating an acute crisis in neighboring Costa Rica, while U.S. apprehensions of Nicaraguans at the southern border have multiplied by a factor of more than 50 between fiscal years 2020 and 2022.[3] Even Cuba, the longest-standing dictatorship in the hemisphere, has seen record-setting levels of migration as the country’s economy continues to reel and as the regime further clamps down on dissent following the massive protests on the island in July 2021.[4] Furthermore, the presence of dictatorial regimes within the Western Hemisphere offers a springboard for extra-hemispheric authoritarians to expand their influence, co-opting, coercing, and manipulating other countries in the region to undermine their relations with the United States, often empowering anti-democratic forces in the process.

These challenges should not cause the United States to underestimate the considerable advantages it still possesses when it comes to geopolitical competition in the hemisphere. LAC on the whole still looks to the United States as its preferred partner. If the U.S. seizes the opportunity to present a comprehensive, well-resourced counteroffer, the region will consider it seriously. Crafting such a response however will require a sustained, and forward-looking strategy for engagement with LAC which to date has unfortunately appeared lacking from a United States government which has long turned to the region only in response to crisis and neglected it at all other times.

Russia: The Great Disruptor

Facing resource constraints which have only grown more acute in the wake of its 2022 full-scale invasion of Ukraine, Russia nevertheless evidences a brazen disregard for international norms and law in its efforts to disrupt the security of the United States and allies, including in the Western Hemisphere. While Russia cannot compete with China or the United States in provision of raw economic assistance, it makes up for this through the sheer diversity of avenues in which Moscow seeks to advance its interests by any means necessary.

Russian influence in the region primarily comes from security ties, fostered through Moscow’s global arms industry which countries across Latin America have relied upon in the past to fill their armories with cheap, reliable weapons and equipment. In June of 2022, Nicaragua renewed the mandate for Russian military forces to operate within its borders. Russia also maintains a number of GLONASS satellite positioning stations, with one outside of Managua and another scheduled to be deployed in Venezuela.[5] The infamous Wagner private military contractor has also set up shop in Venezuela, providing security for Maduro and training the Venezuelan armed forces.[6] The role of this shadowy state-affiliated mercenary group is cause for elevated concern especially as leaked U.S. intelligence reports have indicated the group also explored contracts to provide security in Haiti. More recently, reports have circulated of Cuban citizens living in Russia signing up to fight in Ukraine, while Havana and Russian client state Belarus recently inked a deal for Cuban forces to help train the Belarussian military.[7]

Cybersecurity is another vulnerability which Russia has proven adept at exploiting. This in some respects can be traced to a lack of awareness across the region as to the vulnerabilities faced from infiltration by malign foreign actors. This extends even to regional ministries and national defense institutions. The Brazilian military for instance relies on Russian firm Kaspersky Lab for data protection services, even to the point of renewing its contract the summer of 2022 as the war in Ukraine raged.[8] Russian cyber actors have also used their technologies to interfere in elections in Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, and Peru, among others. This has mostly taken the form of disinformation and amplifying polarizing voices and showcases Moscow’s well-developed mis- and disinformation tactics. Such capabilities are further augmented by ostensibly aboveboard news outlets. RT en español and Sputnik Mundo, Russia’s Spanish-language mouthpieces, have over 30 million viewers in Latin America and the Caribbean, with media agreements to operate in 11 countries.[9] Russia’s ability to exploit mis- and disinformation opportunistically was on display recently when images from Mexico of cartel soldiers wielding U.S.-made AT-4 anti-tank missile launchers began circulating on social media. Russian sources, amplified by Moscow’s embassy in Mexico City, seized on the narrative that these launchers were redirected from U.S. arms shipments to Ukraine, pushing false claims that the war there was fueling Mexico’s internal security challenges.[10]

Russia’s ongoing war has also touched off a wave of migration, as thousands of mostly young, educated Russians flee the country by increasingly circuitous and dangerous routes to avoid being drafted to fight in Ukraine. The number of Russian nationals encountered at the United States’ border quadrupled between 2021 and 2022. Russians seeking entry to the United States often transit through Mexico due to significantly easier visa requirements.[11] While these outflows underscore the unpopularity of Moscow’s war, they create novel challenges for North American security as well. Rising levels of Russian migrants through Mexico open new revenue streams for criminal groups engaged in human smuggling. Those fleeing Russia are not the only newcomers to Mexico, which, according to U.S. Northern Command, is home to the largest concentration of GRU agents outside of Russia.[12] Weaknesses in screenings of Russians seeking asylum may therefore present new avenues for Moscow to infiltrate and disrupt the United States itself, to say nothing of the corrosive effects on regional security Russian espionage has already produced.

China: Civil-Military Fusion

The People’s Republic of China (PRC) engages with LAC first and foremost through an economic framework. Between 2000 and 2020, the PRC’s share of trade with the region grew eightfold, and China’s signature Belt-and-Road Initiative (BRI) has successfully garnered some twenty-one signatories in the hemisphere. Nevertheless, viewing Beijing’s relationship to the Western Hemisphere solely as one of trade obscures many of the more nefarious activities which have emerged as part and parcel of expanded PRC engagement.

The PRC’s interests in LAC are manifold. Broadly speaking, LAC is vital to China’s economic development, as it is home to extensive deposits of natural resources, including minerals and metals such as copper and lithium, as well as petroleum products. LAC is also key for China’s food security, with the region representing much of the PRC’s food imports.[13] Increasingly, as China’s economy cools off from its previous red-hot growth, China is turning towards LAC countries not merely for their raw materials, but as a base of consumers eager to purchase Chinese-manufactured products. Geopolitically, China has long been fixated on the region as home to the majority of sovereign states that continue to recognize Taiwan. The PRC has assiduously chipped away at this number, and three Central American countries — Panama, El Salvador and Nicaragua — have switched diplomatic recognition from Taiwan to China since 2017. So too has the nearby Caribbean Island nation of Dominican Republic, and in March 2023, the government of Xiomara Castro in Honduras recognized the PRC, opening an Embassy in Beijing on June 11th; a move which brought the total number of Taiwanese diplomatic allies in the region down to just seven countries. In Guatemala as well, which is headed towards presidential elections at the end of June, outward support for Taiwan may nevertheless belie an internal calculus where recognition is far more contingent. Should recognition of Taiwan slip further in the hemisphere, the PRC will in all likelihood be further emboldened in its rhetoric and provocations directed towards the island.[14]

While the PRC has clear strategic interests underpinning its focus on LAC, China’s engagement in the hemisphere is largely regime agnostic. Nevertheless, high levels of PRC engagement have been associated with worrying trends in recipient countries’ democratic health. China often acts as a “lender of last resort,” bankrolling authoritarian governments when other sources of financing will not touch these. The China Development Bank and the Export-Import Bank of China offered in excess of USD $137 billion to the region in loans to various sectors, Venezuela being the single greatest recipient of Chinese loans at USD $60 billion.[15] Furthermore, China’s public security initiatives have raised concerns after the PRC’s “safe cities” surveillance technology was associated with crackdowns on opposition parties in countries like Ecuador under the Correa government, to say nothing of China’s assistance with social control and digital monitoring in Venezuela.[16]

Military and security collaboration is also a growing aspect of Chinese activity in LAC. China has sold equipment to military and police forces from countries historically opposed to the United States—such as Venezuela, Cuba and Bolivia —as well as close American partners like Colombia, Chile, and Ecuador. Venezuela, however, is by far the region’s largest buyer of PRC arms. Between 2009 and 2019, $615 million in weapons was sold to Venezuela.[17] China could be poised to make greater arms sales to fill a vacuum left by Russia needing to keep supplies at home due to its invasion of Ukraine. In addition to military sales, the People’s Liberation Army has a burgeoning presence in the region, which it maintains through training and visits, permitting it greater familiarity with countries’ operational frameworks and preparedness, as well as their strategic doctrine and training routines. China has furthermore exploited a paucity of U.S. police assistance in the region, coupling this with the dire security crises faced by countries throughout the hemisphere, to advance its own model of security assistance.[18]

While China leads with trade and investment, security concerns are never far off, as one report by the Asia Society outlines how China employs “civil-military fusion” in its development projects, ensuring that they are designed to specifications that offer both commercial and military advantages.[19] In Latin America, this manifests in projects like the Espacio Lejano space research station in Argentina, which is effectively off limits to inspection by Argentine authorities. Analysts have noted that, while certainly capable of its stated purpose of deep space scientific research, the station could readily be used for satellite telemetry tracking and control, collecting signals intelligence, and even potentially missile guidance, tools which would serve China well in a potential conflict scenario.[20] Even further south, the PRC is seeking to expand its presence with a new agreement between Chinese state-owned Shaanxi Chemical Industry Group Co. Ltd. and the province of Tierra del Fuego to begin construction on a port in Ushuaia, a key gateway to the Antarctic, and strategic chokepoint along the Drake Passage and Strait of Magellan.[21] In Peru, a mega port is being built by a state-owned company from China which will become a key link between China and Latin America, ensuring Chinese supply chains of metals, critical minerals and agricultural products.[22] General Laura Richardson in recent testimony before Congress has also raised concerns that Chinese-constructed infrastructure along the Panama Canal could be easily turned to military purposes in the event of a conflict or crisis scenario.

Finally, approximately 100 miles off the coast of Florida, the White House has now confirmed the presence of a PRC-run base, replete with long-range radars and other electronic surveillance equipment directed towards the United States.[23] The revelations underscore how the PRC utilizes its economic heft to extract far more expansive geopolitical advantage. Cuba, undergoing its most severe economic crisis since the collapse of the Soviet Union, reportedly accepted billions of dollars from China to take over and upgrade the facility in a trade which was likely too good to refuse for Havana.[24]

As with Russia, a growing trend of Chinese nationals seeking respite from repressive policies at home have been pursuing circuitous routes to the United States by way of LAC countries. According to U.S. Customs and Border Patrol data, more than 4,000 Chinese nationals were encountered between October 2022 and February 2023 at the southern border, a dramatic uptick from the 421 encounters reported during the same period from 2021 and 2022.[25] Typically, these individuals arrive via countries like Ecuador which does not have a visa requirement for Chinese citizens to visit. From there, they travel a long and often dangerous road, together with tens of thousands of Latin American and Caribbean migrants transiting the Darién Gap between Colombia and Panama.

Iran: Opportunistic Encroachment

Often viewed as a secondary, or even tertiary player in the hemisphere, Iran’s engagement with LAC exacerbates many of the challenges outlined above. The continued global sanctions regime against Iran limits its tools for influence and has largely relegated Iranian influence in the hemisphere to Venezuela, Nicaragua, and Cuba, which are already willing to flaunt U.S. sanctions. Here, Iranian engagement has a complementary effect to more well-established and substantive Russian and Chinese efforts.

The docking of Iranian warships in Rio di Janeiro in March 2023 and high-level visits by Iranian officials to Caracas and Managua and Havana suggest Iran is seeking to project military power throughout the region in addition to economic benefit. Diplomatically, it appears Iranian Foreign Minister, Hosein Amir Abdolahian’s February 2023 tour of the hemisphere’s dictatorships was a preview for an even greater engagement, as President Ebrahim Raisi began making the same circuit of visits on June 12.[26] In the past, Iran allegedly sent members of its Quds Force to help Nicolás Maduro stay in power, including with arms shipments.[27] Informed observers have speculated that in return, Maduro may be shipping Venezuelan-made kamikaze drones, or their parts, on regular triangular flights between Venezuela, Tehran, and Moscow.[28]

Another security concern is the continued presence of Hezbollah in Latin America. The group’s origins in the region extends back decades, where they were originally concentrated around the Southern Cone, especially the tri-border area of Paraguay. Today, Hezbollah operations have shifted northwards, mainly to Venezuela where they have a sympathetic backer in the form of the Maduro regime.[29] The group has been responsible for helping Maduro launder gold as well, with Israeli intelligence revealing in February 2023 the existence of a gold smuggling operation between Caracas and Tehran facilitated by Hezbollah.[30]

Cross-Cutting Themes

All three extra-hemispheric authoritarian regimes recognize that their goals in Latin America are aligned for the time being, and all have a vested interest in sustaining anti-U.S. regimes, and disrupting U.S. security. In many cases, there is strong complementarity between the interests of these authoritarians. China for instance has high demand for cheap oil, while both Iran and Venezuela need to find clients willing to buy their energy exports in the face of sanctions. At other times, cooperation among autocrats gives different regimes the ability to defray costs and deflect responsibility. Russia for example can supply Nicaragua with arms and equipment while entrusting the training of its repressive apparatus to Venezuelan and Cuban officials.[31]

Accordingly, it must be understood that autocrats around the world follow a similar “playbook” of policies for how to take and hold power, clamp down on dissent, and survive in the face of international pressure. Nicaragua’s Foreign Agents Law for instance was closely modeled after Russia’s, allowing it to clamp down and expel dissenting voices.[32] Cybersecurity and the information space more broadly represent key vulnerabilities that malign authoritarians view as entry points for influence, many countries in the region still do not take their data security seriously enough.

Another common thread is the linkage between authoritarian regimes and migration. Dictatorships are associated with a number of push factors for migration, the most basic of which is the simple reality that most people do not wish to live under unaccountable and repressive governments. This is evidenced today by the thousands of Russian and Chinese nationals who have uprooted and risked their lives in an attempt to find better conditions oceans away. Autocracies also drive migration by adopting poor economic policies and channeling resources to inner circles while the rest of the country languishes. Venezuela is perhaps the archetypical case of such gross economic mismanagement producing the world’s largest migration crisis outside of an active war zone. Authoritarianism is part and parcel of the root causes of migration, and ought to be treated as such in any U.S. response.

Recommendations

The 2022 National Security Strategy notes that “No region impacts the United States more directly than the Western Hemisphere.”[33] Unfortunately, resources and political capital have not been commensurate with the scale of the threat posed by the interlocking efforts of Russia, China, and Iran, along with regional authoritarians. A comprehensive resource-backed approach to LAC is urgently needed if the region is to be secure, democratic, and prosperous. This would include, as one example, revising Development Finance Corporation rules to allow financing of projects in middle income counties of the region, especially given the huge disparities in development within different LAC countries.

Strengthen Regional Migration Responses: Irregular migration remains one of the most profound challenges affecting the entire Western Hemisphere. As authoritarian regimes the world over contribute to mass outflows of people, the United States has an important leadership role to play in identifying and advancing solutions to manage migration, protect the security and rights of individuals in transit, and support host countries. At the same time, the United States should encourage countries with visa-free entry policies for Russian and Chinese nationals to reexamine their screening processes to prevent the espionage apparatuses of these regimes from gaining access to the United States and allies under the guise of humanitarian need. The opening of new migration processing centers in Colombia and Guatemala in this respect represents an important step forward. Reports of Russian efforts to negotiate visa-free entry with Mexico and a number of Caribbean states should also come as cause for concern, and the United States should be active in opposing measures which could facilitate the entry of Russian government agents into the region.

Invest in Digital Capabilities: Cyber vulnerabilities not only create practical information security risks that damage the national security of Latin American and Caribbean countries, but a lack of general knowledge on cybersecurity opens the door to malign foreign powers offering facile solutions. SOUTHCOM, in partnership with CYBERCOM, and the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA), can lead training with partner countries to outline key risks, and the elements of a better strategy to counter cyber threats.

Counter the Dictator’s Playbook: As it becomes increasingly apparent that autocrats both within LAC and beyond are borrowing from a shared “playbook” of policies and tactics for maintaining their grip on power, the United States must double down on efforts to coordinate a response among like-minded democracies to counter instances of autocratization. Such a “democratic playbook” should include measures such as helping to strengthen democratic institutions, early warning signs for civil society watchdogs to track, forums like the Summit for Democracies which allow international coordination to pressure dictatorships, as well as a reexamination of how U.S. sanctions policy can be more effectively deployed against dictators and would-be autocrats.

### Core Advantage---Trade

#### Trade and economic development in the region is at risk- Trump administration is planning policies that generates market volatility in multiple states

Hedges, 3/19/2025 [Jill, Dr, Deputy Director & Senior Analyst, Latin America Transactional Latin America-US ties will be turbulent <https://www.oxan.com/insights/transactional-latin-america-us-ties-will-be-turbulent/> Accessed 4/21/2025]

U-turn on Venezuela Secretary of State Marco Rubio and Special Envoy to Latin America Mauricio Claver-Carone advocate a policy of stricter sanctions and “maximum pressure” against leftist governments in Cuba, Nicaragua and Venezuela. They also favour a robust effort to displace Chinese economic and diplomatic influence in Latin America. In contrast, Richard Grenell — another top diplomatic adviser –advocates a more transactional, less ideological approach. In late January, Grenell met with President Nicolas Maduro in Caracas, the highest-level US visit to Venezuela in decades. During the meeting Maduro agreed to accept Venezuelan deportees from the United States and to release six US detainees in Venezuela (see VENEZUELA/US: Maduro gains from warmer ties, for now – February 12, 2025). The surprising rapprochement, however, ended only weeks later when Trump revoked the temporary licence granted to Chevron to export Venezuelan oil, accusing Maduro of failing to uphold the deportation agreement. The reversal threatens to deepen Venezuela’s economic crisis and encourage even more outward migration, although the subsequent US deportation of Venezuelans to a maximum-security prison in El Salvador may boost nationalist feeling and strengthen Maduro’s domestic position (see VENEZUELA: Oil sanctions impact will not shift Maduro – March 13, 2025). Milei tightrope The Argentine president has positioned himself as Trump’s closest ally in Latin America, although his free-trade stance clashes with Trump’s protectionism. Argentina will not be exempt from US “reciprocal tariffs”, set to take effect in April, and will suffer significant losses if Trump maintains his 25% tariffs on all steel and aluminium imports. Furthermore, market volatility caused by Trump’s trade policies have particularly affected Argentine bonds, jeopardising the country’s fragile recovery. While Trump and Milei have publicly floated the idea of a bilateral free trade agreement (FTA), political and economic constraints make this unlikely. A limited deal to avoid some tariffs is more plausible. Another obstacle is that Claver-Carone has openly criticised Milei’s inner circle, particularly Cabinet Chief Guillermo Francos, whom he blames for his 2022 removal as president of the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) when Francos was Argentina’s IDB representative under the previous, Peronist government (see LATIN AMERICA: US vote may decide IDB presidency – November 15, 2022). Despite Claver-Carone’s criticism of Milei’s economic policies, the Trump administration is expected to back Argentina’s bid for new IMF financing.

#### Stronger ties with Latin America key to trade

Raisbeck 22 [Daniel, policy analyst on Latin America at the Cato Institute’s Center for Global Liberty and Prosperity, U.S. Policy toward Latin America, 2022, https://www.cato.org/cato-handbook-policymakers/cato-handbook-policymakers-9th-edition-2022/us-policy-toward-latin-america, Herrity]

With regard to foreign policy, Cuba, Nicaragua, and Venezuela do see eye to eye, and they have formed alliances with the world’s most powerful authoritarian states. This action has led to a type of meddling in other countries’ affairs that transcends regional geopolitics. Russia, for instance, has armed the Venezuelan regime heavily and used its territory to destabilize Colombia, a longtime U.S. ally whose guerrilla insurgencies receive clandestine support from Moscow. For its part, China has also helped prop up the Maduro regime, but its influence in Latin America extends much further. In fact, China recently became Latin America’s top trading partner, with strategic investments in infrastructure, minerals, and agricultural commodities across the region. Although the United States’ autocratic adversaries have been gaining ground in the Western Hemisphere, the postpandemic era offers numerous opportunities to strengthen America’s ties with Latin America and serve as an attractive example of liberal democracy.

According to the International Monetary Fund, Latin America is uniquely positioned to ease the global food, metal, and energy shortages that Russia unleashed with its war against Ukraine. For its part, The Economist argues that “the capriciousness of Chinese regulators, the tangled state of global trade and the trend towards reshoring and nearshoring” make Latin America an ideal location to supply the United States and vice versa. Regional economic integration should be a priority, and thus the United States should promote “lower trade barriers, harmonize provisions across … trade agreements and clear up onerous customs procedures.”

### Core Advantage---China Competition

#### China’s sphere of influence in Latin America is growing now---it’s part of their geopolitical strategy to isolate Taiwan and bolster authoritarianism.

Diana Roy 23. Editor of Latin America and Immigration Policy at the Council on Foreign Relations. “China’s Growing Influence in Latin America.” Council on Foreign Relations. 6/15/23. https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/china-influence-latin-america-argentina-brazil-venezuela-security-energy-bri/

China’s role in Latin America has grown rapidly since the turn of the century, promising economic opportunity while also raising concerns over Beijing’s influence. China’s state firms are major investors in the region’s energy, infrastructure, and space industries, and the country has surpassed the United States as South America’s largest trading partner. Beijing has also expanded its diplomatic, cultural, and military presence throughout the region. Most recently, it leveraged its support amid the COVID-19 pandemic, supplying the region with medical equipment, loans, and hundreds of millions of vaccine doses.

But the United States and its allies fear that Beijing is using these relationships to pursue its geopolitical goals, including the further isolation of Taiwan, and to bolster authoritarian regimes such as those in Cuba and Venezuela. U.S. President Joe Biden, who sees China as a “strategic competitor” in the region, has pledged greater economic cooperation with Latin America, but some analysts argue the United States should be doing more.

What is China’s history with Latin America?

China’s ties to the region date to the sixteenth century, when the Manila Galleon trade route facilitated the exchange of porcelain, silk, and spices between China and Mexico. By the 1840s, hundreds of thousands of Chinese immigrants were being sent to work as “coolies,” or indentured servants, in Cuba and Peru, often on sugar plantations or in silver mines. Over the next century, China’s ties to the region were largely migration-related [PDF] as Beijing remained preoccupied with its own domestic upheaval.

Most Latin American countries recognized Mao Zedong’s communist government following U.S. President Richard Nixon’s trip to China in 1972, but it was not until after China’s entry into the World Trade Organization in 2001 that they began to form robust cultural, economic, and political ties. Today, Brazil, Cuba, Paraguay, Peru, and Venezuela are among the Latin American countries with the largest Chinese diaspora communities.

How have economic relations developed?

In 2000, the Chinese market accounted for less than 2 percent of Latin America’s exports, but China’s rapid growth and resulting demand drove the region’s subsequent commodities boom. Over the next eight years, trade grew at an average annual rate of 31 percent [PDF], reaching a value of $180 billion in 2010. By 2021, trade totaled a record $450 billion, a figure that remained largely unchanged in 2022, and some economists predict that it could exceed $700 billion by 2035. China now ranks as South America’s top trading partner and the second-largest for Latin America as a whole, after the United States.

Latin American exports to China are mainly soybeans, copper, petroleum, oil, and other raw materials that the country needs to drive its industrial development. In return, the region mostly imports higher-value-added manufactured products, a trade some experts say has undercut local industries with cheaper Chinese goods. As of 2023, Beijing has free trade agreements in place with Chile, Costa Rica, Ecuador, and Peru, and twenty-one Latin American countries have so far signed on to China’s Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). (Talks on a free trade agreement with Uruguay are ongoing.)

Chinese overseas foreign direct investment (OFDI) and loans also play a major role in strengthening ties with the region. In 2022, China’s OFDI in Latin America and the Caribbean amounted to roughly $12 billion [PDF], or about 9 percent of the region’s total OFDI. Meanwhile, the state-owned China Development Bank and the Export-Import Bank of China are among the region’s leading lenders; between 2005 and 2020, they together loaned some $137 billion to Latin American governments, often in exchange for oil and used to fund energy and infrastructure projects. In 2022 alone, loans totaled $813 million [PDF]. Venezuela is by far the biggest borrower; it currently has $60 billion worth of Chinese state loans, mostly relating to energy and infrastructure. That is nearly double the amount for the second-largest borrower, Brazil. Additionally, China is a voting member of the Inter-American Development Bank and the Caribbean Development Bank.

However, these ties have raised some concerns, particularly among regional governments. While Chinese loans often have fewer conditions attached, dependence on them can push economically unstable countries such as Venezuela into what critics call “debt traps” that can result in default. Indeed, several Latin American countries are seeking to renegotiate the terms of their debt. Critics also say that Chinese companies bring lower environmental and labor standards, and they warn that China’s growing control over critical infrastructure such as ports and energy grids poses national security risks. There are also fears of growing economic dependency in countries such as Chile, which sent more than $36 billion worth of exports, or about 38 percent of its total, to China in 2021.

What are China’s political interests in the region?

At the forefront is China’s desire to expand its sphere of influence through what it calls “South-South cooperation” [PDF], a development framework focused on aid, investment, and trade. China’s focus on soft power—including strengthening cultural and educational ties—has helped Beijing build political goodwill with local governments and present itself as a viable alternative partner to the United States and Europe.

Since former Chinese President Jiang Zemin’s landmark thirteen-day tour of Latin America in 2001, there have been dozens of high-level political exchanges. President Xi Jinping has visited the region at least eleven times since he took office in 2013. In addition to several bilateral agreements with countries in the region, China has signed comprehensive strategic partnerships—the highest classification it awards to its diplomatic allies—with Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Ecuador, Mexico, Peru, and Venezuela.

China’s push to isolate Taiwan is another major factor. With Beijing refusing diplomatic relations with countries that recognize Taiwan’s sovereignty, Latin America’s support for the island has dwindled in recent years; only seven countries in the region still recognize it. In 2023, Honduras became the latest to switch diplomatic allegiance to Beijing after Taipei denied the country’s request for billions of dollars of aid. Other recent flips include the Dominican Republic and Nicaragua. Experts say the remaining holdouts, such as Haiti, are facing increased pressure.

Meanwhile, some observers say growing China-Latin America ties are bolstering authoritarian governments, including those in Cuba, Nicaragua, and Venezuela. China’s role in such countries is that of “an incubator of populism,” says Evan Ellis, a research professor of Latin American Studies at the U.S. Army War College Strategic Studies Institute. “It’s not that China’s trying to produce antidemocratic regimes, but that antidemocratic regimes find a willing partner in the Chinese.”

#### Unchecked, that directly threatens our regional hegemony in Latin America.

Nicholas Larsen 24. Legislative Assistant at U.S. House of Representatives for Congressman Jim Himes. “Why Deepening Economic Relations Between China and Latin America Threaten US Regional Hegemony.” International Banker. 1/22/24. https://internationalbanker.com/finance/why-deepening-economic-relations-between-china-and-latin-america-threaten-us-regional-hegemony/

“China’s growing influence in Latin America is reshaping trade dynamics. Brazilian agribusiness and iron ore interests, for example, are becoming heavily reliant on China, their main market,” according to Thiago de Aragão, director of strategy at Latin American public-affairs firm Arko Advice, writing for US-based, Asia-Pacific-focused current affairs publication The Diplomat on December 20. “This trade pattern not only highlights Brazil’s dependence on the Chinese market but also illustrates China’s expanding influence in Latin America, affecting regional trade dynamics and economic policies.”

That “influence” has only accelerated in recent years, partly thanks to several countries in the region deciding to sever their formal diplomatic ties with Taiwan. Instead, they have joined the overwhelming majority of nations around the world—the United States and member states of the European Union (EU) included—that officially adhere to the One China principle, contending there is only one sovereign state under the name China, with Taiwan an inalienable part of that China, and that the mainland serves as the sole legitimate government as the People’s Republic of China (PRC). Indeed, only 12 countries in the world now maintain formal diplomatic relations with Taipei City, accounting for just 0.17 percent of the global economy and less than 0.5 percent of the world’s population.

Among the most recent nations to make the switch was Honduras, which, in March 2023, signed a joint communiqué with Beijing to confirm that “Taiwan is an inalienable part of Chinese territory” and, in doing so, commenced official relations with China. By June, Honduras had opened its embassy in Beijing before both nations began negotiations for a free-trade agreement (FTA) just a few weeks later. And although discussions remain ongoing, data published in December by China’s General Administration of Customs (GACC) showed that bilateral trade between the two countries had grown rapidly since March’s rapprochement, surpassing $1.57 billion during the January-October period, a considerable 17.9-percent year-on-year hike.

Such a trend for the wider region looks set to continue over the coming years, with China having recently surpassed the US as South America’s biggest trading partner. Whether it’s the development of effective COVID-19 vaccines in close cooperation with Cuba, investing in lithium-production projects in Chile or providing billions in financial support for the region’s largest solar farm in Argentina, China’s economic influence across Central America and South America will only expand further as its own economy—which grew at a stellar 5.2 percent last year—continues humming along.

While such developments are sure to please Beijing, they represent yet another source of consternation for Washington, with US policymakers now increasingly citing the Monroe Doctrine as justification for a more visible American presence in Latin America. “Republican presidential candidate Vivek Ramaswamy is calling for the doctrine’s reinvigoration to take aim at China’s growing presence in Latin America and are offering it as a justification for a potential US military attack on criminal organizations in Mexico,” University of Warwick associate professor Tom Long and University of Cambridge assistant professor in international relations Dr. Carsten-Andreas Schulz jointly wrote in a December 16 piece for Foreign Policy magazine. “They are following the lead of former US President Donald Trump, who hailed Monroe on the floor of the United Nations General Assembly, as well as advisors such as John Bolton and former Secretary of State Rex Tillerson.”

Ultimately, the most profound implications of China’s successful advances may be ideological, especially with the likes of Nicaragua, Cuba and Venezuela all operating under strong socialist ideologies and thus the recipients of painful economic sanctions imposed by the US. But with China following a development model that it frequently calls “socialism with Chinese characteristics”, its establishment of close bilateral ties with fellow left-wing governments could go a long way towards undermining the effectiveness of Washington’s regime of punitive economic measures. Indeed, China announced in September that its diplomatic status vis-à-vis Venezuela had been upgraded to an “all-weather” partnership—a title few of Beijing’s trusted partners can claim to hold. The subsequent bumps in trade and economic cooperation that are widely expected to emerge from this development could do much to blunt US efforts to isolate Caracas economically.

It must be noted, of course, that the tides of diplomacy can shift at any time, as Argentina’s recent lurch to the right perhaps most clearly exemplifies. With Javier Gerardo Milei voted in as president by the electorate in November—and with the neoliberal firebrand making unequivocally clear his preference for closer relations with Washington, his distaste for ties with China and his desire for his country to exit BRICS—Buenos Aires’s ties with Beijing look set to become increasingly strained. For its part, China has responded by suspending its $6.5-billion currency-swap agreement with Argentina.

Of the mere 12 nations maintaining ties with Taiwan, four are located in Latin America—Guatemala, Belize, Haiti and Paraguay—and three are in the Caribbean, suggesting that China may not have its way entirely in the region for some time yet. Nonetheless, this potential opposition represents little more than a speedbump on China’s journey towards complete dominance as Latin America’s preferred economic partner.

How the US responds to this trend will prove profound in its relations with China and Latin American states. “Managing the relationship between the United States and China is the diplomatic challenge of the century,” noted the federal United States Institute of Peace in August. “In the case of Latin America, how this challenge is resolved could be the difference between a fragile region conducive to conflict, divided by ideology and polarization, and an economically developed and socially prosperous hemisphere in peace.”

#### U.S must reinvest in Latin America to counter China’s growing influence and reclaim regional leadership

**Levitt ’25** [Matthew Levitt, National Security Strategy Intern, “The Trump Administration could be the most engaged with Latin America of any 21st-century administration. Here’s why that is a good thing,” American Security Project, 01/24/2025, https://www.americansecurityproject.org/the-trump-administration-could-be-the-most-engaged-with-latin-america-of-any-21st-century-administration-heres-why-that-is-a-good-thing/, BADMUS]

Never in recent history has the Cabinet of the United States been led by as many Latin America experts as the Trump administration plans to appoint. At a time when foreign policy has its eyes laser-focused on the Middle East and Ukraine, **strategic realignment with U.S. neighboring allies could open the United States up to a new source of security and economic prosperity**. With collaboration between Latin America and China growing by year, greater focus on the region should be a priority of the Trump administration and those that follow. Latin America has been at the bottom of the U.S. foreign policy priority list for far too long. Administrations have promised greater cooperation with the region for decades, but large-scale foreign crises have often taken attention off foreign policy in the Western Hemisphere. Disproportionate **U.S. focus** on the Middle East, Asia, and Ukraine, has **allowed China to establish a firm collaborative footing in Latin America**, coinciding with the growth of Russian security and economic cooperation in the region during the same period. Trump’s recent appointments of Marco Rubio to head the State Department, ex-U.S. Ambassador to Mexico Christopher Landau as Deputy Secretary, and Mike Waltz as National Security Advisor reflect a new era of foreign policy that will be focusing on the Western Hemisphere. His administration has also nominated several Ambassadors to key Latin American nations such as Colombia and the Dominican Republic, which were without Ambassadors for years. President Trump also maintains close personal relationships with Brazilian former President Jair Bolsonaro and Salvadorean President Nayib Bukele. Argentine President Javier Milei was the first foreign leader to visit Trump after the election in November. If the United States wants to maintain its position as the “global protector,” it needs to prove that it can defend its interests in its own backyard. In the past 25 years, China has gone from making up 2 percent of Latin American exports to now being the largest export destination for South America and the second largest in all Latin America. In 2021, the trade volume between China and Latin America exceeded $450B, with many expecting that number to rise to $700B in the next ten years. In contrast, **in 2023, trade volume between the United States and Latin America amounted to about $1.1T. However, when trade with Mexico is removed, the number shrinks to less than $350B**. As part of the Belt and Road Initiative, China has invested over $100B in Latin America’s energy, infrastructure, and mining sectors. This includes the development of Chinese mining companies to operate in Latin America and the construction of Chinese cellular communications infrastructure and facial recognition software for policing. Beyond that, between 2018 and 2020, China invested an additional $16B in Latin America’s “Lithium Triangle,” a region holding 56 percent of the world’s lithium. When countries are unable to repay their debt to China, they are allowed to pay it back with natural resources; this debt trap advantages weaker nations and strengthens Chinese supply chain dominance. Beyond its underutilized markets and resources, Latin America has the potential to play a role in broader U.S. foreign policy. One critical policy issue for Washington is Taiwan, which is losing its global diplomatic recognition quicker than it is gaining it. Of the eleven UN member states that have official relations with Taiwan, seven are in the Americas. Of those seven, one is in South America (Paraguay) and two are in Central America (Guatemala and Belize). The remaining four are scattered across the Caribbean. However, even this foothold is in jeopardy. In March 2023, Honduras severed ties with the island in exchange for establishing relations with China, a move known as “dollar diplomacy.” Unlike when seeking foreign investment from the United States or U.S.-based companies, countries seeking money from China do not have to meet requirements of democracy or human rights, explaining the strong relationship between China, Venezuela, Nicaragua, and Cuba. While being authoritarian or negligent of human rights abuses is not a requirement to work with China, it allows those governments a pathway to economic success without needing to conform to the norms of the international community. It is possible that President **Trump can use his relations with autocratic figures in Latin America to sway the greater region away from Chinese predatory influence**. If the United States does not strengthen and progress relations with its southern continental neighbors, it will only allow adversaries like Russia and China to bolster their already strong footings in the region. The United States cannot allow that to happen. With the officials President Trump is appointing to the United States’ most important foreign policy positions, it may be possible to begin the long overdue process of stronger hemispheric cooperation.

#### US cooperation in Latin America is key to checking China, combatting authoritarianism in the region, and promoting democracy

Devia-Valbuena and Mejia, 23 [Nicolás Devia-Valbuena is a regional program specialist with USIP’s Latin America program. Alberto Mejía is a former general commander of the Armed Forces of Colombia. “How Should the U.S. Respond to China’s Influence in Latin America?” *USIP*, August 28, 2023. <https://www.usip.org/publications/2023/08/how-should-us-respond-chinas-influence-latin-america>]

On August 21, the Central American Parliament — a regional body representing Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras, Nicaragua, the Dominican Republic and Panama — voted to expel Taiwan as a permanent observer and replace them with the People’s Republic of China (PRC).

The move comes amid a growing trend of regional countries dropping diplomatic relations with Taiwan in favor of China. Over the past five years alone, five Central American and Caribbean countries have made the switch: Panama in 2017, the Dominican Republic and El Salvador in 2018, Nicaragua in 2021, and Honduras just this past March.

That leaves only 13 countries that recognize Taiwanese statehood, seven of which are in Latin America and the Caribbean. China’s desire to flip these seven countries and further isolate Taiwan may explain, in part, the PRC's investment and economic cooperation agenda in the region. Despite China's current economic woes, some analysts argue that the PRC is likely to continue funding foreign infrastructure projects to bolster its struggling construction industry, given the saturation of the Chinese market.

Countries in Latin America have already strengthened their economic relations with China, understanding Beijing’s economic growth as an opportunity for increased trade and investments in key sectors such as infrastructure, communications and logistics.

But such regional dynamics come during a period of heightened geopolitical competition between the United States and China, in which the diplomatic and economic advances of the PRC in Latin America are perceived as a potential threat to America’s interests in the region. Some policymakers and analysts also fear that Beijing’s armed forces could be concealing double-use installations behind many Chinese-funded infrastructure projects — which would allow for the projection of Chinese military power in the region and escalate a U.S.-China relationship already marred by mistrust and animosity.

Managing the relationship between the United States and China is the diplomatic challenge of the century. In the case of Latin America, how this challenge is resolved could be the difference between a fragile region conducive to conflict, divided by ideology and polarization, and an economically developed and socially prosperous hemisphere in peace.

The United States is in a unique and privileged position to partner with its Latin American neighbors to pursue the latter by focusing on its comparative advantages in diplomacy and culture. Those partnerships can contribute to the strengthening of local democratic institutions and social cohesion and mitigate the potential negative effects of Chinese economic practices while harnessing Beijing’s infrastructure developments for the socioeconomic benefit of the region.

China’s Infrastructure Boom: Highways, Ports and Stadiums

Several countries in the region, hungry for investments in infrastructure, energy and debt financing, have found a willing and capable partner in China, whose big pockets have remained accessible irrespective of a country’s political regime or ideology. Latin American governments, both left- and right-leaning, see China’s impressive infrastructure development and economic rise as a model for their own countries and a way to consolidate and strengthen their relations with the PRC. The results have been stunning: In the last 20 years, trade between China and Latin America has grown a staggering 2600 percent. China is now South America’s main trading partner and the second largest trading partner for Central America.

For Latin American countries that already recognized the PRC over Taiwan, those trade relationships have evolved into a development and cultural agenda, with 21 countries in the region now part of the Belt and Road Initiative.

And for those nations who still recognize Taiwan, China’s pitch includes ambitious infrastructure projects and cooperation agendas that not only aim to bring them over to Beijing’s side, but also serve to entice others sitting on the fence in a sort of domino effect. For instance, El Salvador’s decision to recognize the PRC was met with an ambitious, multi-million infrastructure plan (which has nonetheless stalled in the past years).

However, Chinese investment, which at first glance seems a net positive, has also provided a lifeline for authoritarian regimes such as Venezuela, which have used such alternative sources of income to counter sanctions and keep their strong grip on power. Whereas Western financial institutions, such as the World Bank and the Inter-American Development Bank, use their investments as a channel for both developing local economies and strengthening rule of law, the flow of capital from Chinese export credits or alternative financial institutions such as the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank or the New Development Bank have done little to consider the human rights records of recipients or improve the transparency of its local partners. In Peru and Bolivia, massive investments in port and mining infrastructure have come under heavy criticism from local communities due to their overwhelming negative effects on local social fabrics and ecosystems.

The Power of Hemispheric Connections

Despite China’s exponentially growing economic influence in the region over the past 20 years, the United States remains and will continue to be the most important partner for Latin America as the result of more than 200 years of shared history, culture and economic interdependence. While the position of China as a trading partner is indeed increasing, the overall economic links between the United States and Latin America far surpass any other actor in terms of private investment and remittances. This is even before factoring in the vibrant cultural relationships that have grown from cross-border family and friendships and created an almost transnational identity in the hemisphere.

Latin America is also a region where, despite recent concerning trends in specific countries, support for democracy and the rule of law as the preferred system of governance throughout the population is high. Furthermore, the United States continues to be perceived as the more trustworthy partner for the region when compared to China, a perception that has been on the rise since 2020. Additionally, countries in the region have found the United States to be an unrivaled security partner, with Colombia and Brazil representing some of the most important American allies in the world on counternarcotics and hemispheric stability.

The Future of U.S.-China Policy in Latin America

Strategic competition with China in Latin America should be analyzed through different lenses for a better understanding of the situation and to deliver more effective responses. A relationship between any two actors is not only economic, but also political, historical, geographical, social and cultural. It is specifically the cultural, historical and social realms where the United States does not only have an advantage, but a virtual dominance over China, providing an opportunity to shift the competition and discourse away from over-securitized and over-politicized approaches that will certainly encounter resistance in Latin America and be exploited by rivals referencing “imperialism” and “colonialism.”

Shifting the competition toward America’s advantages also requires a change in paradigm from understanding Latin America as a “problem to be solved” to an opportunity to build a common future.

A desirable future for the United States and the region could see a quality infrastructure network built with Chinese investments where local and U.S. businesses can thrive, and where growing local economies provide the platform for strong democratic institutions and inclusive societies where people do not have to leave their home countries to achieve their life goals.

### Core Advantage---Health/Human Rights

#### In the wake of recent Trump Administration foreign policy decisions, it is necessary for the U.S. to increase its global health and human rights engagement with Latin America

Bollyky et al, 25 [Thomas Bollyky, Bloomberg Chair in Global Health at Council on Foreign Relations; Senior Fellow for International Economics, Law, and Development.; Joseph Dieleman, an Associate Professor of Health Metrics Sciences at the Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation (IHME) at the University of Washington. In this role, he leads the Resource Tracking research team, which focuses on tracking development assistance for health, health spending by disease, and government health spending; Paola Pedroza, Global health researcher with experience in data cleaning, standardization, and economic modeling; Chloe Seachinger is a research associate for global health, economics, and development at the Council on Foreign Relations (CFR). She holds a bachelor's degree from the School of Public and International Affairs at Princeton University; "An ‘Americas First’ foreign policy includes global health," Science Direct, March 2025, https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S2667193X25000791?via%3Dihub, TRI]

The Trump administration entered office promising an “Americas First” foreign policy that pays new attention on what Secretary of State Marco Rubio has called “missed opportunities and neglected partners” in the Western Hemisphere.1 Yet, the recent disruption of U.S. global health engagement in Latin America is instead a return to an unfortunate longstanding pattern in which the United States sees the region as a source of problems rather than a partner in solving them. On his first day in office, President Trump initiated a series of actions that unravelled twenty-five years of U.S. global health leadership. Those measures began with a renewed notice of U.S. withdrawal from the World Health Organization and a 90-day pause in new US foreign aid that evolved into a stop-work order, the effective termination of most U.S. Agency for International Development staff, and the cancellation of 5724 out of approximately 6200 US foreign assistance awards.2 The stocktaking of what the world has to lose as the United States draws down its development assistance for health (DAH) has understandably focused on Africa, the region receiving most of that aid. Yet, the loss of U.S. aid programs in Latin America and the Caribbean should give Americans equal pause, given the close proximity of those nations and the nature and importance of the essential services and institutions being disrupted. Secretary Rubio argues that U.S. development assistance programs over time should “shrink, not expand” as the targeted health needs subside and are assumed by local governments.3 In Latin America, they have. In 1990, the region represented one out of every seven dollars that United States spent on DAH; by 2022, 2.5 percent of U.S. global health assistance went to Latin America and the Caribbean. At the same time, the mortality rate for children under 5 in the region has fallen by more than half since 2000. Most countries in Latin America and the Caribbean are middle-income, with governments and populations that paying their own bills for healthcare.4 While U.S. financial contribution to regional health is relatively small in absolute terms—$536 million in 2022, 0.8 percent of global DAH4—the United States nevertheless has had outsized influence on the health of the hemisphere in three key areas, all of which have been disrupted by recent U.S. aid cancelations and its withdrawal from WHO (Fig. 1). Download: Download high-res image (744KB) Download: Download full-size image Fig. 1. US development assistance for health disbursed in Latin America in 2022 and health programs cancelled in 2025. Notes: The map reports the amount of development assistance for health from the US government received by each country relative to their own population4 in 2022 US dollars. The callouts highlight a small sample of the many cancelled US government health assistance programs.5 Support for fragile, indebted states As Secretary Rubio acknowledges, it is the interest of the United States and every other government in the region to prevent health and humanitarian needs from overwhelming and destabilising nations.3 Haiti is in political turmoil, facing its sixth consecutive year of negative economic growth. U.S DAH to Haiti is 166 percent larger than that fragile state's domestic government health expenditure and is responsible for preventing maternal, infant and child deaths and funding more than 80 percent of the island nation's HIV/AIDS programs.4 The United States provides foreign assistance in the region to debt-distressed nations, such as Honduras and Nicaragua that receive, on a per-capita basis, roughly as much U.S. health aid as the Democratic Republic of Congo and Ethiopia, respectively. Cross-border threats The Western Hemisphere is awash with transnational threats to human and animal health, making the timing of the Trump administration's orders especially alarming. In some instances, those threats have originated from Latin America and spread northward with trade, travel, and migration. These include the record numbers of dengue fever cases reported in the Americas in 2024,6 nearly two dozen travel-associated Oropouche virus cases in Florida and New York,7 a dangerous new world screwworm outbreak menacing the livestock industry at the Mexico-U.S. border,8 and the fentanyl supplies that became a leading cause of death for younger American adults.9 In other cases, however, the public threats went the other way, with Latin American nations at grave risk from the spread of highly pathogenic avian influenza in U.S. dairy cattle and poultry farms and a measles outbreak that caused the first two U.S. deaths from the virus in a decade. From Brazil to Peru, Colombia to Jamaica, now-cancelled U.S. foreign assistance awards helped support the regional laboratories, clinics, and surveillance programs that target the cross-border health threats that countries cannot fight alone. Regional cooperation The U.S. has historically supported regional health cooperation in Latin America, while not always abiding by its precepts. The Pan American Health Organization was founded in 1902, before WHO, at the initiative of the U.S. government and partner nations concerned about the consequences of uncoordinated yellow fever control policies.10 The U.S. hosts the PAHO headquarters in Washington DC and provides most (54%, $78 million USD) of its assessed contributions.11 The United States donated the most vaccines to the region during the COVID-19 pandemic, but those doses arrived late, months after they first became available to Americans.12 In the meantime, the COVID-19 pandemic hit Latin America hard, with the region accounting for 14.3 percent of the world's COVID-19 deaths with just 8.1 percent of its population.13 To date, the U.S. has not left PAHO, but its withdrawal from WHO still hurts PAHO, which relies on Geneva for 42 percent ($295 million) of its annual budget.11 U.S. example has also begun to spread. Argentina also withdrew last month from WHO, sparking fears that other populists may do the same as President Millei to curry favour with Mr. Trump. While many of the Trump administration's executive orders are being challenged in the U.S. courts, the damage to the people receiving U.S. assistance, and to those delivering it, won't be easily undone. Once shuttered, it is hard to reconstitute migrant clinics, new drug trials, and paediatric immunisation campaigns that depend on patient routines, experienced staff, and the hard-won trust of local officials. Global public health programs are predicated on a strategy of prevention; there is no undoing the infections that occurred when an aid program fails to deliver an insecticide-treated bed net, misses a vaccine dose, or has no one available to give a pregnant mother the injection that would prevent her transmitting HIV to her unborn child. To paraphrase the late U.S. Secretary of State George Shultz, global health security starts in your own neighbourhood. Engagement on health, including through the various regional and multilateral organisations that provide assistance to Latin America, is an indispensable part of any effort to advance the interests that America shares with the other nations of the Western Hemisphere.

## Neg General

### Neg Ground---Imperialism

#### Latin America should not be treated like the cudgel for US power competition

Kaplan 2/12 [Stephen B. Kaplan is an Associate Professor of Political Science and International Affairs at George Washington University; and a faculty affiliate of the Institute for International Economic Policy., Don't let geopolitics undermine Latin America's hard-won free markets, https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/in-depth-research-reports/issue-brief/dont-let-geopolitics-undermine-latin-americas-hard-won-free-markets/]

In the wake of Latin America’s “Lost Decade,” many Latin American countries adopted market-oriented investment laws in hopes of attracting global capital. Perceiving that the lack of public-sector constraint was a catalyst for the 1980s debt crisis, these institutions aimed to “tie the hands” of subsequent governments with procurement provisions. For example, Brazil’s 1993 Procurement Law was adopted in the wake of its Brady Bond restructuring in which Western bankers converted the country’s defaulted bank loans into global bonds. In essence, Brazil gained capital-market access in exchange for establishing market-friendly institutions, including laws that promoted public-sector efficiency through public procurement. Supported by the United States and international financial institutions, such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank, this pattern was repeated throughout the region with most Latin American states constitutionally adopting such procurement laws.

If we fast forward through time and space to the early twenty-first century, this institutional architecture has successfully infused investment into Latin American markets. For example, over the last three decades, Brazil’s 1993 Procurement Law has helped catalyze a whopping 900 procurement projects totaling more than $338 billion:1 a boon to the Brazilian business community. Surprisingly, however, in the prelude to the largest public tender in Brazil’s history—a $9 billion auction of its fifth-generation wireless network in 2021—the market-friendly Bolsonaro administration was considering legally barring China’s technology giant Huawei from participating, raising several questions. Politically, why would the Brazilian government interfere with the country’s constitutionally mandated procurement system,2 a bedrock of its free-market legacy? Economically, why would the Bolsonaro government threaten to block Huawei, a major technology provider in Brazil for over two decades, from building 5G networks?

The answer reflects geopolitics—mainly US concerns about Chinese technology posing a threat to data protection, intellectual property rights, and national security. For example, the 2022 US National Security Strategy aims to “counter the exploitation of American’s sensitive data and illegitimate use of technology, including commercial spyware and surveillance technology.”3 However, outright technology bans risk unintentionally casting a cloud over the historic US commitment to market institutions and economic freedom, which are important hallmarks of its historic soft power. Trade liberalization has been historically popular in much of Latin America,4 notwithstanding recent deteriorating public satisfaction with democracy, which has fallen by about 10 percent since 2004.5 The United States should thus concentrate on creating economic opportunities regionally, rather than risk geopolitics undermining longstanding market norms.

Exporting patient capital: Externalizing China’s state-led development model

In the mid-1990s, China struggled to raise global market financing for the construction of the Three Gorges Dam, a massive hydroelectric power plant and the largest water-supply development in human history. Due to its size and international concerns about environmental sustainability, multinational and bilateral lenders including the World Bank and the US Export-Import Bank balked at providing project financing to the state-owned contractor, China Three Gorges Corporation. Against this backdrop, the China Development Bank (CDB) opted to finance the dam, pioneering its new brand of “development finance,”6 in which the bank would increasingly occupy the market space between a policy bank and a commercial bank. Over the long run, however, once the dam produced electricity, not only was the project profitable, but China Three Gorges Corporation became a global market player, acquiring financial stakes in other global energy firms.7

Similarly, the CDB has catalyzed financial expansions internationally as part of China’s “go global” strategy. Brandishing a balance sheet that was on par with the United States’ Big Four banks, JPMorgan Chase, Bank of America, Citigroup, and Wells Fargo,8 the CDB extended credit lines to national governments through joint development funds and other cofinancing initiatives. Whereas

Western commercial banks and even multilateral banks had to ensure individual projects were profitable over the short-to-medium term to appease their shareholders, the CDB had the ability to emphasize the longer term, as a form of “patient capital.”9 Its mandate was to meet government objectives with market-oriented instruments, affording the bank more time to both reach profitability and comply with state guidelines. Although Chinese policy bankers also demand a return on their capital, they incorporate a longer payback period in their lending structure to encourage “market maximization.” In other words, they aim to grow China’s total corporate earnings within important markets, rather than boosting the profitability of a single project or firm.10 Policy banks, such as the CDB and Export-Import Bank of China, are thus aiming to develop long-term markets rather than to maximize short-term profits.

During my field research in China over the past half decade, officials from both policy banks routinely referred to the importance of using “weighted outlooks for respective returns or revenues” from these projects.11 According to one veteran policy bank manager: “It’s not one port or one project; it is bringing the whole picture together. There may be risk or uncertainty in any one element, but in the long run, the whole picture comes together.”12

For example, beginning in 2001, the CDB provided about $45 billion in lines of credit to telecommunication equipment makers13 such as Huawei and ZTE, helping them become key players in the global technological marketplace in the early twenty-first century. They reached this status in part by taking advantage of “vendor financing,” a key element of China’s patient capital. In Brazil, for instance, Huawei used CDB lines of credit to lend money to local Brazilian companies who then purchased Huawei’s telecommunications equipment.14 The CDB, and ultimately the Chinese government, did not judge the success of this banking activity on the profitability of one loan, but rather the extent to which they had created new telecommunications markets for Chinese firms overseas. Over the last two decades, China has expanded its web of commercial ties in the Brazilian telecommunications sector, where today the country’s three largest cellphone operators, Vivo, Claro, and Oi, are using Huawei technology in about two-thirds of their 3G and 4G networks.15

The challenges of competing with China

Cheap financing gives China’s state-backed firms a competitive advantage when breaking into new markets overseas and thus a competitive edge globally. The United States, meanwhile, has aimed to compete with China using diplomatic levers and alliance channels. For example, it convinced such countries as Australia16 and Canada17 to ban Huawei and ZTE from building their 5G networks. However, this has proven to be a less effective strategy in the developing world, where alternative providers (e.g., Ericsson and Nokia) have a smaller historic commercial presence, and where many countries must significantly upgrade their digital infrastructures. For example, Huawei has a longstanding commercial relationship in Argentina and Brazil, after constructing 70 percent18 and 85 percent19 of their mobile networks, respectively. Aiming to close its technological gap, Colombia—whose mobile connectivity has ranked behind a half dozen regional peers20 — has also had pilot tests of the 5G Huawei network.21

Why would Latin American countries risk such important development opportunities to help protect US national security, when the United States no longer has a near-technological monopoly?22 In this regard, the strategic doctrine of Active Non-Alignment,23 or avoiding aligning with either the United States or China, might appeal to many Latin American governments feeling caught in the middle of US-China competition. Beyond Brazil, the Trump administration reportedly also tied new Ecuadorean bilateral loans intended to help repay its Chinese debts to the US “Clean Network” program, effectively excluding Chinese telecommunications companies from building Ecuador’s 5G network.24 Such initiatives risk obscuring the US commitment to public procurement laws, market openness, economic competition, and transparency in the hemisphere. Why not instead develop investment alternatives, as the United States has done with AT&T Mexico, collaborating with Nokia to support developing 5G innovation and infrastructure throughout the country?

China’s growing investment diversification: A US opportunity

After reaching a peak of $67 billion outstanding, or one-tenth of Latin America’s external debt in 2017, China has been steadily unwinding its Latin American state-to-state financial ties.25 This financial deleveraging has been driven mostly by Ecuador and Venezuela, two countries where Chinese policy banks mispriced investment risk and became financially overextended. As a rising “developing country creditor,” China had hoped to offer a new brand of development financing by offering overseas lending without policy conditionality. Emphasizing South-to-South financial cooperation, China aimed to use its development finance to cultivate a Chinese commercial presence in key strategic sectors in developing economies. Avoiding the stringent macroeconomic conditions that are typically required by Western multilateral institutions, Chinese lending instead emphasized microeconomic incentives. Policy banks employed commercial conditions to hedge China’s bilateral credit risk through loan-for-oil deals, betting that oil proceeds would both help guarantee debt repayment and also expand China’s commercial footprint in the Latin American energy sector.26

China has experienced a creditor learning curve, discovering that sovereign credit risk cannot simply be mitigated by collateralizing policy bank loans with natural resources. Even when loan repayment is tied to national commodity income, loan profitability is dependent on prudent local governance that sustains state-owned enterprises’ resource production. When there is substandard national resource governance, Chinese policy banks have little recourse beyond extending new funds in hopes of recovering natural resource collateral. As one former CDB official explained in a December 2019 interview for my book, Globalizing Patient Capital, “It’s not like lending to one province of China; you cannot order another country to do what you think is right.”27

Chinese policy banks have thus adopted a defensive lending posture with many of their major Latin American borrowers by renegotiating state-to-state loan terms. Ironically, China’s patient investment has also yielded a patient restructuring approach, where China’s main state-backed overseas creditors have extended debt relief to highly indebted countries in hopes of recuperating their bad investments during better times. For example, the China Development Bank and Export-Import Bank of China, tend to avoid recognizing short- or medium-term losses in their banking portfolios, granting payment deferrals rather than outright debt forgiveness. After first approving Venezuelan debt relief in 2016, China extended its debt moratorium through the pandemic, allowing the country to defer its principal payments, reduce its underlying oil collateral, and extend repayment deadlines. In Ecuador, Chinese policy banks extended principal payment deferrals valued at $891 million between 2020 and 2022. More recently, President Guillermo Lasso successfully negotiated with China’s policy banks to extend bilateral debt relief on oil-backed debt servicing though 2025.

China’s mispricing of credit risk and debt difficulties have contributed to a deterioration in its political influence, creating a regional opportunity for the United States. For example, in Ecuador, public perceptions of China have deteriorated in recent years against the backdrop of growing concerns that the former Rafael Correa government had mortgaged as much as four years of Ecuador’s future oil production through its China loan-for-oil deals.28 By 2021, nearly three-fifths of Ecuador’s population deemed China “untrustworthy,” compared to less-than-half of the population mistrusting China in 2014. The region has witnessed a similar pattern, with trustworthiness of the Chinese government falling by about 20 percent over the last decade.29 Scholars have also found that public sentiment regarding China varies by economic sector, with Brazilian politicians representing regions hurt by Chinese import shocks more likely to hold negative views about China.30

In response to such negative optics and mispriced investment, China’s creditors have deleveraged their financial positions, and diversified away from their bilateral debt holdings in the region. Debt spirals and governance crises have threatened to erode China’s regional soft power, after it steadily developed deep trade and investment ties over the past two decades. To mitigate its sovereign risk, China is experimenting with market-based and multilateral solutions. With an eye to diversifying its sovereign risk beyond debt financing, China has created more than $40 billion in state-backed Latin American equity funds. Not only are these state-owned asset managers an important part of China’s 2013 Third Plenum market reforms, they also enable Chinese policy banks to increasingly engage with the private sector internationally by directly investing in Latin American corporate enterprises. Notwithstanding the lofty headline numbers, China’s state-backed equity investors have deployed only $2 billion in Latin America, or about 5 percent of the total funds committed by their shareholders.31 China’s gradual shift in investment tools is also timed to take advantage of a changing Latin American context in which governments, including in Argentina and Brazil, have increasingly employed private procurement. In recent years, both countries passed public-private partnership laws to relieve national budgetary pressure by delivering public services outside the public balance sheet.

In the world of finance, shifting from debt-to-equity financing is a common way to mitigate credit exposure. The key question is whether China is moving forward quickly enough with these private-sector initiatives to avoid its mounting state-to-state problems. The growth of foreign direct investment (FDI) flows in recent years, which has surpassed state-to-state lending as the primary channel for new Chinese financial flows to the region,32 suggests China is adjusting fairly swiftly.

Leveraging US competitive advantages

With China employing more market-oriented investments regionally, the country is developing a greater presence in Latin America’s private sector, which is an area of historic competitive advantage for the United States. China initially made its foray into Latin American financing by offering its patient form of capital, characterized by its large financial scale and subsidies. These characteristics amplified policy banks’ risk tolerance, allowing them to more fluidly absorb short-term losses, sustain long-term investments, and avoid using policy conditionality to ensure debt repayment. These features of China’s development finance also helped cultivate a Chinese commercial presence in key strategic sectors within higher-risk economies.33 To hedge sovereign credit risk from their state-to-state loans, however, policy banks employed commercial conditionality,34 using natural resources as collateral for loans, as a means of repayment or in the event of a default.

However, Chinese policy banks have also shown that they are susceptible to mispricing credit risk when their sovereign borrowers mismanage the economy or natural resource production. They have also used commercial conditionality, linked to these financial contracts, to promote trade by requiring local purchases of Chinese machinery, materials, and technology and by guaranteeing contracts with Chinese firms. Employing these commercial conditions, however, have intensified such historical regional problems as commodity dependency and industrial stagnation.35 The United States can thus exploit Latin America’s frustrations with commercial conditionality, or the fine print of these financing deals, to better compete with China in several ways regionally.

International institutions: Compelling China to be a multilateral stakeholder

In light of China’s development emphasis in its foreign policy, the Chinese government has been careful to participate in multilateral debt relief initiatives, such as the Debt Service Suspension Initiative (DSSI) and the Group of Twenty (G20) Common Framework agreement, since the onset of the pandemic. However, China has simultaneously favored bilateral debt negotiation in countries where the CDB is the lead creditor, arguing that the CDB is a commercial bank, falling out of the scope of official, coordinated debt relief. Given the considerable scale of both Chinese investments and the CDB’s exposure to Latin American debt,36 such bilateral discretion could challenge the global governance standards advocated for by the IMF and the Paris Club, posing a risk to global financial stability.

China creditors often opt for bilateral discretion because they prefer “evergreening” strategies or waiting for an economic recovery to generate new life into their bilateral loans. In other words, they have restructured loan terms, and propped up sovereign borrowers (e.g., Ecuador and Venezuela) without recognizing bad debts or requiring significant economic reform. Why? China is willing to engage in regulatory forbearance to avoid recognizing short-term losses. The United States pursued a similar set of policies during the 1980’s Latin American debt crisis to safeguard its bank balance sheets from regional defaults. The Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation relaxed regulatory conditions, while US banks extended new credit to heavily indebted countries in hopes of facilitating debt repayment that was vital to bank profitability.37 Financial losses and developing country debts escalated by the end of the decade, leaving the region caught in chronic crises. Mired in a period of shrinking growth, runaway inflation, and development stagnation popularly known as the Lost Decade, Latin America’s struggles weighed on the global economy. Western banks were eventually forced to write off their bad loans as part of multilateral-sponsored reform programs that helped stabilize the region, and check inflation.

China’s bankers have similarly balked at debt forgiveness, but over time, they are going to require more policy tools beyond rescheduling bilateral debt terms and waiting for economic growth and financial recovery. Without an alternative framework for debt sustainability, China needs the Common Framework as much as the United States. The IMF provides a pathway to financial stability that is often grounded in tough policy conversations with its borrowers about economic reforms that bilateral creditors—particularly those like China who favor nonintervention—hope to avoid. Beyond the current discord about how to distribute financial burdens under the Common Framework, China is a multilateral stakeholder that ultimately needs financial stability for its national creditors as much as the West. For example, China authorized Argentina to use its central bank currency swap this summer to help enhance its near-term financial means to repay the IMF, a vital step to facilitating new fund disbursements under Argentina’s ongoing IMF program. In light of such aligned financial incentives, the United States should use its influence in international institutions, including the IMF, to more actively encourage greater Chinese participation in multilateral debt relief, an outcome that not only delivers greater financial stability for US creditors, but also Chinese creditors.

Fortify US dollar as Latin America’s reserve currency

The dollar continues to reign supreme as a reserve currency in international finance, accounting for $6.9 trillion, or about two-thirds of the world’s total foreign exchange reserves, while the Chinese renminbi’s accounts for a mere 2 percent of total exchange reserves.38 Renminbi internationalization is one of the key motivations for China’s integration internationally; however, foreign investors have been circumspect about using the currency as a low-risk safe investment given ongoing concerns about the predictability of its political and legal frameworks.39 China is trying to counter this narrative by using global trade and investment as a conduit to promote renminbi-based transactions. Even though the renminbi has less historic visibility in Latin America, the Chinese authorities have raised the currency’s profile through currency swap agreements, completing central bank swap agreements with eight Latin American countries totaling $19 billion.40 These agreements not only give central banks direct access to the Chinese currency but they also provide Latin American countries with a potential financing alternative when they face liquidity constraints in US dollar markets – as observed in Argentina this summer.

To reinforce dollar supremacy and improve the financial inclusion, efficiency, and safety of the US dollar payment system, US authorities should research the merits of a central bank digital currency (CDBC) in Latin America. By using trade to promote renminbi internationalization, China is betting that technological development will enhance the direct convertibility of bilateral currencies and reduce the world’s need for the dollar as a reserve currency. Today, the dollar is involved in almost nine-tenths of all currency transactions globally,41 affording the United States two key important economic and geopolitical advantages. Economically, long-standing demand for US dollars places a premium on its US Treasury assets, which translates to low interest rates for its government and firms that are vital for economic growth. Geopolitically, US dollar dominance allows the US government to use its global financial network to monitor international transactions and apply economic sanctions. To maintain these relative national advantages, the United States should secure the dollar’s place as a global intermediary by leveraging its technological expertise and regulatory infrastructure to build an unrivaled digital dollar hub for the international financial system.

Increase the scale and operations of the US Development Finance Corporation

The US Development Finance Corporation (DFC) has about $4.4 billion outstanding in active projects in the Western Hemisphere, or more than one-third of its total global projects.42 This development financing represents about 2 percent of regional FDI flows today. The DFC employs its financial resources—including loans, loan guarantees, equity investments, political risk insurance, and technical assistance—to help spur private investment in developing country markets. Importantly, the DFC’s mandate, which was created under the BUILD Act in 2018,43 has sought to primarily expand development opportunities in low- and middle-income countries.44 However, the DFC is also a commercial tool that has helped create market opportunities internationally in sectors where the United States has a competitive advantage, including clean technology, education, finance, healthcare, and information technology.

Given China’s large presence in South America’s high middle-income economies, the DFC should expand its scope and scale in the region’s largest markets, where commercial opportunities often intersect with strong development needs. To date, the DFC has extended 93 percent of its Latin American portfolio to higher middle-income countries, including Colombia, Ecuador, Mexico, and Peru. Beyond the Andes and North America, however, the rest of South America only accounts for one-quarter of the DFC’s Latin American exposure.45 There are many remaining fertile opportunities in markets with sizable private sectors, including Argentina, Brazil, and Chile. China’s state-to-state financing has been effective at breaking into these markets, but the United States is brimming with sophisticated market players who would benefit competitively from enhancing the institutional foundations of the region’s marketplace.

To maintain its effectiveness, the DFC should thus focus on its institutional advantage of market development, and avoid any potential political interference. When the United States aims to leverage DFC financing to extract political concessions, or influence national investment governance, it risks undermining its own messaging about market governance and capital development. Much of the region still views China’s telecommunications firms as offering a development opportunity in digital infrastructure.46 The US concerns regarding data privacy and national security have merit, but are best channeled into foreign policy by instead presenting the region with competing development opportunities through the DFC. Such developmental efforts are more likely to grow regional support for US goals for twenty-first century globalization and help restore US economic and political leadership.

The DFC also can leverage the longstanding US strengths in financial intermediation, transparency, and accountability. Building robust legal frameworks for public finance and procurement has helped enhance private-sector activity, competition, and efficiency in Latin America over the course of the last few decades. Why interfere with such foundational regional market institutions by introducing politics into the public tender process? Alternatively, the United States can use its voice in multilateral and regional institutions including the World Bank and Inter-American Development Bank to further develop local administrative, legal, and financial expertise in procurement governance and public-private partnerships. Through such institutional efforts, the United States can help incentivize more Chinese financing flows through the local private sector, where it’s more likely to behave similarly to traditional market financing. In addition, the DFC can help simultaneously foster synergies between the US private sector’s technical expertise and local firms’ economic knowledge, creating mutual market gains.

China has begun to answer the region’s call for value-added manufacturing investment and technological spillover in such sectors as renewable energy, electric battery production, and clean transportation. However, China is still overcoming some negative optics throughout the region due to the high commercial content of its Latin America financial foray. Against this backdrop, the United States should leverage its private sector to deliver local development opportunities, but without the commercial conditionality of China’s development finance.

### Neg Ground---Multilateralism

#### US Grand Strategy vs. Multilateralism

Ward 23 [Walter H. “Howard” Ward, Jr. is a distinguished leader in the field of military education and cultural understanding. Director of the Air Force Culture and Language Center (AFCLC) at Air University, Not an Away Game: US Strategic Competition in America’s Own Neighborhood, October 5, 2023, https://www.airuniversity.af.edu/JIPA/Display/Article/3540600/not-an-away-game-us-strategic-competition-in-americas-own-neighborhood/]

Abstract

US security challenges have historically been framed in terms of North and South, but the focus shifted to East and West after World War II. The concept of “East” encompassed Eastern Europe or the Middle East, while today it includes challenges in the Far East under Indo-Pacific Command (INDOPACOM). However, strategic competition is now closer to home, necessitating a new approach.

The United States has asymmetric means to secure victories in strategic competition in Central and South America. This article examines China’s influence in the region, identifies key players, and highlights areas where the US holds a competitive advantage. Urgent action is needed to ensure strategic competition remains an away game. By providing strategic recommendations, this article aims to help the US achieve a mutually beneficial outcome while safeguarding its long-term interests.

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Since the Civil War, US security challenges have traditionally been expressed in terms of North and South, but from World War II onward, the prevailing focus has shifted to the East and West. Eastern Europe and the Middle East were defined as the “East,” while today, US Indo-Pacific Command (INDOPACOM) challenges are framed as the Far East. For nearly a century, an ocean, both literal and figurative, has separated the homeland from strategic competitors in this East-West orientation. However, the landscape has undergone a significant transformation.

Strategic competition is now much closer to home and no longer lurking beneath the surface. Chinese and Russian influence in Central and South America has become highly visible, as they strive to create political, economic, and social divisions between the US and its regional partners. Their motives are neither altruistic nor mutually beneficial, but rather part of a deliberate strategy to enhance their own power while undermining US influence and diverting attention away from distant shores.

Fortunately, the United States possesses asymmetric means to effectively secure victories in strategic competition within Central and South America, enabling success in the long run. The key lies in people—the fundamental building blocks of the endeavor. The United States Air Force, leading the way in force development within the Department of Defense, is equipping its personnel with language and cultural skills suited for the present mission. This article delves into the ways China influences military and economic affairs in Central and South America. More importantly, it provides recommendations where the United States holds a distinct asymmetric competitive advantage and emphasizes the need for swift action to ensure strategic competition returns to its status as an away game.

By exploring these dynamics, this article aims to rebalance the playing field and provide strategic recommendations that enable the United States to secure a mutually beneficial outcome while safeguarding its interests in Central and South America.

China’s Stealthy Military Influence in Central and South America

China has silently pursued a long-term strategy of exerting influence over the militaries of Central and South America. In a thought-provoking piece for the Center for International Maritime Security, Capt Steven Arango, USMC, highlights China’s growing influence achieved through investments in officer professional military education. Drawing upon a RAND report, Arango reveals that China provides a staggering five times more opportunities for professional military education than the United States, and this disparity continues to widen each year.1

The concerns raised by Arango are echoed by John S. Van Oudenaren and Benjamin E. Fisher, who emphasize China’s investment in professional military education across Central and South America. Referring to a 2010 news article from Xinhua News Agency, Van Oudenaren and Fisher disclose that China had already educated over 4,000 officers from more than 150 countries by that time.2 However, they caution that the mere provision of seats in courses does not guarantee sustainable integration or operational capability. Their research uncovers a striking disparity—while international students are exposed to Chinese history and culture, including a shared narrative of European colonial exploitation, they are segregated into separate international cohorts rather than being fully integrated with their People’s Liberation Army counterparts. This stands in stark contrast to the experience at institutions such as Air University and other service professional military education establishments, where international officers are fully integrated alongside their US colleagues.3

In US professional military education institutions, the United States actively facilitates the unrestricted integration of international students by providing a baseline of English language skills. This invaluable gift opens doors for these students to fully participate in classes alongside American and other international students—a gift that keeps on giving in many ways. However, a stark contrast emerges when examining the experience of international officers attending Chinese Defense Studies campuses.4

No similar effort is made to support the integration of international officers within the Chinese system. Instead, they are segregated into classes conducted in their native language, limiting direct engagement with their Chinese counterparts. Moreover, the instruction and materials largely reflect official Chinese Communist Party (CCP) positions, rarely allowing for diverse perspectives.5 The disparity could not be more pronounced when compared to the experience of attending professional military education at a US institution. As both a student and instructor, I have witnessed and participated in numerous spirited discussions between US and international officers, fostering a deeper understanding of challenges and strengthening relationships.

Despite the disparity in educational quality, China is undeniably providing greater quantity in terms of educational opportunities. However, upon returning to their home countries, these officers bring with them connections and ideologies that tangibly extend the reach of Chinese influence, reaching right to our own doorstep. By widening the gap between our relationships with our closest neighbors, China gains a strategic competition advantage as the visiting team, while our ability to deter their malign influence in INDOPACOM is compromised.

This stark juxtaposition highlights the importance of addressing the approach to international military education. It is imperative that the United States not only maintains its commitment to unrestricted integration but also expands its efforts to counter the widening influence of China. By strengthening relationships, deepening understanding, and offering a competitive educational experience, the US can effectively navigate the evolving landscape of strategic competition in our own backyard.

China’s Economic Infiltration

China is also actively pursuing a similar path economically, making significant strides in Central and South America. Data from the House Foreign Affairs Committee reveals that while Mexico and Canada remain the US’ top trading partners, China has successfully penetrated these regions, with trade increasing by a staggering 26-fold between 2000 and 2020. Moreover, projections indicate that this growth will double by 2035.6 These gains are not surprising when considering the substantial political investment made by President Xi Jinping. Since assuming office in 2013, President Xi has visited Latin America on 11 occasions, in stark contrast to the mere five US Presidential visits to the region documented in Department of State historical records up until 25 October 2022.7

Beyond the numerical figures lies a more concerning trend of vertical integration, wherein China strategically acquires key industries rather than solely purchasing their products. The House Foreign Affairs Committee highlights that China has invested a staggering USD 16 billion in Argentina, Chile, and Bolivia’s lithium production industry.8 Furthermore, China stands as the largest investor in seven of Peru’s major mines, controlling 100 percent of their iron ore production and 25 percent of their copper output, including two of the largest mines. This economic investment has facilitated the transfer of USD 634-million worth of military equipment between 2009 and 2019, paving the way for the adoption of PRC-style “digital authoritarianism” and surveillance tactics through Huawei networks.9 These developments are taking place within our contiguous land mass and steadily encroaching closer to our borders, raising significant economic and security concerns.

China’s economic ambitions have encountered significant challenges alongside their military exchanges. In a recent article published in the Wall Street Journal, Ryan Dube and Gabriele Steinhauser shed light on the crumbling state of many of China’s infrastructure investments in Latin America. Host countries in the region have not received the expected benefits, mirroring patterns observed in Africa and Asia.10 For instance, Ecuador’s largest hydroelectric plant, constructed with an investment of USD 2.7 billion and financed at a 6.9-percent interest rate, stands perilously close to sliding down a mountainside due to erosion, despite being built by hundreds of Chinese workers flown into Ecuador between 2010 and 2016.11

China’s growing military and economic influence in our hemisphere is forcing us to confront strategic competition on our own turf. This shift has the potential to diminish our capacity to effectively compete in INDOPACOM, an arena where we hold significant interests and treaty alliances. However, there is still an opportunity to change the tide by strengthening our relationships both to the North and South. Coalescing our alliances and partnerships can serve as a vital enabler in countering malign Chinese influence and effectively securing our own interests, as well as those of our alliance partners, in the INDOPACOM region.

To achieve this goal, the United States must recognize that the Chinese way of war has evolved. It must make comprehensive investments in the region across all domains, recognizing the need to compete on multiple fronts. Moreover, the US should capitalize on its asymmetric cultural advantage by fostering and leveraging cultural connections. By investing strategically, bolstering relationships, and embracing cultural ties, the US can navigate the challenges posed by China’s economic influence, seize opportunities for mutual benefit, and successfully safeguard our interests and those of our alliance partners in the INDOPACOM theater.

Pitching a Winning Strategy: Countering China’s Malign Influence in Our Backyard

To effectively counter China in the SOUTHCOM AOR, the United States must confront the stark reality that the Chinese way of war differs significantly from what we have encountered in the past. China has adopted a comprehensive whole-of-government approach, actively waging this war and extending its reach through Central and South America. A decade ago, Professor Stefan Halper at Cambridge University prepared an unclassified report for Mr. Andy Marshall at the Pentagon’s Office of Net Assessment, providing an extensive analysis spanning 559 pages. This report detailed China’s not only whole-of-government but also whole-of-society approach to advancing CCP objectives.

One such strategy, known as “The Three Warfares,” was sanctioned by the CCP in 2003. It encompasses psychological warfare, media warfare, and legal warfare, also referred to as lawfare. According to Halper, these three warfares are actively employed against the United States, aiming to diminish our capacity for power projection. One key assumption underlying the analysis is that China utilizes the three warfares to “diminish or rupture regional alliances,” further jeopardizing our interests12

A single story on the 2022 Summit of the Americas, featured in the English language version of chinamil.com, explicitly reveals how the three warfares are being employed in Latin America to disrupt partnerships and enhance China’s strategic competition as a home game for the United States.13 When even prominent figures like actor and World Wrestling Entertainment superstar John Cena are compelled to issue video apologies in both English and Mandarin for referring to Taiwan as a country, fearing repercussions from Chinese-controlled media sources, it becomes evident that the three warfares have entrenched themselves.14

In the face of these challenges, the United States must adopt a robust defensive strategy to counter China’s whole-of-government warfare. This strategy necessitates a comprehensive approach, bolstering partnerships, enhancing information warfare capabilities, and safeguarding regional alliances. By fortifying our defenses and exposing the tactics employed by China, the United States can effectively resist and neutralize the impact of the three warfares. Through resilience and proactive measures, we can protect our interests and maintain stability in the SOUTHCOM AOR.

A recent article in The Economist highlights a significant shift in China’s approach to Latin America. China’s policy banks have ceased making new loans in the region since 2020, with even Venezuela receiving credit solely for maintaining oil shipments to China. Furthermore, a study conducted by the College of William and Mary reveals that the region experienced a higher number of cancelled or suspended Belt and Road transactions compared to any other area, reaching its investment peak in 2014.15 However, amid these developments, mineral extraction remains a constant, with Latin American exports to China, primarily consisting of minerals and other natural resources, surging 28 times higher between 2017 and 2021 than in previous years.16

Against this backdrop, a remarkable opportunity arises for the United States to adopt a comprehensive whole-of-government approach, fostering a brighter future with our closest neighbors while strengthening our position in strategic competition. Data indicate that China’s efforts in the region do not effectively benefit the overall nation, as they fail to generate local jobs and often result in crumbling infrastructure. This counternarrative, reminiscent of colonialism, presents a stark reality that can easily resonate. By coupling it with incentives for US businesses to make capital investments that benefit all parties involved, we can finally unleash the full potential of our own region in a sustainable and mutually beneficial manner.

Through strategic partnerships, shared prosperity, and long-term investments, the United States can cultivate a thriving regional ecosystem. By harnessing the power of collaboration and aligning our interests, we can build a foundation for sustainable growth and development, leaving behind the pitfalls of China’s diminishing influence. This approach not only strengthens our hand in strategic competition but also establishes a win-win scenario, fostering a resilient and prosperous future for ourselves and our neighbors.

Conclusion

The US military possesses a commendable model for cultivating relationships with international partners through professional military education, but it is evident that maintaining quality has become a challenge in keeping up with quantity. The US model, encompassing English language instruction, full integration, and academic freedom to explore diverse topics, has proven to be an effective system for building enduring, values-based relationships. Complementing this, the Air Force’s Language Enabled Airman Program (LEAP) develops Airmen equipped with language proficiency, cultural understanding, and regional expertise, enabling them to directly collaborate with their Latin American counterparts on shared security interests. The result is an increased operational capability and a perception of equality, as Latin Americans witness their own sons and daughters working as capable partners alongside the world’s leading military—an invaluable achievement that cannot be easily replicated.

However, China holds an advantage purely in terms of the sheer number of opportunities, even if the quality does not match the US experience. To address this imbalance, the United States must seek avenues to fund additional opportunities for international officers to attend professional military education alongside their American counterparts. As previously cited articles have highlighted, the tactics and values Latin American officers bring back from their educational experiences in China have a profound impact. The same applies to their experiences in the United States. Increasing capacity at service schools presents a relatively low-cost proposition that sends a powerful message about our commitment to the region—one that revolves around our most valuable resource of all: people.17

By investing in expanding opportunities and fostering deeper engagement, the United States can reaffirm its dedication to the region and bolster its partnership-building efforts. Strengthening the human dimension of our relationships demonstrates a genuine commitment to mutual growth and collaboration. Through these actions, the United States can reinforce its role as a trusted and capable partner, contributing to the sustained security and prosperity of the region.

The final recommendation to prevent strategic competition from becoming a home game is to leverage the significant asymmetric advantage the United States possesses in terms of culture. Numerous cultural domains provide opportunities to foster closer connections and shared identity with our Latin American partners. From the presence of large Latin American and Caribbean diasporas in the United States to the influence of pop culture and the shared commitment to democratic principles among most countries in the region, avenues abound for bridging the gap through cultural and linguistic exchanges. A foundational step involves increasing investment in educational exchanges at universities and high school levels, utilizing culture and language as tools to diminish the distance between us. Additionally, bolstering the tourist economy, both inbound and outbound, between Latin America and the United States represents another vital stride toward fostering mutually beneficial interactions. With the majority of the COVID pandemic in the rearview mirror and a strong desire for experiential travel among consumers, culturally and economically advantageous opportunities await. It is important to recognize that approaches such as these represent the long game, requiring time to witness tangible benefits. Nevertheless, enduring impact and lasting outcomes often demand significant investments over time.

China’s endeavors in Latin America compel us to prioritize something that we should have been doing all along—taking our own region seriously. This year marks the bicentennial of the Monroe Doctrine, which effectively declared a “no trespassing” sign on the region. However, history is unlikely to attest that the United States dedicated the level of effort required for the shared security and prosperity of our neighbors. While China has capitalized on an opportunity, the game is far from over, and data indicate that the timing is perfect for a comeback—if we are willing to commit for the long haul instead of merely stepping back once Chinese influence recedes. Through military and economic cooperation, while leveraging common cultural elements, we can forge a stronger and more prosperous region for ourselves and our neighbors—without compromise. Settling for anything less weakens us at home and hampers our aspirations for security and prosperity both East and West.

The key to winning the away game in strategic competition lies in ensuring it never becomes a home game. By proactively embracing our role and strengthening relationships within the region, we can fortify ourselves against external influences and create a resilient environment conducive to shared security and prosperity. This requires an unwavering commitment to nurturing strategic partnerships and working collaboratively toward a brighter future for all.

### Neg Ground---Solvency

#### There is also a healthy negative debate to be had over solvency and whether countries say no to engagement:

#### Affs can’t solve structural issues to accepting aid

**Pozzebon, 19** – Writer for CNN

[Stefano Pozzebon, “Aid is piling up on Venezuela’s border. Here’s why it’s not getting in,” CNN, 2-21-2019, https://www.cnn.com/2019/02/21/americas/venezuela-aid-power-struggle-intl/index.html, accessed 4-30-2024]

“On February 23, humanitarian aid will enter Venezuela one way or another,” the country’s self-declared president Juan Guaido declared earlier this month. But not so fast – President Nicolas Maduro, who won reelection in a widely-criticized vote last year, has promised to block the supplies, and organizations including the Red Cross and United Nations have refused to help.

The slow advance of aid toward impoverished Venezuela has become a proxy measure of the power struggle between its two rival presidents. At the same time, there is little doubt that the Venezuelan people are in need of help. So why is it so hard to agree on aid?

What is happening?

Venezuela is dealing with the worst economic crisis in its history. One in 10 Venezuelans are undernourished, and the economic crisis has triggered an exodus of at least three million people, according to the International Organization of Migration.

Venezuela closes key maritime, air borders with neighbors amid growing aid crisis

Guaido has thrown all his weight behind a “humanitarian channel” that would bring tons of much-needed aid from foreign countries into Venezuela. But the plan isn’t just benevolent – it’s also a direct jab at Maduro, who for years has denied that a humanitarian crisis was happening in Venezuela.

“The impact of the humanitarian aid is highly political,” admits Juan Miguel Matheus, an MP for the opposition. “Our first and primary goal is to provide relief for the Venezuelan population, but after that, with this move we want to checkmate Maduro.

“If the aid gets in, Maduro is shown to have lost control of the situation; if it doesn’t get in, we show that Maduro doesn’t care for the suffering of the people,” he says.

Why aren’t international organizations joining the opposition’s plans?

Many reputable international organizations, including both the Red Cross and Caritas, the humanitarian arm of the Catholic Church, have declined to participate in Guaido’s aid campaign. The Red Cross tells CNN that the initiative organized by the Venezuelan opposition is too political.

“The action of the Red Cross is based on two principles: humanity and neutrality. Neutrality is the most important one in situations like this,” explains Francesco Rocca, president of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies. He is adamant that Venezuela should receive humanitarian aid, but that the operation should be a concerted effort.

Only through an agreement between the two sides could the aid be really effective, he says.

The United Nations has also chosen not to take sides, calling instead on both parties to de-escalate tensions.

Ok, so who is actually bringing the aid?

The United States has pledged 20 million dollars to help Venezuela. That has so far translated into three deliveries of air cargo to a border town in Colombia, where it is poised to enter the country.

Canada, Germany and the United Kingdom have also chipped in, among others.

Colombia has provided the logistical facilities for transporting the aid. Two more shipment points have been announced in Brazil and Curaçao, both also near the Venezuelan border.

Venezuela’s closest neighbors, like Colombia, are the most interested in seeing aid brought in, as they hope this measure could help reduce the wave of Venezuelan refugees pouring across their borders.

What is Maduro doing?

Boxes of aid ready for distribution sit inside a warehouse at the Tienditas International Bridge in Cucuta, Colombia, on Tuesday.

Boxes of aid ready for distribution sit inside a warehouse at the Tienditas International Bridge in Cucuta, Colombia, on Tuesday. LUIS ROBAYO/AFP/AFP/Getty Images

Maduro sees the opposition-led plan as a trap, and has rejected the humanitarian aid it would bring in. Accepting foreign supplies during the current political crisis would be tantamount to accepting foreign political intervention, from Maduro’s point of view.

When the US sent a shipment of medical and food supplies to the Venezuelan border last week, Maduro’s regime installed a blockade on one of the bridges that connect Venezuela and Colombia.

#### Maduro doesn’t want US aid and deliberately sends the aid to other countries, means aid is usless

**Welsh 4/21** (Teresa Welsh is a Senior Reporter at Devex. She has reported from more than 10 countries and is currently based in Washington, D.C., 4-1-2021, accessed 4-25-2024, Devex, "Just 2% of US aid to Venezuela reached the country, report finds", <https://www.devex.com/news/just-2-of-us-aid-to-venezuela-reached-the-country-report-finds-99800>

The U.S. Agency for International Development “faced significant policy, coordination, and strategic planning challenges in designing and implementing humanitarian and development programs” in Venezuela, a report from the USAID Office of Inspector General found. The report, which the watchdog quietly released earlier this month, found that the former Trump administration’s political objectives consistently interfered with USAID’s response to the regional humanitarian crisis caused by Venezuela's political collapse. Over 5 million Venezuelans have fled the country since 2015, and millions still inside are in need of humanitarian assistance. Of the 368 metric tons of aid USAID’s Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance and Office of Food for Peace sent to the Colombian border in 2019 — costing $2 million — only 8 metric tons were actually delivered inside Venezuela. The rest of the humanitarian assistance supplies, some of which were stored in a warehouse guarded by the Colombian military outside of Cúcuta, were distributed inside Colombia or sent to Somalia. The report also found that the Trump administration used U.S. foreign assistance to shore up support for Juan Guaidó, an opposition figure who the U.S. recognized as the legitimate leader and interim president of Venezuela instead of President Nicolás Maduro. It said that the Office of the Administrator, then Mark Green, directed OFDA and FFP to “align their award decisions toward reinforcing the Interim Government’s credibility.” This meant U.S. funding to the United Nations, which was capable of delivering humanitarian assistance inside the country, was minimized over Guaidó’s concerns that the U.N. was aligned with Maduro. That politicization of aid was a cause for concern, USAID staff told OIG inspectors. “In January and February 2019, the U.S. Government identified USAID’s humanitarian assistance for Venezuelans as also serving as a key tool to elevate support to the Venezuela Interim Government and increase pressure on the Maduro regime,” the OIG report found. “These directives communicated instructions to OFDA and FFP on the use of the Agency’s humanitarian assistance resources in response to the crisis, including taking actions that deviated from humanitarian principles and heightened security and fiduciary risks.” Total USAID funding for the Venezuela regional crisis was $507 million for fiscal years 2017 to 2019, with $260 million for humanitarian assistance and $247 million for development assistance. In early February 2019, the opposition government of Guaidó expressed its intent to force a delivery of aid across the border at a donor conference in Washington — in defiance of Maduro, who saw the move as part of a coup attempt. Skyrocketing inflation had made it nearly impossible to afford basic supplies such as food and medicine, and millions of Venezuelans were fleeing the dire situation on foot. But Maduro denied his country was experiencing a humanitarian crisis and blocked delivery of the USAID supplies. Clashes at Maduro-controlled border crossings led to the destruction of $34,000 of U.S. humanitarian supplies as the opposition attempted to get it into the country on February 23, 2019. The violent standoff made international headlines. “This contributed to a tense environment for humanitarian assistance funded by or associated with the U.S. Government, as the Maduro regime publicly rejected pre-positioned commodities and initiated security crackdowns in Venezuela,” the report said. USAID “pre-positioned” aid to Colombia using military aircraft from Florida in anticipation of its delivery across the bridge from Cucuta into Venezue The report also found that OFDA and the State Department Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration failed to develop joint strategic humanitarian response plans to coordinate strategy and programming at the country or regional level to deal with the Venezuela crisis, leading to confusion among agencies and partners over who was responsible for what. Officials working for USAID’s Office of South America Affairs in the Latin America and Caribbean Affairs Bureau told auditors that they were being asked to carry out programming in which they had no expertise, in areas such as health and economic growth. They also said “they were effectively operating as a mission with the burden of working remotely, as they had no operational presence inside Venezuela.” In response to a request for comment, USAID Acting Spokesperson Pooja Jhunjhunwala said the agency had seen the OIG report and cooperated during the audit. “We welcome this and all reports that aim to improve the effectiveness of USAID’s work, especially in challenging operating environments,” Jhunjhunwala said. “As with all OIG Audit reports, USAID will address findings and recommendations. For safety and security reasons, USAID does not name our partners inside Venezuela.”la in February 2019, transportation the report found to be unnecessary because commercial transportation was available and less expensive.

#### Tensions between the United States and Maduro prevent aid from being used even if justifications like the aff aren’t politicized

**Reuters 4/19** (Reuters is one of the largest news agencies in the world and covers a litany of topics, 4-14-2019, accessed 4-30-2024, "U.S. aid to Venezuela was not aligned with humanitarian principles, audit finds", https://www.reuters.com/world/americas/us-aid-effort-venezuela-was-not-aligned-with-humanitarian-principles-audit-finds-2021-04-30/

CARACAS, April 30 (Reuters) - A U.S.-backed effort to send aid to Venezuela in 2019 that ended in a violent standoff on the Colombian border was not planned in alignment with humanitarian principles, according to an audit by the Washington-based aid agency involved in the operation. The U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) sent aid material to the Colombian border region in February 2019 amid chronic shortages of food and medicine and rising malnutrition in Venezuela. The Trump administration had planned for the supplies to be carried across the Colombian border into Venezuela by allies of Venezuelan opposition leader Juan Guaido. But the aid convoys were blocked by troops loyal to President Nicolas Maduro - who called the operation a violation of the nation's sovereignty. "(The) directive to pre-position humanitarian commodities was not driven by technical expertise or fully aligned with the Office of Inspector General, U.S. Agency for International Development ... principles of neutrality, independence, and being based on needs assessments," the USAID audit concluded. The report, originally released on April 16, was first reported by the Associated Press. The border standoff took place weeks after the Trump administration recognized Guaido as Venezuela's legitimate president and backed Guaido's creation of an interim government that was meant to advance a political transition in Venezuela. During the aid effort, USAID leaders instructed officials to align decisions "toward reinforcing the Interim Government's credibility," the report says. It adds that USAID's leadership directed officials to minimize funding to United Nations agencies, even though they had infrastructure in Venezuela to deliver such goods, because it believed they were sympathetic to Maduro's government. "The Boliviarian government in February 2019 warned about the fraudulence of the supposed humanitarian aid from the US in Cucuta," tweeted Venezuelan Foreign Minister Jorge Arreaza, in reference to the Colombian border city where much of the aid was sent. "Today, @USAID itself recognizes that it was part of a political operation meant to change a government." "It was never a humanitarian action, but rather a covert operation," wrote Information Minister Freddy Ñañez in an emailed statement. "Humanitarian aid was the excuse with which they tried to break our territorial sovereignty." The U.S. State Department did not immediately respond to a request for comment. "We welcome this and all reports that aim to improve the effectiveness of USAID's work, especially in challenging operating environments," a USAID spokesperson said in an emailed response to Reuters. Of the 368 tonnes of supplies sent to the Colombia-Venezuela border region, only eight were delivered to Venezuela, with the remainder distributed in Colombia or shipped to Somalia, the report said. Following the aid standoff, Maduro’s government began progressively allowing for a greater influx of foreign aid and an expanded presence of international humanitarian groups.

# Recommended Countries

## Brazil

### Uniqueness

#### Quick Background: Strained relations amid tariff disputes; affs could explore climate cooperation, Amazon protection, or trade normalization.

#### Trump supercharges the necessity for Brazilian foreign policy engagement---risks Chinese expansionism

Winter 24 [Brian Winter, Editor in Chief of Americas Quarterly, "Latin America Is About to Become a Priority for U.S. Foreign Policy," Foreign Affairs, 12-10-2024, https://www.foreignaffairs.com/united-states/latin-america-about-become-priority-us-foreign-policy, accessed on 4-17-2025, GMU AE]

While traveling throughout Latin America in recent years, visitors heard the same refrain: Washington isn’t paying enough attention to the region. Business leaders, academics, and politicians on both the left and the right agreed that the United States lacked a clear strategy for engagement and was losing influence and economic opportunities, especially to China. Such talk is hardly new. A 1973 article in Foreign Affairs warned that “the United States has no Latin American policy, save one of benign neglect.” But these laments seemed to reach a peak during the Biden administration, which was seen as too focused on the United States’ growing rivalry with Beijing and the wars in Ukraine and the Middle East to devote even minimal bandwidth to its southern neighbors.

As the adage goes, be careful what you wish for. Donald Trump’s second presidency seems destined to focus more attention on Latin America than any U.S. administration in perhaps 30 years, including the incoming president’s first term. The reason is straightforward: Trump’s top domestic priorities of cracking down on unauthorized immigration, stopping the smuggling of fentanyl and other illicit drugs, and reducing the influx of Chinese goods into the United States all depend heavily on policy toward Latin America. His stronger-than-expected electoral mandate (winning the popular vote plus control of both houses of Congress) coupled with a substantial increase in the flows of migrants and narcotics since he first occupied the White House mean that Trump will be even more emboldened than before to pressure Latin American governments to help achieve his goals. He will resort if necessary to punitive measures including tariffs, sanctions, and perhaps limited military action, such as drone strikes against Mexican cartels, to try to get his way.

Trump’s heightened interest in the region will be welcomed by fellow conservatives, such as Argentine President Javier Milei, Salvadoran President Nayib Bukele, and others at a time when the ideological right appears to be ascendant throughout much of Latin America. The appointment of U.S. Senator Marco Rubio as secretary of state, if confirmed by the Senate, would not only elevate a son of Cuban immigrants and fluent Spanish speaker but also make him probably the most well-traveled and -connected official on Latin American issues to serve at such a high level in Washington since Nelson Rockefeller was vice president under President Gerald Ford in the 1970s. Trump and Rubio’s approach could, over time, bring new and unexpected opportunities for economic integration and investment to Latin American countries the administration perceives as cooperative and friendly.

But especially in the short term, Trump’s policies toward the region are likely to be highly disruptive—and could risk pushing key Latin American countries further away from Washington rather than reversing the drift of recent years. Mexico faces the biggest challenges, including the possibility of severe damage to trade with the United States, the destination of more than 80 percent of its exports, unless it meets Trump’s demands to help secure the countries’ 2,000-mile shared border. Trump’s recent threats to implement a 25 percent tariff on Mexico upon taking office were only the start of a protracted and tense negotiation that no one should assume is a bluff. Indeed, Mexico is not alone. Other countries, stretching from Guatemala to Colombia, will also face tariffs or other sanctions unless they are seen to be halting the northward flow of migrants through the Darién Gap and other key transit points and taking back citizens swept up in Trump’s promised mass deportations. A second Trump administration will try to pressure Latin American governments including Brazil, Panama, and Peru to stop accepting Chinese investment for sensitive projects such as ports, electric grids, and 5G telecommunications networks. Many Republicans perceive these linkages, and the growing Chinese presence in Latin America more broadly, as unacceptable violations of the Monroe Doctrine, the 201-year-old edict that the Western Hemisphere should be free of interference from outside powers, an idea that has enjoyed a certain revival among Republicans in today’s era of heightened great-power competition.

Whether Trump’s policies toward the region result in a widespread backlash, a series of quiet accommodations, or an era of stronger U.S.-Latin American ties will depend on several factors. Some of them, such as the crises driving record migration in recent years from several countries across the region, will be largely beyond the president-elect’s control. The biggest question, some Republican officials say, is whether Trump comes to see Latin America as not just a source of the United States’ biggest problems but also a potential solution to them.

HEADING SOUTH

It is fair to note that many of the most dire prophecies about Trump’s first term in Latin America failed to come true. After Trump launched his 2016 presidential campaign by accusing Mexico of sending rapists to the United States, threatening to withdraw from the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), and promising to make Mexico pay for a new border wall, some predicted that he would take a hostile approach not just to Mexico but also to the entire region.

His policies proved to be more nuanced. Despite clear ideological differences between Trump and former Mexican President Andrés Manuel López Obrador, a leftist, the two leaders managed to forge a relationship that was transactional and ultimately respectful. As long as López Obrador cooperated on migration issues—by ordering Mexican troops to stop northward bound migrants before they reached the U.S. border, for example—Trump left Mexico alone to pursue its domestic agenda without interference or even much commentary. The two countries approved a new trade deal with Canada, known as the U.S.-Mexico-Canada Agreement (USMCA), that even some free-market advocates saw as an improvement on its predecessor NAFTA because of its enhanced protections for intellectual property and labor rights. Elsewhere, Trump established cordial relationships with several like-minded Latin American leaders, helping secure a $57 billion International Monetary Fund loan package—the largest in the history of the Washington-based lender—for his longtime friend President Mauricio Macri of Argentina. Most of Trump’s vitriol and ire was focused on the socialist dictatorships of Cuba, Venezuela, and Nicaragua, which he targeted with sanctions and other policies that enjoyed broad support elsewhere in the hemisphere at the time.

But the relatively benign outcomes of Trump’s first term in Latin America may now be breeding a certain complacency about his second. U.S.-Mexican ties were salvaged during his first term only after Mexican officials secured repeated last-minute interventions from sympathetic interlocutors in the White House, including Trump’s son-in-law Jared Kushner and his former chief of staff John Kelly, who helped convince the president not to unilaterally close the border or withdraw from NAFTA, according to accounts at the time. Those moderating voices may be absent or at least outnumbered in a second term, overshadowed by more hawkish officials such as incoming national security adviser Mike Waltz, a Florida congressman who introduced legislation in 2023 seeking to authorize U.S. military force against Mexican cartels. Waltz has said that the legislation would not include the deployment of U.S. troops on Mexican soil, but it would allow the use of drones, cyberwarfare, “intelligence assets [and] naval assets” to target organized crime groups. The incoming vice president, JD Vance, a Marine Corps veteran, also voiced support during the campaign for sending the U.S. military to “do battle with the Mexican drug cartels,” an idea that has become much more widely accepted in Republican circles since Trump’s first term.

There is no doubt that the issues of drug trafficking and migration along the border have become more urgent. Although overdose deaths in the United States fell slightly in 2023 to about 107,000 people, that number is still about 70 percent higher than when Trump first took office in 2017. About three-quarters of the fatalities were caused by fentanyl, which U.S. officials say comes mostly from Mexico. The number of unauthorized migrant crossings detected at the U.S.-Mexican border tripled under Biden’s watch, according to U.S. Customs and Border Protection data, although migration has sharply declined in recent months after Biden implemented more stringent controls before the November election. Meanwhile, bilateral trade has also evolved in a way not to Trump’s liking, with the United States running a record trade deficit with Mexico of $152 billion in 2023. Throughout his campaign, Trump described tariffs on Mexico not just as a tool to secure greater cooperation on migration but also as a necessary step to protect U.S. manufacturing, suggesting that he might implement duties of 100 percent or higher on Mexican-made vehicles.

Officials in both countries know that Trump is a dealmaker, and some believe the conduct of his presidency will ultimately be less harsh than his rhetoric. New tariffs on Mexico would damage the U.S. economy as well, given how deeply supply chains have become intertwined over the last 30 years, and they risk a resurgence of the inflation that drove many Americans to vote for Trump this year. Mexican President Claudia Sheinbaum, a protégé of López Obrador who took office in October, will likely be able to satisfy some of Trump’s demands, including receiving migrants from third-party countries as they await entry to the United States. Trump sounded pleased in public remarks regarding a large seizure of fentanyl by authorities in Mexico in early December, days after he made a particularly dramatic tariff threat.

Nevertheless, Mexican officials fear that difficult times are still ahead. Trump has repeatedly cast Mexico as a source of the United States’ biggest problems, and he often sounded during the 2024 campaign as if he believed a fundamental split between the countries would bring jobs back to the United States and other benefits for his working-class base. It’s also unclear whether Mexico has the resources or the political will to fully secure the vast border or to confront organized crime groups that have grown even more powerful in recent years and that by some estimates now control as much as one-third of Mexico’s territory. (Mexico’s government strongly rejects such estimates.) As fate would have it, the USMCA is set for a previously scheduled review by its three members in 2026. Some close to Trump say he never liked the deal in the first place, viewing it as a first-term concession to business interests, whose support will be less critical now that he is not seeking reelection. Mexico’s recent decisions to replace its judiciary through direct elections and move toward abolishing autonomous regulatory agencies may violate the USMCA’s terms, making it even easier for Trump to try to overhaul its provisions—or simply walk away.

TOUGHENING UP

Mexico certainly won’t be the only country facing intensified pressure. During Trump’s first term, migrants came largely from Mexico and the so-called Northern Triangle countries of El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras. More recently, the profile has been much more diverse, with record outflows from Cuba, Haiti, and Venezuela, as well as from Ecuador, Peru, and other countries in the region struggling with organized crime and economic stagnation. Just as many Latin American officials complained in recent decades about a narcotización of their relationships with the United States, as narcotics dominated all other subjects, regional ties may see a migratización in coming years, with tariffs and other punishments doled out to governments perceived as failing to stop the flow of migrants northward.

The leftist dictatorships in Cuba, Nicaragua, and Venezuela will also receive tougher treatment, although it’s unclear how much attention Trump will devote to them. During his first term, Trump adopted a “maximum pressure” strategy of sanctions against Venezuela and its dictator Nicolás Maduro, recognizing the opposition figure Juan Guaidó as the country’s legitimate president—a decision supported by numerous other Latin American governments, as well as by Canada and the European Union. The strategy ultimately failed to dislodge Maduro, however, and sanctions only deepened Venezuela’s economic crisis, contributing to an even greater exodus of Venezuelan migrants to the United States and elsewhere in the region. The Biden administration tried negotiating with Maduro’s regime, only to see it resort to massive fraud in July presidential elections and lock up yet another round of political opponents. Trump will almost certainly return to a more adversarial approach toward all three dictatorships, which are particularly important causes for Rubio and others among Trump’s Florida-heavy team of advisers. Yet there appears to be a split between those who believe the regimes are “weak and teetering,” as Florida Representative Mario Díaz-Balart recently contended, and other Republicans who, burned by the experience of Trump’s first term, argue that major new sanctions and other pressure tactics would stand little chance of restoring democracy and risk unleashing yet another large wave of outward migration.

Indeed, Trump and his team may save their energy for what they see as the larger threat: China. Latin America’s trade with China has exploded from $18 billion in 2002 to $480 billion in 2023, and Beijing has increasingly become a key investor in infrastructure projects including ports, public transportation, and electric grids. No one on Trump’s team believes the new administration can convince Latin American countries to turn their backs on Beijing entirely, but officials do plan to be more aggressive in trying to keep the Chinese away from the most sensitive civilian and military assets in the region, which they see as a matter of national security.

For example, Trump’s former top Latin America aide, Mauricio Claver-Carone, recently proposed applying a 60 percent tariff on any imports to the United States that have passed through Peru’s massive new port of Chancay, which was built by China at a cost of $1.3 billion. Claver-Carone called his proposal a “shot across the bow” meant to deter any country in Latin America from accepting Chinese investment in critical infrastructure. Trump officials have also deemed Huawei, the Chinese telecommunications provider, and Chinese companies that produce electric vehicles in Mexico to be strategic threats. It’s unclear how governments around the region will react to such pressure, since ties with China often have little to do with ideology—even Milei, the first foreign leader to meet with Trump after his election, is reportedly now considering a visit to Beijing in early 2025. Attempts at pressure could backfire and convince some countries, including Brazil and Colombia, to deepen their ties with Beijing and other nonaligned groups such as BRICS, the partnership whose first members were Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa.

THE CHINA FACTOR

Perhaps ironically, some Trump backers believe that the United States’ competition with China may ultimately be what compels the president-elect to pursue a more constructive relationship with Latin America. If Trump is truly intent on reducing Chinese imports, the theory goes, he may see allied countries in the Western Hemisphere as alternative sources of cheap labor that would help strengthen the U.S. supply chain. The growth of near-shoring, which accelerated under the Biden administration, could also boost the economies of the region—and, over time, give potential migrants a reason to stay home. In a July essay for Americas Quarterly, Claver-Carone cited “the inextricable link between U.S. national security and mutual economic growth” in the hemisphere and proposed using the Development Finance Corporation and other U.S. agencies to finance investments and “Make the Americas Grow Again.”

It is unclear whether Trump, once in office, will come to see Latin America as more of an opportunity than a threat. But such integration-minded proposals and other parts of the Trump agenda would win considerable support in a region eager for economic growth and greater engagement with Washington. Even Trump’s immigration and deportation policies may find sympathy at a time when the likes of Argentina, Chile, and Costa Rica have themselves struggled to accommodate rising migration from poorer countries. Widespread frustration over organized crime throughout the hemisphere, as well as social changes such as the spread of evangelical Christianity, mean that right-wing leaders may be favored to win upcoming elections in Chile in 2025 and Brazil and Colombia in 2026. It is entirely possible to imagine Trump working with a broad array of like-minded governments in the region to address security and other shared challenges.

But others sound a note of caution. The stagnation that has supposedly plagued U.S. ties with Latin America in recent years may have had less to do with a lack of bandwidth or ambition in Washington than some believe. Competing with China, for example, has been exceedingly difficult now that, for the first time since World War II, both political parties in Washington fundamentally do not believe in the benefits of free trade. Unlike China, the United States cannot order its companies to do business in Latin America and expect them to wait years for a profit—or simply to invest for geopolitical reasons. The past 30 years of U.S.-Latin American relations, seen in a different light, can be interpreted as an unglamorous but methodical construction of trade and other ties that have supported mutual economic growth, favored the strengthening of democracies, helped address challenges such as climate change, and promoted more equal relationships in the wake of the Cold War. Whether “benign neglect” will be replaced with something better during Trump’s second presidency remains to be seen.

### Engagement Key---ANVISA

**US-Brazil Co-op needed to save ANVISA. ANVISA key to global health supply chains**

**Abranches 24**  [Leonardo Abranches is a Senior In-Country Advisor and a member of the Brazil-U.S. Business Council who works for U.S. Chamber of Commerce, “Strengthening ANVISA: A Pivotal Moment for U.S.-Brazil Cooperation”, U.S Chamber of Commerce, 12/09/24, https://www.uschamber.com/international/strengthening-anvisa-a-pivotal-moment-for-u-s-brazil-cooperation, Richter]

As Latin America’s largest economy, Brazil is a key player in the global healthcare market. At the heart of its regulatory framework is ANVISA, Brazil’s Health Regulatory Agency that has safeguarded the safety and efficacy of essential products, including pharmaceuticals, vaccines, and medical devices, for over two decades. Now, faced with a critical staffing crisis, ANVISA's ability to maintain its high standards, and its reputation as a global reference national regulatory authority ensuring the safety, efficacy, and quality of regulated health products that can support millions of patients in the country is under threat, with repercussions that extend far beyond Brazil’s borders.

Addressing this challenge is crucial for businesses from all countries invested in Brazil’s health sector and global supply chains. The U.S. Chamber of Commerce’s Brazil-U.S. Business Council recognizes ANVISA’s crucial role and stands ready to support the agency through advocacy, promoting regulatory convergence between the U.S. and Brazil, and facilitating public-private partnerships to strengthen its capacity and effectiveness.

The Silent Backbone of a Global Health Network

ANVISA is no ordinary regulator. Overseeing over 20% of Brazil’s GDP, the agency is responsible for industries that touch nearly every aspect of daily life—pharmaceuticals, medical devices, food, cosmetics, and more. ANVISA’s regulations ensure that products entering the market meet stringent safety and efficacy standards, providing a crucial line of defense for public health in Brazil. ANVISA’s importance stretches beyond Brazil: it is a trusted partner of the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (USFDA) and a leader in regulatory alignment across the Americas and at the global level. This leadership and partnership with the USFDA has enabled faster, more effective and efficient product approvals in Brazil and a more resilient Brazilian and global health supply chain.

However, ANVISA is facing a critical challenge. By the end of 2024, approximately 500 ANVISA employees, nearly 25% of its current workforce, are expected to begin retiring due to retirements with only 50 replacements authorized. For an organization already operating below optimal staffing levels, this reduction is expected to create bottlenecks in critical areas such as product approvals, inspections, and border control. With 1,604 current civil-service employees complemented with 400 support staff, but with a need for at least 1,250 additional staff, ANVISA’s ability to fulfill its mandate is at risk. This concern affects first and foremost Brazilian patients and the Brazilian health system, but also the Brazilian health industrial complex and global health product supply chain that rely on effective and timely regulatory processes to remain competitive. Efficient regulatory systems are essential not only for ensuring timely access to products but also for bolstering Brazil’s position as an attractive destination for investment including research, development and production. ANVISA’s effectiveness directly influences Brazil’s capacity to grow sectors like biotechnology, pharmaceuticals, and medical technology. A delay in regulatory approvals could slow innovation, affect job creation, delay access to life saving products, and undermine Brazil’s broader economic growth ambitions.

The Stakes for Brazil’s Role in Competitive Global Health Product Supply Chains

ANVISA’s effectiveness and efficiency are a critical foundation to a competitive Brazilian health industrial complex that delivers for patients and the healthcare manufacturing base that works with and in Brazil. Brazil is also a key healthcare trading partner for the U.S., with billions of dollars in medical products exchanged each year.

Brazil’s production capacity offers resilience in the face of global supply chain disruptions. But for this potential to be fully realized, ANVISA must be equipped to handle the growing demand for regulatory oversight. If the agency falters, it could create bottlenecks leading to delays in the supply of essential products like life-saving medications and medical devices, which would have global consequences outside of Brazil, such as shortages in broader Latin America, Africa, Southeast Asia, the U.S. and Europe.

Turning Crisis into Opportunity: Deepening U.S.-Brazil Regulatory Cooperation

While the challenges facing ANVISA are serious, they present a unique opportunity to deepen regulatory cooperation between the U.S. and Brazil. Over the years, ANVISA and the USFDA have built a solid foundation for collaboration, sharing best practices and aligning on critical regulatory issues. Expanding this cooperation could help ANVISA manage its current staffing crisis while laying the groundwork for long-term improvements in regulatory efficiency.

One potential area of opportunity is leveraging existing frameworks like the Agreement on Trade and Economic Cooperation (ATEC) between the U.S. and Brazil. By expanding this agreement to include more specific provisions for healthcare product regulation, both countries can benefit from smoother, faster processes for regulatory approval and product flow. Technical cooperation between ANVISA and the FDA, including staff exchanges and training programs, could also help bridge the skills gap that will inevitably arise as senior staff retire.

### Engagement Key---AI

**US and Brazil Co-op key to AI development**

**Giambertoni & Rueda 25**  [Marzia Giambertoni is a policy analyst at RAND. Giambertoni served as a U.S. Security Assistance Director’s Fellow for the Center for Human Rights & Humanitarian Studies at the Watson Institute. She also worked as a Program Analyst at the U.S. Naval War College and as a Research Assistant for the Middle East Institute, focusing on Iran. Ismael Arciniegas Rueda is senior economist at RAND and a professor of policy analysis at the RAND School of Public Policy. Arciniegas has held leadership positions at major energy companies such as AES, PSEG, Constellation and TransAlta, “Digital Dams: How U.S.-Brazil AI Cooperation Could Help America's AI Ambitions Flow”, RAND, 4/22/25, https://www.rand.org/pubs/commentary/2025/04/digital-dams-how-us-brazil-ai-cooperation-could-help.html, Richter]

The United States' strategic imperative to excel in artificial intelligence (AI) runs headlong into a critical constraint hiding in plain sight—electricity. The answer might be similarly visible some 3,000 miles south in the bountiful hydroelectric plants of Brazil.

As Microsoft, Google, and other tech giants build massive AI data centers nationwide, America's aging power grid groans at a potentially overwhelming increase in demand. Meanwhile, Brazil has quietly positioned itself as an AI-ready nation powered by clean energy—with 93.6 percent renewable electricity generation and partnerships already forming with American companies and the Chinese government. Good hydrology has recently allowed Brazil to export energy surpluses to neighboring Argentina and Uruguay, demonstrating its regional energy leadership. The United States could face a choice between advancing U.S.-Brazil AI cooperation and risking the loss of influence in a region increasingly courted by global technology powers. Currently, Brazil is listed as a Tier 2 country under the U.S. AI Diffusion framework, which means it can only receive chips under certain conditions.

“Brazil has quietly positioned itself as an AI-ready nation powered by clean energy—with 93.6 percent renewable electricity generation and partnerships already forming with American companies and the Chinese government.”

Brazil's advantages for AI infrastructure are compelling. The country possesses nearly one-fifth of the world's water reserves, critical for both hydropower generation (accounting for 80 percent of its electricity) and cooling the server farms that power AI systems. This renewable energy advantage has already attracted significant investment: Microsoft recently committed $2.4 billion for cloud and AI infrastructure in Brazil, while Amazon Web Services is investing $1.8 billion through 2034.

Domestically, Brasilia is investing $3.8 billion through 2028 in AI initiatives spanning education, Amazon deforestation monitoring, and Portuguese language models. But Brazil isn't putting all its eggs in the American basket—at the 2024 G20 Summit, it signed thirty-seven memorandums of understanding with China, including a joint AI laboratory agreement, and is pursuing semiconductor partnerships that could reshape Western hemispheric technology dynamics.

The contrast between Brazil's energy outlook and growing U.S. power constraints couldn't be starker. While Brazil ranks twelfth globally in the Energy Transition Index, large parts of the U.S. power grid present reliability constraints and blackout risks over the next several years despite a potential reopening of coal plants. The situation has pushed tech giants toward creative but costly solutions—Microsoft signed agreements to restart Pennsylvania's Three Mile Island nuclear plant, and Google partnered with Kairos to construct new nuclear reactors. Brazil's abundant renewable energy offers an alternative that aligns with tech companies' climate commitments while relieving pressure on the strained U.S. grid.

An Opening for U.S.-Brazil AI Cooperation

As the United States develops its global AI diplomatic strategy, Brazil must be included alongside other emerging technology powers like Saudi Arabia. First, establishing a bilateral AI innovation hub modeled after Brazilian company Scala's “AI City” could create a space where American enterprises can offer advanced semiconductor technology in return for Brazilian renewable energy. Second, perhaps most critically, the United States should elevate official diplomatic engagement on AI to match China's. Brazil, as a Major Non-NATO Ally, deserves more attention than the primarily private-sector partnerships that characterize current U.S. engagement. Such an initiative would require coordinating policy across the Departments of State, Commerce, and Energy but could yield outsized returns.

“If the United States successfully engages with Brazil, U.S. companies will gain access to sustainable computing infrastructure at a time when domestic power constraints threaten innovation timelines.”

The strategic calculus for U.S.-Brazil AI cooperation offers clear advantages and risks. If the United States successfully engages with Brazil, U.S. companies will gain access to sustainable computing infrastructure at a time when domestic power constraints threaten innovation timelines. Hyperscalers are already seeking “atypical locations” for data centers due to power availability issues. Brazil's position as Latin America's premier innovator makes it a natural regional partner for technological advancement. Conversely, if the United States fails to engage, it risks ceding more influence to China in its own hemisphere, potentially complicating supply chains and creating security concerns as Brazil deepens its semiconductor and AI partnerships with Beijing.

### Engagement Key---BRICS

#### America needs to invest in Brazil now---Lula’s okay with it, and it’s the only way to solve a BRICS takeover.

Magnotta 25 [Fernanda Magnotta, Magnotta is a Global Fellow at the Wilson Center Brazil Institute, a Senior Fellow at the Brazilian Center for International Relations, "Trump and Lula Think Differently. Will They Find Common Ground?," Americas Quarterly, 1-22-2025, https://www.americasquarterly.org/article/trump-and-lula-think-differently-will-they-find-common-ground/, accessed on 4-17-2025, GMU AE]

SÃO PAULO—Though their ideologies are a world apart, U.S. President Donald Trump and Brazilian President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva will now be forced to interact, as the respective leaders of the two largest economies in the Western Hemisphere. And even though Trump and Lula have very different stances on geopolitics and much else, pragmatism could push both to find ways to make the bilateral relationship at least functional, though likely with significant tensions and limitations.

Undoubtedly, the global ambitions of the expanding BRICS bloc of countries, China’s growing influence in Latin America, the approaches to the multilateral institutions and climate change will be central in defining the rapport between the two leaders. And Trump and Lula have mostly different vantage points on these matters. Lula sees himself as an eminent voice in the Global South and a beacon of multipolarity, while Trump covets a world where the U.S. plays the ultimate leading role.

As Lula has been adamant about expanding BRICS, its bank and global financial reach, Trump has warned against plans to de-dollarize the world. “The idea that the BRICS Countries are trying to move away from the Dollar while we stand by and watch is OVER,” Trump posted on X, weeks after winning the November election. He immediately added that “there is no chance that the BRICS will replace the U.S. Dollar in International Trade, and any Country that tries should wave goodbye to America.”

But Trump and Lula may align on favoring a quicker negotiated end to the war in Ukraine. And in any case it is facts that will most likely guide the relations between the two countries in this new era. The U.S. is Brazil’s second biggest trading partner after China, and their ties have grown steadily. Just last year, Brazil’s exports to the U.S. exceeded $40 billion, a historic level.

No wonder Lula has avoided confrontation so far. While he didn’t call Trump personally to congratulate him on his victory, Lula used social media to set the tone of their expected relationship. “The world needs dialogue and joint work to have more peace, development, and prosperity. I wish the new government luck and success.”

But the prominent role of Elon Musk, a frequent critic of Brazil’s Supreme Court and Lula’s PT party, in the new Trump administration has drawn worries in Brazilian policy circles. With Trump back at the helm, the U.S.-Brazil relationship must find new convergence points—a difficult but feasible task.

### Engagement Key---Laundry List

#### Advocate that also shows what the advantages would look like, says to increase economic engagement.

Chivvis et al., 23 (Taken from a Q&A session between Chris Chivvis, the director of the American Statecraft Program at the Carnegie Endowment, and Margaret Myers, director of the Asia & Latin America Program at the Inter-American Dialogue, and Matias Spektor, professor and associate dean at the Fundação Getulio Vargas’s School of International Relations, 8/24, “Why Brazil’s Relationship With the United States Isn’t Taking Off”, <https://carnegieendowment.org/2023/08/24/why-brazil-s-relationship-with-united-states-isn-t-taking-off-pub-90432>) AJW

Chris Chivvis: Why does Brazil matter to the United States?

Matias Spektor: Historically, Brazil has been very cooperative with the United States, yet this is a relationship that never really took off—even when the two sides have a lot of interests in common and they share a similar view of what’s going on. For example, for the first time in many years, the [Joe] Biden administration and the administration of [Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva] have a common read of what’s happening in Venezuela, yet even then they find it very hard to cooperate. Brazil matters because when Brazil moves in the region, it affects America’s interests in the one part of the world where the United States is unrivaled.

All the geopolitical changes are beginning to unsettle this—in particular, Chinese influence in the Americas. China has been investing big time in Latin America for twenty years, not least because the United States invited China twenty years ago to invest big time in Latin America.

There’s another side to this—why Brazil matters moving forward—and these are two very important things that people in Washington normally don’t talk about. The first one is that in the next twenty years, Brazil is going to be a major, major player with the United States in providing food to the rest of the world. And in the context of the geopolitical changes we are seeing, these will make Brazil matter all the more.

The second one is that Brazil is now becoming a big player in the oil field. Brazil was never a significant oil exporter, but it’s becoming one. And although this was never the case before and therefore there’s no track record of U.S.-Brazil cooperation on the oil front, this is something that will impose itself in coming years.

Then there is the issue of climate change. Brazil is a major driver of deforestation, and this is not something Brazil can deal with on its own, partly because it needs money to compensate those losers if deforestation were to come to an end. But [also] partly because there’s so much political interest at the local level in Brazil for deforestation that Brazil will need international cooperation big time to turn the tide.

There’s another element to this: deforestation in Brazil is linked to the global supply chain of cocaine and other drugs and is related to transnational crime. So the issue of climate change in Brazil intersects with transnational crime, which is one of the biggest items in America’s relationship with Latin America.

And finally, Brazil matters for procedural reasons, because [the United States] needs Brazil’s cooperation if it wants to get things done in the UN General Assembly or in the World Trade Organization. For example, NATO operations in the South Atlantic require procedural cooperation with Brazil. Brazil is very, very weak internationally, but it can make things more difficult.

Chris Chivvis: How should the United States approach Brazil’s deepening relationship with China?

Margaret Myers: We’ve seen attempts by two administrations now—especially the [Donald] Trump administration—to try to dissuade Brazil from engaging with China in various areas, especially those of security concern to the United States, [such as] 5G and Huawei. It resonated to a degree with the [Jair] Bolsonaro administration, and there were some efforts to consider purchasing other equipment—at least by the government or by certain parts of the Brazilian military. But Lula made it very clear during his visit to China that collaboration was very much on the table. These attempts [at dissuasion] just haven’t made a dent. And it’s not just in Brazil—it’s across the entire region. . . .

That said, there are areas where Brazil and the United States can cooperate in policy setting, agenda setting, nuclear policy, space policy—areas of interest to Brazil where [Washington] or may not align with China. It’s a matter of thinking about this a little bit more strategically and understanding really what would appeal to Brazil.

Chris Chivvis: How should U.S. policymakers understand this apparently open-ended relationship between Brazil and China? Is it really open-ended or are there natural limits, as Margaret was just suggesting?

Matias Spektor: I think Margaret is spot on.

First of all, Brazil is increasingly dependent on China, and China is increasingly dependent on commodities coming from Brazil, and China is very exposed to Brazil. For example, [at least 12 percent] of energy distribution is now owned by Chinese capital in Brazil. But the relationship is not an easy one.

China treats Brazil in a manner that is very top down. Meetings at the BRICS are very scripted. Brazil finds itself having very little room to maneuver with China. Brazil can have a far more flexible set of conversations with the United States than it can with Beijing. Beijing has a very set view of where Brazil fits in the global pecking order, and it’s not at the top of that pecking order, and it’s not at the top of Beijing’s regional pecking order in Latin America. Beijing has far closer ties with other countries in the region, even if Brazil is the biggest [country].

There’s another set of constraints, and I think it’s very important for U.S. policymakers to understand this because it shapes the way any Brazilian leader is bound to deal with China. In the past twenty years, there’s been the birth of pro-China constituency groups [in Brazil]. . . . Brazilian leaders increasingly have their hands tied simply because China is such an important economic magnet, and breaking that is going to be really tricky.

Now, if you think the future of U.S.-China relations is relatively peaceful, these constraints needn’t be a problem. Brazil will become more enmeshed, more interdependent with China. Lots of Brazilian interest groups will derive their bread and butter from trade with China and Chinese finance, and we won’t see a problem.

This is exactly what the [Bill] Clinton administration had in mind. Then, subsequent administrations encouraged China to come to Latin America to join the Inter-American Development Bank, for example, because it was a useful way to have excess capital coming from China fill a void that the United States was not willing or able to fill itself.

The problem is that if we think that the future of U.S.-China relations is going to be more conflictual, then we’re in deep trouble. Then, the United States will have a big incentive to try to push and shove countries in Latin America—and Brazil in particular—to sever ties with China. They won’t be able to do it, because domestically this will be politically impossible, and the United States will have very little choice but to play regional hegemony and lay down the law.

Chris Chivvis: [The environment is] a very complicated domestic political and economic problem for Brazil. What are the things that the United States could really do in order to help reduce or even halt deforestation of the rainforest?

Margaret Myers: I think there is a sense within the United States right now that more does in fact need to be done, and a realization that the $500 million commitment to the Amazon Fund really did fall short of what Brazil would’ve hoped for. Especially when you look at the numbers that China tends to throw around—which are quite large, [though] they don’t always come to pass. The Biden administration is now looking to increase this amount by mobilizing something in the neighborhood of $1 billion to support land restoration. So if that materializes, it will hopefully make more of a difference for the Amazon and for the bilateral relationship.

But the tools that the United States has at its disposal right now are limited, and they’re not quick. And this is something that applies to the whole of Latin America, as countries look for assistance from the United States and to engage with the United States. There is interest in diversifying partnerships. But if the finance isn’t there, if it isn’t there in the right amount, then that ends up being problematic. So I would say that there are some restrictions on our toolkit that will make more engagement, including in the climate space, a little bit difficult.

Chris Chivvis: How does it look from a domestic political economy perspective in Brazil?

Matias Spektor: Brazil’s deforestation problem and climate problem in general is gargantuan, partly because so many millions of people depend on carbon emissions for their living. Land use is the major driver of carbon emissions in Brazil. So transitioning to anything different is going to cost tens of billions of dollars. And within that, there’s very little the United States can do—no amount of money will be sufficient compared to what Brazil needs. So I would bet that the future of the U.S.-Brazil relationship should center around that, but there’s an opportunity now.

Brazil is about to unveil its own Inflation Reduction Act. It’s basically subsidies and industrial policy to facilitate a transition to a lower carbon economy. The task to get that to work without major corruption scandals or major inefficiencies is going to be enormous. There is a real opportunity for collaboration between the two countries—in particular, the private sectors.

The other area where there’s room for collaboration—but a lot of danger—is on the issue of climate-related organized crime. One of the problems Brazil faces in the Amazon in particular is that organized crime is behind cattle laundering, illegal logging, and illegal mining. When the Lula administration took office, the minister of the environment found out the Amazon region had [at least 1,200] illegal airstrips. And the problem with illegal airstrips in a landmass the size of Europe is that if you bomb them from the air with support from the federal police, they get rebuilt within three or four days.

Now, no talk of America cooperating militarily or even police cooperation in Brazil will fly. Brazilian elites are terrified of an American military presence in South America. But what can fly is cooperation to help Brazil deal with the end of the illegal trade cycle, which is trade through the Atlantic going into Africa and then to Europe, where the consumer markets are for drugs, illegal logging, illegal mining, and so on. Intelligence cooperation, military-to-military cooperation outside the Amazon—I think that would be an opportunity. But as Margaret said, America’s ability to support Brazil in this is going to be limited.

Chris Chivvis: How do you see the similarities and differences between Brazilian strategic thinking and the other emerging powers in the BRICS?

Matias Spektor: Let me take two: India and Indonesia. These countries are in many respects parallel to Brazil, and Brazil has had increasingly positive and closer ties with these countries. They see themselves as coming from a postcolonial experience and are moving up the ranks in the world.

So what can we say about the comparisons? This is really tricky. India is in an enviable position from Brazil’s standpoint because India can trade support with the United States in ways that Brazil cannot. India matters geopolitically in the context of counterbalancing China. And India is making a buck out of this, mostly through military cooperation and purchases, [as well as] a phenomenal diaspora that is highly educated and well-employed in the United States. Brazil doesn’t have any of this, so we cannot really compare what’s happening in the ties between Washington and New Delhi to Washington and Brasília. Brazil is much weaker.

Then take Indonesia. Indonesia too is a country whose foreign policy resembles Brazil’s a lot. When you listen to diplomats from Indonesia talk, it sounds like a Brazilian is talking. Joko Widodo, the president, is the only man I believe in the last few months to have met the presidents of the United States, Russia, and Ukraine. This is a man who sees himself as trying to hedge his bets and not take sides and benefit from the existing competition. But Indonesia is in a part of the world that China claims as its own regional hegemony. So the differences are enormous.

Stewart Patrick from Carnegie had a [recent] piece arguing that we shouldn’t really call the Global South “the Global South.” This is a very diverse set of countries, but there is something that unites them. And what unites them is a common experience of being at the bottom end of a global hierarchy. These are countries that have an experience with colonialism, economic injustice, and racial injustice, and these provide a common ground.

Does this mean they produce a common platform and they are united in multilateral fora? No. But they’re united in the belief that unipolarity is not good for them. So defending the global liberal international order is not going to fly with them because they see advantage in having not only a strong China but also a strong Russia.

Chris Chivvis: How might the United States counter Chinese influence in Brazil in a way that is smart and sophisticated?

Margaret Myers: I think there are a few things that can be done. First of all, I’m a big proponent of greater economic engagement with the region generally, given long-standing feelings among Latin American leaders that the region has been abandoned by the United States.

Chris Chivvis: What are you thinking about in particular?

Margaret Myers: We’re at a bit of an impasse with [trade], but certainly economic assistance in various forms, and also investment, especially in the case of Brazil.

As the United States looks to secure supply chains, which have been a big part of an effort to reduce reliance on China and to reorient production toward the region, it’s my view that Brazil can and should play a role in this process, especially in the production of higher value-added products. The United States right now is a major contributor to value-added production across the region. This is not something that we talk about enough, and we should engage with Brazil on these terms.

The problem is this idea of “friendshoring,” right? Creating opportunities for countries with demonstrated commitments to U.S. interests. But Brazil has a mixed record there. Friendshoring is necessarily exclusive by nature, so maybe we ought to think about this as “making friends-shoring” or something of that nature. It strikes me that the administration would seem to be taking this to heart—at least to some degree, having just talked about a jobs initiative with Brazil, which could be great depending on its scale.

I think also another thing that needs to be done—and is being done to a certain degree—is bringing Brazil into the fold. As in this recent G7 meeting, acknowledging its prominence on the global stage and in global agenda-setting. This is a critical component to maintaining fruitful bilateral ties and to ensuring at least some alignment on issues of global interest, even though there is this profound commitment to avoiding an overreliance on one single partner or on the United States in general.

[A third step] is maintaining and strengthening the many existing mechanisms for bilateral cooperation. In some of these, ideally, there may be a degree of policy coordination that can be achieved that would be beneficial, as the United States looks to compete in broader terms with China, not just in Brazil but globally.

#### Democracy, economic development, climate change, and crime all provide areas of engagement and cooperation for the US in the area of Brazil

Jones et al., 23 (Bruce, Senior Fellow - Foreign Policy, Center for Asia Policy Studies, Strobe Talbott Center for Security, Strategy, and Technology, Sophia Hart, Senior Research Assistant - Strobe Talbott Center for Security, Strategy, and Technology, and Diana Paz Garcia, Research Assistant - Strobe Talbott Center for Security, Strategy, and Technology) AJW

Of democracy…

It is not only global dynamics to which U.S.-Brazil relations need to adapt. There are also important internal democratic and economic changes that are shaping each country’s politics, and their relationship.

The United States and Brazil are not the regions’ only democracies. Nor are their democracies the most eroded by recent populist politics (an ‘honor’ that surely goes to Mexico under Andrés Manuel López Obrador.8) But as two of the world’s top five most populous democracies, the health of constitutionalism in Washington and rule of law in Washington and Brasília matters a great deal — to each, to the region, and to the overall stability of democracy in the world.

It is intrinsic to representative democracy that the overwhelming weight of significant political or policy change must come from within. Still, as we’ve already seen, U.S. support to Brazilian institutions can help — U.S. actors played an important role in limiting efforts within Brazil to erode those same institutions and helped secure a free and fair electoral result.9 Despite some recent efforts to portray that as an effort to interfere, it is evident that the focus of U.S. efforts was to prevent internal Brazilian forces from manipulating, cheating, or defying the results, as opposed to putting the thumb on the scales in one direction or another.10

The United States is not without its own democratic backsliding challenges and anti-democratic actors in both countries not only remain active but also have been known to collaborate across borders. A more regularized bilateral arrangement — exchange of lessons learned, sharing of good practices, and capacity building where needed — would help build trust and then could be extended to other areas of democracy, human rights, and rule of law. Such exchanges should extend beyond the executive branch. An effort to build relations between U.S. and Brazilian parliamentarians, for example, could help build confidence between governments.11 It would be a way, too, to acknowledge that the immediate crisis of January 8 may have passed, but the challenges endure, just as they do in the United States.12

The need is perhaps greatest — but also the opportunity strongest — in response to disinformation, arguably the most virulent threat to healthy democratic discourse and free elections.13 There is ample scope for knowledge sharing between researchers, technology companies, and government officials. Cooperation among civil society institutions could help develop robust responses, tailored to the specific needs of each country.

There is also an essential need in both countries to strengthen and protect judicial independence and judicial oversight of electoral processes. The U.S. Department of Justice investigation and prosecution of those responsible for attempts to negate the November 2020 election and otherwise erode the rule of law, although unfinished, is encouraging. U.S. judicial and law enforcement actors should pay close attention to Brazil’s swifter and more decisive efforts in this regard — for example, in their swift move to bar Jair Bolsonaro from running for re-election.14 Brazil’s authority to bar violators of electoral rules from running for office is particularly noteworthy.15 In both cases, adjudicating disputes around electoral and constitutional issues in the courts, both to defend the constitution and to legitimize the judiciary system, will help each country address systemic disillusionment with democracy and support for authoritarianism. Although there is some risk of politicization of the judiciary, legal avenues, if properly handled, are certainly preferred over the insurrection-style violence that have occurred in both countries.16

Neither country can isolate the challenge to democracy they are each facing from deep economic strains.

At the same time, neither country can isolate the challenge to democracy they are each facing from deep economic strains. Brazil’s democratic challenge comes in a context of per capita income that is roughly 20% of American per capita income (as measured in PPP dollars).17 The disparity in income levels, however, may overstate the differences between the two countries’ internal dynamics. While per capita income has been growing (slowly) for U.S. workers, working class wages were largely stagnant until very recently, and inequality was at its highest level in decades prior to some (probably temporary) relief from huge government transfers during Covid. Moreover, average life expectancy for Americans has been declining.18 These phenomena are closely linked to populist sentiment and political dissatisfaction.

Still, the United States has sustained per capita GDP growth since the global financial crash, while Brazil has not.19 For Brazil, the salient fact is its own variant of the “middle income trap”20 — but in this case, not just static growth but rather year on year decline of per capita income for over a decade (after more than a decade of robust growth, much of it fueled by spiking commodity prices, in turn fueled by Chinese resource consumption).21 It is unlikely that Brazil can move much beyond the current democratic challenge without simultaneously improving the living standards of most Brazilians. In this sense, democratic protection and economic development are closely inter-woven.

… AND DEVELOPMENT

In short, Brazilian economists and development scholars seem to agree that Brazil needs a new national development strategy to reflect current realities. A central area of uncertainty in U.S.-Brazil relations in this new era will lie in the impact of the American shift away from the “Washington Consensus” of neo-liberal economics towards a semi-protectionist industrial strategy.22

There’s an irony here. Brazilians have long critiqued the Washington Consensus — and the shift towards a wider set of government interventions (there have always been several, of course), so-called “home-shoring” or “friend-shoring” measures, and industrial strategy in the technology sector, will push Washington ideologically closer to a Latin American and even Brazilian perspective on the role of the state in economics. (Indeed, there are useful lessons that the United States could learn from Brazil’s innovations — started under Lula, continued under Rousseff — to develop mechanisms inside the president’s core planning team to target defense expenditure in ways that helped produce local economic and social benefits.) But whether Washington’s version of this approach will benefit Brazil remains to be seen. Much depends on how far the United States goes towards protecting U.S.-based industry, and whether Brazil can fall inside the friend-shoring arrangements. The success of recently agreed joint ventures between two defense giants, America’s Boeing and Brazil’s Embraer, and of the U.S.-Brazil Defense Industry Dialogue, may do much to shape the question of how Brazil fares in America’s new re-globalization efforts. That Washington (and to a lesser extent the rest of the West) is committed to re-globalization (or “de-risking”, to use the latest term of art) is a reality that Brazil will have to incorporate into its development strategy more fully. But it also creates opportunities.

Across development strategy options, education and capacity building are key for Brazil. To grow and develop, Brazil needs to invest substantially in infrastructure, both digital and physical, and in regional integration (as does the United States). But all of that ultimately relies on a workforce able to take advantage of new digital connectivity. That means “up-skilling,” re-training, and education designed to help workers get jobs, contribute to sub-regional development, and boost productivity.

Here, the United States has much to offer. For all the current challenges faced by the American polity, it still has a large reservoir of human capital capacity, embedded in higher education institutions, nongovernmental organizations, and corporations, across virtually every domain of learning, industry, technology, and society. Brazil has begun investing in important capacity-building programs, including educational exchanges, but much more could be done here. Even with a fraction of the investment that the United States has put into educational and scientific exchange programs with the Quad nations, the United States could do a lot to build on exchanges started under the Obama administration, and significantly boost Brazil’s capacity-building and educational efforts. Although the United States has a particular comparative advantage at the level of tertiary education and high technology, there is also ample scope for support and collaboration at the level of primary and secondary education.23

There’s nothing new in saying Brazil needs an effective development strategy, or in there being windows of opportunity for both U.S. private sector investment and public sector assistance. But the context has changed. The core of that is a strong, bipartisan (if still inchoate) desire from the United States, still the world’s most powerful market, to re-tool some key features of globalization away from excess reliance on Chinese manufacturing and trade. The shape of that is still to be defined. Brazil has an opportunity to help the United States diversify its supply and move up the value chain in so doing.

Both these points — the opportunity for collaboration in education and training, and the opportunity to profit from a push towards re-globalization — come together in a critical area of past tension and potential future collaboration: climate change and the green economy.

Of climate change…

A crucial area where the changing context creates new opportunities for Brazil lies in green technology. Here too, there’s a new context. The notion that the world is in, or at the very least rapidly heading to a climate emergency is one that has begun to penetrate Western discourse and even policy. While the United States is still home to some of the most important recalcitrant actors in climate politics, there’s wide public support for climate action now. The passage of the Inflation Reduction Act (in real terms, a climate and infrastructure bill) will drive a scale of U.S. spending that will begin to reshape American and global markets.24 Across much of the rest of the world, a deeper acceptance of the reality of climate change is shaping — though not yet driving — industrial policy. An ironic outcome of the Ukraine war is a faster-than-expected transition in Europe away from natural gas25, which should spur still-greater expansion of industries like electrical car production. Climate change is no longer a niche topic; it’s a central plank of most countries’ national strategy. And there-in lies a major opportunity for Brazil — one of the world’s real leaders in green energy production and consumption.

Brazil is already a powerhouse in clean energy production.26 With growing global demand for green energy technology and products, and the current state of Chinese dominance in some of those lines of technology, there’s ample scope for new providers to move up the value chain. Outside financing will help, and even more so, support for technology transfer and development in certain parts of the global supply chain. As the economist Monica de Bolle has noted, there are particularly important opportunities in green hydrogen, where Brazil has both significant comparative advantages and a first mover opportunity.27 Brazil also has critical minerals to offer to the global supply chain to help support green industries.

In addition, Brazil is an agricultural powerhouse, and the political economy of those two industries — energy and agriculture — will at times clash.28 But to take advantage of new dynamics in re-globalization, Brazil will have to re-focus its attention on green industries. That signals the need for job creation, re-training, and capacity-building in key sectors.

These job creation efforts must include the Amazon — and specifically, the urban centers of the Amazon.29 This is important, as 30 million people currently live in the Amazon, and more than 20 percent of the Amazon has been destroyed.30 Lula’s return to Amazon protection has crucially re-positioned Brazil globally and removed a major sticking point in U.S.-Brazil relations. Yet, to be sustainable, forest protection must be combined with real investment in sustainable livelihoods and job creation. Conservation and adaptation finance can play a critical role in funding this model to support a climate/jobs agenda in the region. Sustainable urbanization is fundamental in the fight against climate change.31 This must be coupled with a strong investment by philanthropy in building sustainable cities in the Amazon.32

There is an opportunity for both countries to actively build a green economy through activities that support green energy and strengthens their partnership in a meaningful way.

Green industry could be a core part of the kind of U.S.-Brazil educational and capacity-building exchanges noted above. There is an opportunity for both countries to actively build a green economy through activities that support green energy and strengthens their partnership in a meaningful way. Much of this can be done by fusing federal and sub-national efforts.33 The sub-national level has limits but has two distinct advantages: greater proximity to the real political economy of industry and urbanization that must inform strategy, and an ability to be insulated (at least to some degree) from political swings at the federal level.34 Thus, institutions in the United States and Brazil with the capital to mobilize funds in an effective manner should collaborate, when possible, to identify and implement solutions for the climate crisis (e.g., through investments and constructive dialogue).35

There’s also a need for active collaboration on the issues of the blue economy — that is, in work to protect the Atlantic Ocean off Brazil’s east coast, both from environmental degradation and illegal fishing.36 The United States has now developed extensive techniques to combine Coast Guard activity, remote sensing, and the application of computational technologies (including AI) to track illegal fishing and wider maritime domain surveillance and awareness, much of which has been piloted in the central stretches of the Pacific.37 All these could be applied, with greater ease and lower cost, to collaborate with Brazil on protecting the western Atlantic. This collaboration could fall under the umbrella of a recent multi-national agreement among coastal Atlantic countries, which will be formally launched at the U.N. in September 2023, and of which Brazil and the United States are both active members.38

… AND CRIME

There’s a new context, too, when it comes to another perennial challenge in Brazil and in U.S.-Brazil relations: crime.39

The criminal landscape is undergoing a significant transformation as the Primeiro Comando da Capital (PCC) emerges as the dominant Brazilian organized crime group. This shift is part of a global synthetic drug revolution impacting the criminal underworld. The PCC has consolidated its position as Brazil’s largest criminal organization, operating nationwide but increasingly extending its reach overseas, particularly in Africa. Its activities encompass drug trafficking, environmental crimes, and extortion. The group is expanding its influence, collaborating with other crime organizations, and perfecting its money-laundering abilities. It rivals Mexican cartels, Cartel de Sinaloa (CS) and Cartel Jalisco Nueva Generación (CJNG).

Chinese criminal networks, such as the Triads, are also rising in Brazil, primarily engaging in environmental crimes through corruption. This contributes to wildlife trafficking, unregulated fishing, and corrupt lumber practices. Brazil is also becoming a prominent hub for cybercrime. The global dimension of all this limits the capacity of the Brazilian state to tackle or deter criminal actors.

Important to note here is the close inter-connection between the issues of Amazon protection/green jobs, and efforts to counter criminality. Recent work by the Igarapé Institute, a Brazilian think tank, has shown how upwards pressure on global commodity prices quickly translates into new demand for mining operations and illegal commodity trafficking in the Amazon, and how this often goes hand in hand with narcotics trafficking.40

The Brazilian security response has historically been reactive and costly, lacking an intelligence component. Public security decisions have been episodic, responding to incidents rather than adopting a sustained long-term strategy. Violence, perpetuated by both organized crime groups and police officers, has remained high. Some past experiences, though, offer lessons for improving the situation. São Paulo’s approach, which included the use of body cameras, randomized controlled trials (RCTs), and enforcing control and accountability among police officers, has had positive results.41 Similarly, Rio de Janeiro’s 2009 policing program, though context-specific, demonstrated the importance of addressing crime and socio-economic issues simultaneously in favelas.42

However, sustaining operations and securing necessary investments have proved challenging. Corruption within police forces remains a significant issue that requires attention and resolution.43 And while American policymakers are wont to focus on counter-corruption in the current political climate, there will be limits on the extent to which U.S. advice or support is welcome there. Other actors, like the World Bank and the EU, may have greater traction in Brazil at this juncture.

Still, the United States has ample opportunities to assist Brazil in addressing security and countering emerging criminal threats. One key area is coordinating efforts, under Brazilian leadership, to secure the Amazon and enforce environmental policies.44 The United States can provide support in assisting Brazil’s plans to develop alternative livelihoods for individuals engaged in environmental crimes. Collaboration can also focus on joint responses to prevent zoonotic diseases and new pandemics. Both countries can advocate for mitigating wildlife trafficking in pandemic treaty negotiations.

And perhaps most important: the United States can wield its extensive overseas relationships and intelligence operations to help Brazil deal with the global dimensions of the problem — most of which are beyond the reach of the Brazilian state.

### Engagement Key---Student Exchange

#### Educational exchanges, cultural diplomacy and scientific collaboration through student exchange programs are all key to US diplomacy and soft power with Brazil

Baer et al, 25 [Julie Baer, a research and learning lead at the Institute of International Education in Washington; Juliana Rubio, is an associate director with the Americas Program at the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) in Washington; and Eitan Casaverde, is an intern with the Americas Program at CSIS. "A Partnership for Progress: Expanding U.S.-Brazil Student Exchange," Center for Strategic and International studies, 4-4-2025, https://www.csis.org/analysis/partnership-progress-expanding-us-brazil-student-exchange, TRI]

The United States and Brazil have had a diplomatic relationship since 1824. Today, Brazil is an increasingly critical partner for the United States as it seeks to address challenges in energy, food security, climate change, and multilateral cooperation. Trade also remains a central pillar of the relationship. In 2024, trade between the United States and Brazil reached an estimated $92 billion. Of this total, U.S. imports from Brazil accounted for approximately $49.7 billion—a trade surplus for the United States. Beyond economic cooperation, maintaining a strong political alliance is crucial as Brazil positions itself as a global power—especially as countries like China seek to expand their influence through initiatives such as BRICS, an intergovernmental organization comprising Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa. A key factor in sustaining the close U.S.-Brazil relationship is soft power, including educational exchanges, cultural diplomacy, and scientific collaboration, all of which play a vital role in deepening ties between the two societies. These connections not only foster mutual understanding but also reinforce long-term strategic cooperation. Beyond economic cooperation, maintaining a strong political alliance is crucial as Brazil positions itself as a global power—especially as countries like China seek to expand their influence through initiatives such as BRICS. While the United States and Brazil share a strong tradition of educational collaboration, the rise of the BRICS bloc has introduced new complexities for alliances within the western hemisphere. Since its formation in 2009, BRICS has sought to challenge Western influence, with member states steadily expanding their geopolitical and economic reach. As a key participant, Brazil has strengthened its ties with fellow BRICS nations—particularly China and Russia—thereby broadening opportunities not only for trade and strategic cooperation but also for educational and cultural exchanges. These evolving partnerships reflect Brazil’s growing role in a shifting global landscape, raising important questions about the future of its engagement with Western institutions. The stakes for countering Russian and Chinese influence in Brazil continue to rise, particularly given that Brazil is Russia’s leading trade partner in Latin America—and with China’s imports from Brazil reaching $89 million in 2022, more than double U.S. imports that same year. In recent years, education has emerged as a key pillar in strengthening Brazil’s individual ties with both China and Russia. BRICS initiatives have underscored the growing opportunities for educational exchanges between Brazil and Russia, culminating in the establishment of the first Russian-Brazilian school near Rio de Janeiro. Similarly, Brazil and China have recognized the need to expand student mobility, implementing programs to encourage cross-country study. China, in particular, has advanced these efforts through initiatives to bring Brazilian students to the School of Foreign Languages at East China University of Science and Technology (ECUST) and offer Chinese instruction in Brazil through the Confucius Institute at FAAP Business School in São Paulo. These developments highlight the urgent need for the United States and Brazil to prioritize educational collaboration—not only to deepen bilateral ties and maximize shared opportunities, but also to counterbalance growing Chinese and Russian influence in Brazil’s academic and cultural spheres. Furthermore, there is also strong global competition to attract international student talent. Recent years have seen an expansion of international students studying outside their home countries, according to UNESCO. The United States is the top host of international students worldwide, but it is notable that both Russia and China consistently rank among the top ten. Beyond BRICS, there are other countries who are actively recruiting large numbers of globally mobile students that have experienced robust growth, based on 2024 data from Project Atlas. Following the United States, the leading hosts include Canada (+28 percent), Australia (+21 percent), and the United Kingdom (+6 percent). In addition to these large hosts of international students, intraregional mobility within Latin America has also been increasing. For example, more Brazilian students studied in Argentina (24,219) than in the United States, based on 2024 data provided by the Argentinean Ministry of Education. As the United States looks to build upon its history of hosting the most international students in the world and to compete with other countries for top talent, there continues to be capacity across its nearly 4,000 colleges and universities, particularly at the undergraduate level, which is currently facing declining enrollments. With Brazilian students in the United States mostly studying in undergraduate programs, there is space within our institutions to host more of these often self-funded students. Direct Economic Impact on the United States In considering the benefits of international student mobility, it is important to recognize not only the valuable skills, language training, and knowledge gained by international students, but also the immense economic benefit they bring to the United States. The U.S. Department of Commerce’s Bureau of Economic Analysis (BEA) records the amount that international students contribute yearly to the U.S. economy. International students from all over the world contributed more than $50 billion to the U.S. economy in 2023 and supported more than 378,175 jobs. Over the past 15 years, there has been significant growth in the economic contributions of Brazilian students to the U.S. economy, according to BEA’s data. In 2010, Brazilian students contributed $271 million to the economy. In 2015, four years after the launch of Brazil’s Science Without Borders program (known in the United States as the Brazil Scientific Mobility Program, or BSMP), that number had nearly doubled to $499 million. As of the most recent calculation (2023), Brazilian students contributed $1 billion dollars to the U.S. education sector, supporting jobs at colleges and universities throughout the country.

### Neg---China DA

**Lack of US engagement with Brazil pushes them toward China which is key to destroy Hegemonism**

**Shixue 25**  [Jiang Shixue writes for the Global Times and is a distinguished professor at Shanghai University, “Strengthening China-Brazil trade cooperation an urgent necessity”, Global Times, 4/20/25, https://www.globaltimes.cn/page/202504/1332478.shtml , Richter]

Hegemonism, which poses a grave threat to world peace and development, has increasingly become a distinctive feature of the new US government's foreign policy - particularly in its tariff policy. How the Global South should respond is a pressing and unresolved issue. On Thursday, the 15th BRICS Agriculture Ministers' Meeting convened in Brazil, where officials from China's Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs engaged in discussions with their Brazilian counterparts about how Brazil can export more agricultural products - such as soybeans and beef - to China. Undoubtedly, this visit sent a clear signal: China and Brazil will further deepen their cooperation.

Strengthening cooperation between China and Brazil in economic, trade and other areas is not only an urgent necessity but also an obvious possibility.

First, both countries oppose hegemonism. Facts show that China and Brazil have both been victims of hegemonic practices. A spokesperson for China's Ministry of Foreign Affairs recently stated that the US uses tariffs as a weapon to exert maximum pressure for its own selfish gains, which severely hurts the legitimate rights and interests of all countries, violates the WTO rules, sabotages the rules-based multilateral trading regime and destabilizes the global economic order. The US, in defiance of global criticism, is positioning itself against the rest of the world. Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva has also pointed out that the US "arbitrary tariffs destabilize the international economy," and "history teaches us that trade wars have no winners."

Second, China and Brazil both hold prominent positions on the international stage. China's global standing is well recognized, and Brazil's international influence should not be underestimated. Although Brazil is not a permanent member of the United Nations (UN) Security Council, it has consistently played a pivotal role in UN affairs and has taken a proactive stance in global efforts to tackle poverty, climate change and environmental challenges.

Third, both countries possess the economic strength and complementarity needed to advance economic and trade cooperation. As a populous nation, China needs to import large quantities of agricultural and mineral products, whereas Brazil is richly endowed with these resources - many of which hold significant positions in the global market. This creates a clear and strong economic complementarity between the two countries.

Fourth, the political relationship between China and Brazil has laid a solid foundation for economic and trade cooperation. Since the establishment of diplomatic ties in 1974, bilateral relations have been upgraded three times. The first upgrade came in 1993, when the two countries established a strategic partnership. The second took place in 2012, when the relationship was elevated to a comprehensive strategic partnership, making Brazil the first Latin American country to reach that status with China. In 2024, the relationship was further elevated to the China-Brazil community with a shared future for a more just world and a more sustainable planet.

Fifth, the two countries have already accumulated valuable experience in pursuing win-win cooperation. As major developing countries located in the eastern and western hemispheres, China and Brazil are separated by vast oceans, yet they are drawn to each other, enabling comprehensive cooperation across various fields. According to information published on the website of China's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the two sides have signed as many as 167 important bilateral agreements and documents.

To further strengthen cooperation in the fight against hegemonism - and to accelerate the realization of the China-Brazil community with a shared future for a more just world and a more sustainable planet - the two countries can focus their efforts in the two areas of maximizing trade facilitation and strengthening mutual understanding and friendship.

As long as China and Brazil remain united in sincerity and work in close coordination, they will undoubtedly be able - together with other Global South countries - to overcome hegemonism and jointly safeguard the legitimate rights and interests of developing nations.

### Neg---Trump Fails

#### Brazil might need it, but Trump makes foreign policy unpredictable

Murakawa 4-17-25 [Fabio Murakawa, Political Reporter for Valor International, "Trump’s policy shifts force Brazil to rethink U.S. strategy," Valor International, 4-16-2025, https://valorinternational.globo.com/foreign-affairs/news/2025/04/16/trumps-policy-shifts-force-brazil-to-rethink-us-strategy.ghtml, accessed on 4-17-2025, GMU AE]

\*\*translation provided from Valor International

The back-and-forth of Donald Trump’s administration on import tariffs has prompted Brazil to reassess its expectations and recalibrate its negotiation strategy with the United States—particularly regarding steel exports to the U.S. market.

While talks between the two sides continue, officials in Brasília see limited room for concrete progress at the moment, mainly due to the U.S. Trade Representative’s constrained access to the White House.

Since early this year, Brazilian and American authorities have maintained an active dialogue. Seven rounds of discussions have already taken place, involving Vice President Geraldo Alckmin, Foreign Minister Mauro Vieira, and diplomats led by Ambassador Maurício Lyrio, secretary for economic and financial affairs at the Foreign Ministry. Their counterparts have included officials from the USTR, headed by Jamieson Greer.

Sources familiar with the negotiations told Valor that Brazil views the engagement by USTR and the U.S. Department of Commerce as “highly professional.” Even so, they noted a lack of genuine commitment from the White House. President Trump’s unpredictability—and that of his closest advisers—has become a major roadblock to meaningful progress.

Following the sweeping tariff package announced in early April, Brazil’s current strategy is to “let the dust settle.” Initially, Mr. Trump floated the possibility of tariffs as high as 50%. But after pushback from U.S. business groups and affected countries, the final rate was set at 10% across the board.

Given the recent developments, it remains unclear to the Brazilian government what direction a new round of negotiations might take. With the White House focused on escalating trade tensions with China, attention toward partners like Brazil has waned.

More advanced are discussions on the 25% tariffs imposed in 2019 on Brazilian semi-finished steel exports to the U.S.—a top concern for both the Foreign Ministry and the presidential palace.

The Lula administration believes it has made clear to U.S. officials that these surcharges not only hurt Brazil but also negatively impact U.S. industries that rely on Brazilian steel and are now grappling with higher production costs.

Brazil’s argument is further strengthened by the fact that it imports roughly $1.5 billion annually in metallurgical coal from the U.S. to fuel its steel production. That trade generates jobs and revenue for the U.S., and Brazilian negotiators believe it should be considered when Washington reassesses its tariff policies.

Yet here too, the USTR faces hurdles in gaining traction within the White House. Amid President Trump’s broader trade war targeting multiple global partners—including traditional allies—complex issues such as the tariffs on Brazilian steel have struggled to secure the U.S. president’s attention.

Historically, Brazil has been one of the leading suppliers of semi-finished steel to the U.S. and was previously caught in trade disputes during Mr. Trump’s first term. In 2019, the U.S. imposed tariffs on steel and aluminum imports citing national security concerns. Brazil negotiated export quotas to mitigate the impact, but the issue has resurfaced amid a renewed wave of protectionism.

Now back in office, Mr. Trump has revived his combative rhetoric against what he considers unfair trade practices, rolling out a fresh package of tariffs affecting multiple countries.

According to sources, President Lula’s strategy is to avoid direct confrontation while pursuing diplomatic and legal avenues to push for a revision of the tariffs. The immediate priority is to keep communication channels with the USTR open—and to weigh the option of bringing the matter before the World Trade Organization if tensions escalate.

## Cuba

### Uniqueness

#### Quick Background: Post-normalization rollback; opportunities in health diplomacy, human rights, sanctions policy, and regional cooperation.

#### US-Cuba relations ignored now---make action critical

Lehman 25 [Lehman, P., Howard, professor emeritus of the department of political science. “Opinion: The time is now to change US-Cuba relations” Deseret News. 3/22/25. https://www.deseret.com/opinion/2025/03/23/us-cuba-relations-foreign-policy-trade/, skc]

With all the problems facing the U.S. today, Cuba is probably not on many people’s radar. Some Americans may remember the Bay of Pigs in 1961 and the 1962 missile crisis, and, more recently, the Mariel boatlift of 1980, the 1999 saga of Elián González or Obama’s historic visit to Cuba in 2016. While U.S.-Cuba relations may be ignored by most, we should be concerned about the impact of our current policies on the Cuban people, a population only 90 miles away from our border.I recently spent 10 days visiting the country as part of a “Support for the Cuban People” tour permitted by the U.S. government. Even though I am generally knowledgeable about international affairs, I was not aware of the suffering of regular Cubans, in part due to long-standing U.S. policies. While the Cuban government damaged the economy with heavy-handed government controls during the Cold War, limited agricultural diversification and an overwhelming economic reliance on the former USSR, since the early 1990s, Cuba has been economically weakened by continuous sanctions and blockades implemented by the U.S.I can understand the reasons for these sanctions during the Cold War, but why are we still punishing the Cuban people? I saw farmers plowing their fields with oxen, farmers taking their products by horse and cart, and people putting up with innumerable blackouts due to energy shortages. Our group met with dozens of regular Cubans, and everyone had personal stories of suffering: limited food, collapsing infrastructure, hospitals empty of medications and, simply put, no money to advance their well-being.While the U.S. imposed sanctions immediately after the Cuban Revolution, more recent policies have only worsened the suffering. In 1992, the Cuban Democracy Act restricted U.S. visitors to Cuba. The Helms-Burton Act of 1996 ratcheted up the sanctions by placing penalties against companies from any other country that do business with Cuba. This means that internationally operating companies have to choose between Cuba and the U.S.Although the U.S. has an embassy in Havana, Trump does not allow Cubans to obtain a visa in Cuba, they must travel to a third country to apply for one. Under Trump, the U.S. reinstated Cuba’s designation as a state sponsor of terrorism. He also created a list of Cuban enterprises that cannot be used by U.S. citizens. Trump has also allocated over $22 million to anti-Cuba organizations in the U.S. Additionally, Trump placed crippling financial restrictions on the country. The U.S. prohibits U.S. persons and entities from engaging in direct financial transactions with Cuba. In February, the U.S. government prohibited financial services, such as Western Union, from transferring money to Cuba.U.S. draconian policies also affect our own country through increased Cuban migration. As suffering continues, migration dramatically increases. Customs and Border Protection encountered an average of over 200,000 Cuban migrants annually from 2022 to 2024, a fivefold increase over 2021. Our policies also have pushed Cuba to deepen their economic ties with China. Out of necessity, Cuba has strengthened diplomatic, commercial and military ties with Russia, including joint military drills in 2024.Instead of punishing sanctions derived from an outdated ideological worldview, the U.S. should be encouraging Cuba to expand its recent policies of incentivizing the private sector, promoting tourism and developing its basic infrastructure. We met people who are friendly to Americans and who are anxious to develop their entrepreneurial skills. The U.S. already has extensive trade relations with authoritarian governments, including China and Vietnam.As Utahns, we should want to develop closer economic ties with Cuba, as we have done with many Latin American countries. The time is now for a meaningful change in our policy to Cuba. I encourage Utahns to contact their congressional representatives to revisit our policy.

#### Partial dollarization of Cuba means US-Cuba Economic Foreign Policy is needed more than ever

Frank 25 [Frank, Marc, U.S-born journalist from Havana, Cuba. “As Cuba-US relations sour, the island needs dollars more than ever” Reuters. 1/24/25. https://www.reuters.com/world/americas/cuba-us-relations-sour-island-needs-dollars-more-than-ever-2025-01-24/, skc]

HAVANA, Jan 24(Reuters) - Cash-starved Cuba this month opened the first grocery store to accept hard U.S. currency on the island in nearly two decades, the latest sign in a trend towards dollarization in the Communist-run country.The store, open just a few weeks, garners praise from the lucky few with dollars on an island where, just four years ago, banks stopped accepting cash deposits in greenbacks."This supermarket is quite good ... but not everyone has the possibility to buy here," said Yuliani González as she left the white-washed grocery store.The shop lies in the shadow of a newly built hotel complex near the sea in Miramar, a neighborhood popular with foreign diplomats.Cubans with access to dollars can also purchase gasoline without waiting in long lines, reserve a rental car or fancy hotel room and soon, top up their cellular data plans.Cuban officials have said this "partial dollarization," which kicked off a year ago is tough medicine necessary to fix the island's economy, devastated, in part, by a Cold War-era U.S. trade embargo and related sanctions.Relations between Havana and Washington this week took a turn for the worse, when U.S. President Donald Trump reversed a series of last-minute measures taken by the Biden administration that would have made it easier for Cuba to acquire dollars.

That means the dollar crunch is likely to become even more severe, Cuban officials and economists say.Cuba's government has said it hopes dollar stores would reap some of the remittances that enter the country, allowing it to use that hard cash to underwrite social programs like free healthcare plus subsidized food, energy and transportation.Many state-run shops switched to a Cuban version of the greenback in 2004, called the CUC, and then in 2021 began accepting only a digital currency pegged to the dollar, called the MLC, in an effort to raise foreign currency without falling back on the cash dollar."The government equivalent of the dollar keeps changing as it runs out of cash to back it up," Cuban economist Omar Everleny said in an interview. "They need cash quickly.""Soon dollar stores across the country will also accept U.S. currency."But the growing availability of goods and services in dollars, versus the local peso currency, also underscores growing inequality between those with and without access to remittances and other sources of foreign currency, economists like Everleny say.Housewife Odisbel Saavedra Hernández said she receives U.S. dollars from her husband abroad to feed her children."Here you can find what you do not find in other markets. This one is more stocked. I hope that these markets spread throughout the country, but that other people can also have the same benefit as me," she said.

### Engagement Key---Medical Internationalism

#### There is great aff ground on international medical assistance from Cuba and the US’s interventions.

Yaffe 25 [Helen is a senior lecturer at the University of Glasgow. She is the author of We Are Cuba! How a Revolutionary People have Survived in a Post-Soviet World and Che Guevara: The Economics of Revolution. 3-8-2025, "Cuba Sends Doctors, the US Sends Sanctions", Jacobin, <https://jacobin.com/2025/03/cuba-medical-programs-us-sanctions/>, Taxali]

During “the Special Period” in the 1990s, Cuba introduced reciprocal agreements to share the costs with recipient countries that could afford it. Starting in 2004, with the famous “oil-for-doctors” program with Venezuela, the export of medical professionals became Cuba’s main source of revenue. This income is then reinvested into medical provision on the island. However, Cuba continues to provide medical assistance free of charge to countries who need it. Today there are different cooperation contracts, from Cuba covering the full costs (donations and free technical services) to reciprocity agreements (costs shared with the host country) to “triangulated collaboration” (third-party partnerships) and commercial agreements. The new measure announced by Rubio will impact them all.

In 2017, Cuban medics were operating in sixty-two countries; in twenty-seven of those (44 percent) the host government paid nothing, while the remaining thirty-five paid or shared the costs according to a sliding scale. Where the host government pays all costs, it does so at a lower rate than that charged internationally. Differential payments are used to balance Cuba’s books, so services charged to wealthy oil states (Qatar, for example) help subsidize medical assistance to poorer countries. Payment for medical service exports goes to the Cuban government, which passes a small proportion on to the medics themselves. This is usually in addition to their Cuban salaries.

In 2018, the first year Cuba’s Office of National Statistics published separate data, “health services exports” earned $6.4 billion. Revenues have since declined, however, as US efforts to sabotage Cuban medical internationalism have succeeded, for example in Brazil, reducing the island’s income by billions.

US Criminalization of Cuban Medical Internationalism

Already in 2006, the George W. Bush administration launched its Medical Parole Program to induce Cuban medics to abandon missions in return for US citizenship. Barack Obama maintained the program until his final days in office in January 2017. By 2019, Trump renewed the attack, adding Cuba to its Tier 3 list of countries failing to combat “human trafficking” on the basis of its medical internationalism. The US Agency for International Development (USAID) even launched a project to discredit and sabotage Cuban health care programs. In 2024, the US House Committee on Appropriations bill included exposing the “trafficking of doctors from Cuba,” withdrawing aid from “countries participating in this form of modern slavery,” and prohibiting funds to Cuban laboratories. Meanwhile it allocated $30 million for “democracy programs” for Cuba, a misnomer for the regime change that Mallory strategized in 1960.

The service contracts that Cuban medics sign before going abroad are, in fact, voluntary; they receive their regular Cuban salary, plus remuneration from the host country. The volunteers are guaranteed holidays and contact with families. Whatever their motivations to participate, Cuba’s medical professionals make huge personal sacrifices to volunteer overseas, leaving behind families and homes, their culture and communities, to work in challenging and often risky conditions for months or even years. Interviewed for our documentary, Cuba & COVID-19: Public Health, Science and Solidarity, Dr Jesús Ruiz Alemán explained how a sense of moral obligation led him to volunteer for the Henry Reeve Contingent. He went on his first mission to Guatemala in 2005, West Africa for Ebola in 2014, and to Italy in 2020 when it was the epicenter of the COVID-19 pandemic. “I have never felt like a slave, never,” he insisted. “The campaign against the brigades seems to be a way to justify the blockade and measures against Cuba, to damage a source of income for Cuba.”

In the same documentary, Johana Tablada, deputy director for the United States at Cuba’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs, condemned the “weaponization and criminalization” of Cuban medical internationalism that has “wreaked havoc,” particularly in countries pressured to end their partnerships with Cuba shortly before the COVID-19 pandemic, such as Brazil and Bolivia. “The reason that the US calls it slavery or human trafficking has nothing to do with the international felony of human trafficking.” This is cover, she says, for a policy of sabotage that is “impossible to hold up to public scrutiny.” The United States cannot tell people in developing countries to give up medical services provided by Cuban medical brigades “just because it doesn’t match their policy to have international recognition and admiration [for Cuba].” The US is certainly not offering to replace Cuban doctors with its own.

The Threat of a Good Example

The predominant global approach, exemplified by the United States, is to regard health care as an expensive resource or commodity to be rationed through the market mechanism. Medical students “invest” in their education, paying high tuition fees and graduating with huge debts. They then seek well-paid jobs to repay those debts and pursue a privileged standard of living. To ensure medics are well remunerated, demand must be kept above supply. The World Economic Forum projects a shortfall of ten million health care workers worldwide by 2030. But the Cuban investment in medical education raises the supply of professionals globally, thus threatening the status of physicians operating under a market system. Critically, the Cuban approach removes financial, class, race, gender, religious, and any other barriers to joining the medical profession.

The key features of the Cuban approach are: the commitment to health care as a human right; the decisive role of state planning and investment to provide a universal public health care system with the absence of a parallel private sector; the speed with which health care provision was improved (by the 1980s Cuba had the health profile of a highly developed country); the focus on prevention over cure; and the system of community-based primary care. By these means, socialist Cuba has achieved comparable health outcomes to developed countries but with lower per capita spending — less than one-tenth the per capita spending in the United States and one-quarter in the UK. By 2005, Cuba had achieved the highest ratio of doctors per capita in the world: 1 to 167. By 2018, it had three times the density of doctors in the US and the UK.

Today Cuba is in the midst of a severe economic crisis, largely resulting from US sanctions. The public health care system is under unprecedented strain, with shortages of resources and of personnel following massive emigration since 2021. Nonetheless, the government continues to dedicate a high proportion of GDP on health care (nearly 14 percent in 2023), maintaining free universal medical provision, and currently has 24,180 medical professionals in fifty-six countries.

Revolutionary Cuba was never solely concerned with meeting its own needs. According to Morales’s data, between 1999–2015 alone, overseas Cuban medical professionals saved 6 million lives, carried out 1.39 billion medical consultations and 10 million surgical operations, and attended 2.67 million births, while 73,848 foreign students graduated as professionals in Cuba, many of them medics. Add to that the beneficiaries between 1960 and 1998, and those since 2016, and the numbers climb steeply.

The beneficiary nations have been the poorest and least influential globally; few have governments with any leverage on the world stage. Recipient populations are often the most disadvantaged and marginalized within those countries. If Cuban medics leave, they will have no alternative provision. If Rubio and Trump are successful, it is not just Cubans who will suffer. It will also be the global beneficiaries whose lives are being saved and improved by Cuban medical internationalism right now.

### Engagement Key---China

#### There’s a diverse lit base discussing Sino-LatAm relations increasing as US engagement decreases.

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U.S. policymakers and military officials have raised concerns about China’s growing presence in Latin America even as Washington remains focused elsewhere, especially on major ongoing conflicts in Europe and the Middle East. “We are losing our positional advantage in this Hemisphere and immediate action is needed to reverse this trend,” argued Admiral Craig S. Faller [PDF], the former head of U.S. Southern Command, in 2021. During his first term in office, President Donald Trump took a more hard-line approach than his predecessors by imposing sanctions on several countries, including Cuba, Nicaragua, and Venezuela, and slashed aid to others, most prominent being the so-called Northern Triangle countries in Central America. Some analysts say these actions drove certain governments closer to China. Trump also stepped back from trade relations with the region, withdrawing from the Trans-Pacific Partnership.

President Biden, who took the lead on Latin America policy during his tenure as vice president to Barack Obama, has long argued that the United States should renew its leadership role in the region to counter a rising China. Calling China a “strategic competitor” [PDF] and pledging to strengthen U.S. partnerships in the Western Hemisphere, Biden launched Build Back Better World (B3W) in 2021 with his Group of Seven (G7) counterparts. The initiative aimed to counter China’s BRI by developing infrastructure in low- and middle-income countries, including in Latin America. However, the Biden administration committed only $6 million to B3W in its first year, and it was later renamed the Partnership for Global Infrastructure and Investment. At the 2022 Summit of the Americas, Biden announced a range of new economic initiatives, including the creation of the Americas Partnership for Economic Prosperity, which seeks to make the region more economically competitive.

Additionally, the Biden administration has sought to shore up support for Taiwan and continued to raise concerns about Huawei. Still, some experts say Biden is not focusing enough on the region, particularly on trade. The latest report [PDF] by the U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission, an independent agency of the U.S. government, underscored the challenges that Beijing’s growing influence in Latin America poses to Washington.

Meanwhile, bipartisan legislation introduced by then Senator Bob Menendez (D-NJ) and Senator Marco Rubio (R-FL) in 2022 sought to counter China’s “malign influence” in the region by strengthening multilateral security cooperation and counternarcotics efforts. Other legislative proposals include calls for the United States to create permanent trade partnerships with countries in the Western Hemisphere to encourage the “reshoring” of supply chains from China to countries closer to home. Neither bill advanced in Congress.

Rubio is now poised to be Trump’s secretary of state in a second term that many experts expect to ramp up pressure on both China and Latin America. Rubio has been strongly critical of left-wing governments in Cuba, Nicaragua, and Venezuela—and has often criticized China’s presence in the region—while Trump has threatened tariffs on imports from Mexico as a means to pressure the country to tighten its borders. Many experts believe such measures will end up hurting the U.S. economy and ceding some trade to Beijing. Trump’s focus on border control could also spell problems for Latin American countries, as many of them depend on remittances from the United States to boost their economies.

“Few see Latin America as the United States’ backyard anymore,” writes the Wall Street Journal. “The region’s nations are generally sincere in their desire for warm relations with the United States, but they are often seen as a secondary priority in Washington.”

### Engagement Key---Embargo

#### There’s an abundance of lit on embargo and sanctions related affs!

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Understanding Cuba

Cuba’s socialist economic model, shaped by decades of U.S. sanctions, prioritizes state control over key industries while cautiously opening to foreign investment. For example, the 2014 Foreign Investment Act underscores this dual approach, aiming to attract capital while maintaining sovereignty.1 The law emphasizes sectors like renewable energy, agriculture, and tourism to drive export growth, import substitution, and technological advancement - all desirable traits in a country worth investing in.

Demographic challenges persist, however. As of a 2022 survey by CEDA, over 20% of the population is aged 60+, meaning there's a potentially depleting workforce. Consider future implications for Cuba as well in light of broader significant emigration having impacts on labor markets as well.2

Center for Engagement and Advocacy in the Americas. "Navigating Cuba's Care Crisis Amidst Demographic Shifts."

The U.S. Embargo

The U.S. embargo on Cuba began in the 1960s after Fidel Castro's communist government took power, with restrictions on trade, travel, and financial transactions. Over time, the embargo became a central aspect of U.S.-Cuba relations, impacting Cuba’s economy and limiting its access to international markets.3

In the 1990s, laws like the Helms-Burton Act strengthened the embargo, codifying the restrictions and demanding Cuba move toward democracy and a market economy before sanctions could be lifted. Despite some periods of diplomatic thawing, especially under President Obama, the embargo has remained largely in place, with certain exceptions for food, medicine, and humanitarian aid.

While U.S. policy has fluctuated over the years, the embargo continues to hinder Cuba’s economic growth by restricting foreign investments, trade, and access to resources. These sanctions are a major obstacle to Cuba’s ability to integrate into the global economy and to raise capital for modernization or expansion.

Inflation and Tourism

Cuba’s economy has gone through a lot at the start of the 2020's. For starters, it's country was hit hard by the pandemic. Cuba's economy contracted by 10.9% in 2020 due to COVID-19, U.S. sanctions, and structural imbalances. Note that immediately following the pandemic, some experts were optimistic, citing growth for 2021.4 The country's growth did happen, with GDP in 2022 growing 2.0%.5

However, there's an incredibly unfortunate downside here. Much like how the United States faced inflation due to eased monetary and fiscal policy in response to the pandemic, Cuba's inflation has fared much, much worse. Their inflation was more than four times worse than the United States in 2022, reaching a peak of over 39%. Note that this isn't even the worst of it, as Cuba reported year-over-year inflation of over 77% in 2021.5

Since the return from the pandemic, Cuba, like much of the rest of the world, has struggled to operationally get "back to normal". For example, tourism, a critical revenue source, rebounded to 1.97 million visitors in 2023, below pre-pandemic levels.6 Things looked almost as bad in a more functioning society in 2024. Though Cuba's tourism numbers increased to 2.7 million visitors, this was still below the 2022 numbers. It also experienced a decrease in international visitors from the year prior.7

Potential Investment Sectors

There are some promising areas of Cuba to explore for investment. For example:

Renewable Energy: Cuba's 2030 Energy Transition Plan aims for 24% renewable electricity generation through solar, wind, and biomass projects. One of the main areas of this plan is through the External Investment Law, which is a regulatory framework meant to expedite the deployment of capital towards this goal.8

Agriculture: The elimination of the ration book system signals a shift toward private food markets. In addition, the rise of tropical storms has presented logistical challenges to Cuba's farms. You could speculate that there are opportunities in organic farming and increased crop yield technologies.9

Biotechnology: State-owned BioCubaFarma received private funding from foreign partners such as Russia for vaccine production and medical exports. The idea behind this investment was to "bring market innovation medicines against the most complex types of diseases."10

Translating Cuba. "Russia Will Invest 11 Million Dollars in the State-Owned BioCubaFarma to Develop Medicines."

Risks and Challenges

The investment landscape in Cuba is fraught with significant challenges, the primary among them being the ongoing U.S. sanctions. The U.S. Department of the Treasury's Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) maintains strict prohibitions on U.S. persons engaging in business with Cuba without specific authorization. According to OFAC's Cuban Assets Control Regulations, most transactions between U.S. persons and Cuba remain prohibited, with violations carrying severe penalties.11

Currency instability presents another major hurdle for potential investors. Earlier we discussed Cuba's inflation issue. Though Cuba is undergoing monetary reform, the Central Bank of Cuba's 2021 Monetary Reform eliminated the Cuban Convertible Peso. This means Cuba has just one sole currency, though that still left the country with a materially divergent exchange rate.12 It may be some until Cuba sees more reasonable economic stability on that front.

#### Renewed U.S. focus on Latin America driven by migration, security, and China creates opportunities but risks regional dependency—debating these complexities is key

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After decades of limited engagement, Latin America is regaining prominence in U.S. foreign policy, driven by mounting challenges such as immigration crises, escalating drug trafficking, and growing strategic competition with China. While this renewed attention presents opportunities for economic and geopolitical gains, it also exposes the region to significant risks. Increased U.S. involvement often amplifies external pressures, deepens economic dependency, and exacerbates social and political vulnerabilities. This moment calls for carefully examining the complexities in U.S.-Latin America relations. The current U.S. policy shift reflects Latin America’s enduring geopolitical significance and a recurring pattern of interventionist approaches that have historically strained regional sovereignty. This analysis explores the main drivers behind Washington’s renewed focus, its implications for Mexico, the North American-Southern neighbour, and the broader ripple effects across Central and South America. Drivers of Washington’s Renewed Focus Immigration and Border Security Immigration has been a central issue shaping U.S.-Latin America relations, particularly during the Trump administration, and it remains a focal point today. Policies aimed at curbing migration often oscillate between collaboration and coercion. For example, Mexico’s National Guard was deployed to intercept migrants travelling northward, essentially serving as an extension of the U.S. border. This approach strains Mexico’s resources and ignites domestic debates about sovereignty and human rights. Beyond Mexico, Central American nations such as Guatemala, Honduras, and El Salvador face immense pressure to halt migration flows. These governments are often compelled to prioritize U.S. demands, sometimes at the expense of addressing the root causes of migration—poverty, violence, and systemic inequality. While these policies aim to reduce unauthorized migration, they risk perpetuating instability and fueling regional resentment. Drug Trafficking and National Security The U.S. opioid epidemic has intensified calls for stronger measures against drug cartels, particularly those operating in Mexico. The smuggling of fentanyl and other synthetic drugs has led to discussions of unprecedented actions, such as drone strikes on cartel operations. While these proposals reflect the urgency of addressing the drug crisis, they also pose risks of unintended consequences, including escalating violence within Mexico and straining diplomatic relations. Colombia, another key player in the war on drugs, faces similar scrutiny. Despite decades of U.S.-backed initiatives to combat drug production, cocaine output remains high. This raises questions about the effectiveness of punitive approaches versus alternative strategies, such as focusing on socioeconomic development and reducing demand in the U.S. Strategic Competition with China China’s rapid economic expansion in Latin America has become a major concern for U.S. policymakers. Beijing has solidified its presence through trade, investment, and infrastructure projects in the past two decades. Chinese companies have funded critical initiatives, such as ports in Peru and railway networks in Brazil, fostering closer economic ties. Trade between China and Latin America grew from $18 billion in 2002 to $480 billion in 2023, reflecting the region’s growing reliance on Chinese markets. This dynamic creates a geopolitical dilemma for countries seeking to balance their relationships with the U.S. and China. Washington has urged regional governments to avoid Chinese involvement in sensitive sectors, particularly telecommunications and energy. However, this pressure risks alienating nations that view China as a valuable partner for economic growth. Mexico: At the Center of U.S. Concerns Immigration Pressure As the primary transit country for Central American migrants, Mexico has become a focal point of U.S. immigration policies. Under pressure, Mexico has implemented strict measures to curb migration, including deploying security forces and tightening border controls. However, these actions have sparked domestic debates over human rights and the long-term sustainability of such policies. While these measures may temporarily satisfy U.S. demands, they fail to address systemic issues driving migration, such as violence and poverty in Central America. This creates a cycle of short-term compliance without long-term solutions, further complicating bilateral relations. Trade Tensions Mexico is the United States’ largest trading partner, with bilateral trade surpassing $700 billion in 2023. However, this economic interdependence has not shielded the relationship from tensions. The U.S.-Mexico-Canada Agreement (USMCA) was intended to modernize trade relations, yet disputes over labour standards, energy policies, and environmental regulations persist. For example, U.S. concerns about Mexico’s energy reforms, which prioritize state-owned companies over foreign investors, have led to threats of tariffs and formal trade complaints. These conflicts underscore the delicate balance between economic cooperation and sovereignty as nations navigate post-pandemic recovery. National Security and Sovereignty The possibility of unilateral U.S. actions, such as military interventions to combat drug cartels, poses significant challenges to Mexico’s sovereignty. While addressing American domestic concerns, these proposals risk inflaming anti-American sentiment and undermining diplomatic trust. For Mexico, balancing security cooperation with sovereignty remains a critical challenge in its relationship with Washington. Regional Ripple Effects Central America: Migration Frontlines Central American nations face immense pressure to stem migration flows, often under the threat of U.S. sanctions or reduced aid. These policies force governments to prioritise immediate compliance over addressing long-term structural issues like poverty and violence. The U.S.’s emphasis on border security has led to programs like the Alliance for Prosperity, which aimed to improve economic conditions in the region. However, critics argue that such initiatives often fall short due to insufficient funding, lack of coordination, and a focus on enforcement rather than development. South America: Navigating Geopolitical Rivalries In South America, nations like Brazil and Argentina must navigate a complex geopolitical landscape shaped by U.S.-China competition. While both countries benefit from economic partnerships with Washington and Beijing, growing U.S. demands to limit Chinese influence create significant challenges. For instance, Brazil’s reliance on Chinese markets for agricultural exports contradicts Washington’s warnings about Chinese investments in critical infrastructure. Similarly, Argentina’s engagement with China on projects like the Belt and Road Initiative has drawn scrutiny from the U.S., complicating its efforts to diversify economic partnerships. Historical Context: Lessons from the Past The renewed U.S. focus on Latin America is not without precedent. Throughout the 20th century, U.S. regional interventions often prioritized strategic interests over local needs. From the Cold War era’s proxy conflicts to the implementation of neoliberal policies in the 1990s, these engagements frequently exacerbated inequality and political instability. For example, the U.S.-backed coups in countries like Chile and Guatemala underscore the risks of prioritizing short-term strategic goals over democratic governance and regional stability. These historical experiences serve as a cautionary tale for current policymakers and highlight the importance of balancing strategic interests with respect for sovereignty and local agency. Opportunities Amid Risks Despite the challenges, Washington’s renewed attention brings significant opportunities for Latin America. The rise of nearshoring, shifting production closer to U.S. markets, offers job creation and industrial development potential. Countries like Mexico and Colombia are well-positioned to benefit from this trend, particularly as companies seek to diversify supply chains in response to global disruptions. U.S.-led initiatives in clean energy, climate resilience, and infrastructure development also present valuable opportunities. By aligning with these programs, Latin American nations can access funding and expertise to address critical challenges such as renewable energy transitions and climate adaptation. Moreover, enhanced collaboration with Washington could strengthen regional institutions and governance. Anti-corruption measures and support for democratic reforms, when implemented in partnership with local governments, can foster long-term stability and attract foreign investment. Balancing the Scrutiny Latin American leaders must adopt proactive and strategic approaches to maximise these opportunities while mitigating risks. Strengthening regional integration and fostering cooperation among neighbouring countries can enhance the region’s collective negotiating power. Initiatives like the Pacific Alliance and Mercosur offer frameworks for deeper economic and political collaboration, though these efforts require renewed commitment and resources. Diversifying economic partnerships beyond the U.S. and China will also be essential. Latin America can reduce dependency and build economic resilience by forging stronger ties with emerging markets and fostering intraregional trade. Additionally, multilateral diplomacy offers a platform for addressing shared challenges, from climate change to migration, on a global stage. Diplomacy at the Crossroads: Shaping Latin America’s Future Washington’s renewed focus on Latin America signals a pivotal moment in hemispheric relations, offering significant opportunities and notable challenges. The attention brings the promise of economic growth, governance reforms, and deeper geopolitical collaboration. Yet, it also introduces dependency risks, potential erosion of sovereignty, and heightened socio-political tensions across the region. At this critical juncture, diplomacy must take centre stage as the guiding framework for Latin America’s response. Regional leaders must prioritise integration efforts through initiatives like the Pacific Alliance and Mercosur to strengthen collective negotiating power and foster economic resilience. Diversifying partnerships beyond the U.S. and China is equally essential, allowing nations to reduce dependency while forging connections with emerging markets and enhancing intraregional trade. Beyond economic strategies, diplomacy is vital in addressing structural challenges such as poverty, inequality, and climate change. By engaging multilaterally and aligning national interests with global goals, Latin America can turn external pressures into sustainable and inclusive development opportunities. The success of these efforts will depend on the region’s ability to harness diplomacy not just as a tool for negotiation but as a means to reinforce sovereignty, build resilient institutions, and chart a stable course for the 21st century. In this delicate balance between opportunities and risks, the region’s trajectory will be shaped by how effectively its leaders leverage this renewed focus to achieve long-term prosperity and stability.

#### Trump 2.0 reshapes U.S.-Latin America relations, reviving the Monroe Doctrine to counter China—debating these shifts is key

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Trump 2.0 has initiated a new phase in U.S.-Latin America relations, marked by both continuity and change in economic, security, and diplomatic policies. This approach shows a strategic adjustment of regional priorities, including sanctions on Venezuela, engagement with Argentina, and altering trade negotiations with Mexico and Colombia. While some Latin American leaders align with Trump’s policies, others experience tensions, especially regarding migration and trade disputes. The stakes are significant: Latin America is vital for the U.S. economy, a key geopolitical arena amid rising Chinese influence, and a source of immigration issues. For Latin American countries, U.S. policies influence their market access, investment prospects, and regional stability. As the administration strengthens its role in the region, understanding these shifting dynamics is crucial for grasping the future of inter-American relations and their global effects. As frequently emphasized during Donald Trump’s first term, his return to the presidency is expected to signal the resurgence of the Monroe Doctrine for Latin America. Outlined initially in 1823 by then-U.S. President James Monroe, this doctrine asserts that the United States rejects any intervention by external powers—mainly European countries—in the affairs of the Americas. Trump’s 2018 statement that the Monroe Doctrine remains a key priority of U.S. foreign policy indicated that this policy framework would shape the country’s economic, diplomatic, and security strategies in the region. Furthermore, Republican senators have reinforced this approach by legitimizing the doctrine and supporting efforts to curb foreign influence in the hemisphere. A defining factor in U.S.-Latin America relations under Trump 2.0 will be China. Having initiated trade wars against China in 2017, Trump is expected to invoke the Monroe Doctrine again to counter Beijing’s growing influence in Latin America. Since the early 2000s, China’s economic presence in the region has expanded significantly, bringing with it increasing political and diplomatic leverage. Chinese government embraced a ‘going out strategy’ that encouraged Chinese companies to go abroad to search for raw materials needed for its industrial development. Latin America was a significant region for new Chinese development strategy. The region is rich of various raw materials. Also, imported agricultural products from Latin America helped Chines government feed its huge population. Thus, Chinese companies started investing in the region first for extraction projects, then for infrastructure projects to guarantee transportation of raw materials to the country. This shift has offered Latin American countries an alternative to U.S. dominance. The erosion of U.S. influence in its so-called ‘backyard’ and the increasing autonomy of Latin American nations—particularly during the commodity boom between 2000-2013—are viewed by Trump’s administration, which favors isolationist policies, as challenges that must be reversed. Failing to generate sufficient consent mechanisms to encourage regional actors to align with the U.S., the Trump administration is expected to resort to coercion and pressure tactics against countries engaged in trade and diplomatic relations with China. For instance, the U.S. has issued warnings regarding China’s potential military use of the Panama Canal, framing its actions as efforts to safeguard American interests in the region. Trump’s desire to reclaim control over the Panama Canal may be part of a broader strategy to counter China or a new manifestation of U.S. expansionism. In response to U.S. pressure, Panama’s government appears to be distancing itself from China while increasing cooperation with American companies. However, should the U.S. retake canal control, it could provoke a geopolitical crisis and further damage its reputation in Latin America. Another key factor shaping U.S.-Latin America relations in the coming period will be the economic, political, and diplomatic dynamics within North America. Although Trump replaced NAFTA (North American Free Trade Agreement) with the USMCA (United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement) during his first term, his renewed push for high tariffs on Mexico and Canada at the start of his second term threatens the stability of trade relations in the region. Trump’s tendency to frame Latin America as a source of irregular migration and organized crime raises concerns among regional leaders about the implications of such rhetoric. Despite extensive border militarization, family separations, and mass deportations, these measures have failed to curb migration flows. The Trump administration’s proposal to designate Mexican drug cartels as terrorist organizations also raises critical questions about the potential consequences of military interventions—whether they will destabilize local and national contexts or escalate violence in U.S. cities. Studies explain that the war on drugs didn’t decrease cocaine production and increased the decentralization of smuggling routes rather than eliminating the trade. Trump’s tariff policies, coupled with his anti-immigration stance and disproportionate drug control measures, could jeopardize U.S.-Mexico cooperation on migration policy and push Mexico to seek alternatives to its most important partner. According to Article 32.10 of the USMCA, if one of the signatory countries enters a free trade agreement with a non-market economy, the other parties have the right to terminate the agreement. This provision significantly constrains Mexico’s ability to expand trade relations with China. Although Mexican President Claudia Sheinbaum has taken steps to address migration-related concerns, the Trump administration is unlikely to alter its position on tariffs, as trade with Latin American countries is perceived in the U.S. as a direct threat to domestic employment. Additionally, Washington’s confrontational stance toward Mexico has prompted ALBA (Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of Our America) countries like Venezuela and Cuba to express solidarity with Mexico. These ideological divergences suggest that Latin America’s geopolitical landscape could become increasingly polarized under Trump’s leadership. Another key issue will be the ongoing crisis in Venezuela and the Trump administration’s approach toward Nicolás Maduro’s regime. The political and socio-economic crisis has been raised concerns about hyperinflation, democratic backsliding, and humanitarian crisis resulted with Venezuelan migrant and refugee crisis in the region. During his first term, Trump secured the support of right-wing governments, particularly Jair Bolsonaro’s Brazil, in pursuing a U.S.-led resolution to the crisis. This strategy further isolated Venezuela in the region and even pushed regional organizations like UNASUR (Union of South American Nations) to the brink of disintegration. Although sanctions on the Maduro government may decrease in Trump’s second term, key political figures in his administration—such as Secretary of State Marco Rubio—view military intervention in Venezuela as a viable option. Venezuelan migration remains a pressing issue in Latin America, particularly for Colombia, Peru, and Brazil. However, South American leaders take a critical stance toward potential U.S. military intervention against Maduro. Additionally, Cuba, which faced tensions with Trump’s administration after he repealed Obama-era agreements, continues to support Venezuela. On a broader geopolitical scale, external actors like Iran and China have voiced strong opposition to potential U.S. intervention in Venezuela, creating further challenges for the Trump administration. South American nations, particularly Brazil and Argentina, are expected to be cautious regarding U.S. tariffs on key exports such as steel and agricultural products. Brazil’s growing role in BRICS and its deepening economic ties with China could be perceived as a strategic threat by the Trump administration. For instance, BRICS’s decision to expand economic transactions in yuan as an alternative to the U.S. dollar has prompted Trump to issue threats against member states. Moreover, ideological divergences between Lula and Trump could strain bilateral relations despite Brazil’s emphasis on cooperation. Trump’s protectionist measures may negatively impact Brazil’s agricultural and energy sectors. Given that Brazilian exports to the U.S. reached record levels in 2024, any deterioration in relations could have significant economic repercussions, potentially influencing the 2026 Brazilian elections. On the contrary, Javier Milei, the President of Argentina, has cultivated a notably close relationship with Trump, grounded in shared ideological perspectives and mutual admiration. However, potential limitations exist in this burgeoning partnership. Milei’s proposal to exit Mercosur (Southern Common Market) has sparked regional tensions, as the bloc’s regulations prohibit unilateral trade agreements without collective consent. Additionally, Milei’s confrontational stance toward China, labeling it an “assassin” and expressing intent to freeze relations, could pose challenges. China is a significant trading partner for Argentina, and such a drastic shift in foreign policy might have economic repercussions. In summary, while the ideological alignment between Milei and Trump lays a foundation for potential cooperation, domestic and international practical challenges may constrain their collaboration’s depth and effectiveness. Ultimately, the influence of the Monroe Doctrine on Trump’s Latin America policy may manifest in efforts to reinforce U.S. dominance in the region, curb the impact of China and other external powers, and safeguard U.S. security interests. However, this approach’s regional repercussions and potential consequences must be carefully assessed. The Trump administration will undoubtedly need to formulate a strategy to counter China’s growing presence in Latin America. Rather than relying solely on threats and sanctions, this strategy should focus on fostering competition through diversified investments and infrastructure projects. Encouraging U.S. companies to shift production to Latin America to strengthen regional supply chains also remains a viable option. However, it remains uncertain whether the U.S. will provide substantial investment or infrastructure assistance to the region. Meanwhile, China has already braced itself against the Trump administration, with Beijing signaling its preparedness for a potential economic confrontation. At the same time, ideological divisions and differing priorities continue to undermine Latin America’s capacity to respond collectively to common challenges. Trump’s preference for bilateral agreements over multilateralism threatens to weaken regional unity on critical issues such as climate change, inequality, poverty, and organized crime. In this context, a key development to watch will be how Lula da Silva’s government positions itself as a regional power in response to Trump’s interventionist policies. The extent to which Brazil possesses the structural resources to promote regional cooperation and how it balances the U.S.-China power struggle in favor of Latin America’s interests will also be crucial in shaping the region’s trajectory in the coming years.

#### The embargo makes the US an international pariah

Acosta 23 [Nelson, Correspondent at Reuters, U.N. votes to end US embargo on Cuba; US and Israel oppose, 11/2/23, https://www.reuters.com/world/americas/un-votes-end-us-embargo-cuba-us-israel-oppose-2023-11-02/, Herrity]

The U.N. General Assembly called for the 31st time on the United States to end its decades-long trade embargo against Cuba as the communist-run island suffers its worst economic crisis in decades, with shortages of food, fuel and medicine.

The non-binding resolution was approved by 187 countries and opposed only by the United States and Israel, with Ukraine abstaining.

Cuban Foreign Minister Bruno Rodriguez said in a speech before the assembly that the "blockade prevents Cuba from accessing food, medicines, and technological and medical equipment."

Havana is also prohibited from exporting to the neighboring United States, Rodriguez said, curtailing access to a massive market for its goods and costing Cuba nearly $5 billion in losses in 2022 alone.

"The blockade (embargo) qualifies as a crime of genocide," said Rodriguez, who said the U.S. policies were deliberately aimed at promoting suffering among the Cuban people in order to force change in the government.

The trade embargo was put in place following Fidel Castro's 1959 revolution and has remained largely unchanged, though some elements were stiffened by former President Donald Trump. The web of U.S. laws and regulations complicate financial transactions and the acquisition of goods and services by the Cuban government.

U.S. diplomat Paul Folmsbee, in a brief speech opposing the resolution, said the embargo was aimed at promoting "human rights and fundamental liberties in Cuba" and that the U.S. made exceptions for humanitarian purposes.

"The United States continues to be a significant source of humanitarian goods to the Cuban people and one of Cuba's main trading partners," the diplomat said.

He noted that the United States last year sold Cuba $295 million worth of agricultural products.

The long-running dispute between Cuba and the United States shows little sign of detente, despite some modest gestures of goodwill under the administration of U.S. President Joe Biden.

#### Lifting embargo provides a shift towards diplomacy.

Bandow 22 [Doug, senior fellow at the Cato Institute, The Cuban Embargo Has Failed, 2/17/22, https://www.cato.org/commentary/cuban-embargo-has-failed, Herrity]

Six decades ago the Kennedy administration imposed an embargo on Cuba. A dozen American presidents have enforced the island’s economic isolation, substantially tightening controls in recent years. For a time Washington even cited Havana as a state sponsor of terrorism. The U.S. campaign, observed Mauricio Vicent of El Pais, is “without doubt the longest punitive measure ever imposed on a country in modern history.” Washington’s efforts were reinforced by the collapse of the Soviet Union, which ended outside subsidies for the island. Cuba’s GDP shrank by more than a third during what was called the “Special Period.” Venezuela’s Hugo Chavez later stepped in, but Caracas’s economic collapse ended its bountiful subsidies as well. Through it all U.S. policymakers, Florida Cuban expatriates, and vote‐​seeking Republican politicians collaborated to wage economic war on the island. Now, finally, the communist government has fallen. Political prisoners have been released. Castro family and friends have fled. Elections have brought to power officials promising to dismantle the socialist economy. The incoming government even proposed expanding Guantanamo Bay for the U.S. Only kidding! Washington’s policy has completely and utterly failed. The U.S. should stop punishing the people of Cuba for their government’s crimes. Fidel Castro has died and Raúl Castro has retired, but the communist government remains and includes several Castro family members. The jails are bulging after protests in July, with hundreds arrested and many simply disappeared without notice to their families. Trump administration sanctions, left in place by President Joe Biden, continue to cripple the private economy, which had been expanding and undermining government authority. While it was expected to at least roll back the Trump administration’s measures, which hurt private entrepreneurs in Cuba more than government apparatchiks, the Biden administration has done nothing. Some Democrats speculate that the administration is waiting for the midterm elections to pass, or perhaps even for Biden’s reelection, just as President Barack Obama held off until his second term to act. Of course, Biden may not get a second chance. The embargo may be the most complete, longest, and most enduring policy failure in American history. In 1959 Fidel Castro led a revolution against a U.S.-backed strongman, Fulgencio Batista. Castro proved to be even more despotic and turned to the Soviet Union for support. Washington imposed an embargo, which has metastasized through subsequent regulations and laws. The embargo was proposed, the outgoing Eisenhower administration admitted, to impoverish the Cuban people. The State Department’s Lester Mallory urged action that “while as adroit and inconspicuous as possible makes the greatest inroads in denying money and supplies to Cuba, to decrease monetary and real wages, to bring about hunger, desperation and overthrow of government.” Decades later, Fidel Castro is dead and brother Raúl is formally retired. The presidency and party leadership have devolved upon the colorless functionary Miguel Díaz‐​Canel, who retains the founders’ willingness to suppress dissent and enforce obedience. Alas, the reality of Cuban communism does not reflect the rosy assessments of the happy lefty tourists who wander the island in search of a collectivist paradise. Ever since Lincoln Steffens proclaimed of the Soviet Union, “I’ve seen the future, and it works,” progressives have visited new dictatorships hoping to spy the long‐​awaited utopia. Fidel Castro eventually became an enduring revolutionary hero. Where better for lefty intellectuals to vacation than Cuba for a guided tour? Even today, many on the left excuse the repression of Castro’s regime. Cuban officials might occasionally make a mistake, they say, but most blame can be reliably placed upon the U.S. Last July Cuban demonstrators turned out shouting libertad! and were promptly dispatched in the usual communist fashion. Yet left‐​wing commentators were uncomfortable that the Cuban people desire what most people elsewhere desire: liberty. Despite its remarkably good public relations, Cuba remains a dictatorship. Last year Freedom House rated Cuba toward the bottom of its global freedom rankings, deeming the country “not free” and giving it just 13 of 100 available points for its political and civil liberties. Explained Freedom House: “Cuba’s one‐​party communist state outlaws political pluralism, bans independent media, suppresses dissent, and severely restricts basic civil liberties. The government continues to dominate the economy despite recent reforms that permit some private‐​sector activity. The regime’s undemocratic character has not changed despite a generational transition in political leadership between 2018 and 2019 that included the introduction of a new constitution.” The latest report from Human Rights Watch covered last year’s events, including the dramatic summer protests: The Cuban government continues to repress and punish virtually all forms of dissent and public criticism. At the same time, Cubans continue to endure a dire economic crisis, which impacts their social and economic rights. … The government employs arbitrary detention to harass and intimidate critics, independent activists, political opponents, and others. Security officers rarely present arrest warrants to justify detaining critics. In some cases, detainees are released after receiving official warnings, which prosecutors may use in subsequent criminal trials to show a pattern of what they call “delinquent” behavior. All this despite six decades of the U.S. generally increasing economic sanctions. Only President Barack Obama broke that pattern, rolling back some penalties and reestablishing full diplomatic relations. The Cuban people loved him for it. When I visited in 2017, cars still sported decals with Obama’s picture from his visit the previous year. The government underestimated his popularity. Foreign Minister Bruno Rodriguez complained about Obama’s “deep attack on our ideas, our history, our culture, and our symbols” and desire to use economic appeals to force political change. However, President Donald Trump cared more about Cuban‐​American votes than Cuban lives and imposed additional sanctions, even adding a new twist, allowing U.S. lawsuits against foreign investors in Cuba. Human‐​rights activists long had criticized the embargo as counterproductive, used by the regime to excuse its failings and justify its crimes. Cuba’s small businesspeople and their employees, who invested or worked in tourist‐​friendly industries—restaurants, Airbnbs, and taxis—were even more critical. By discouraging U.S. visitors, Trump wrecked the nascent public sector, which at its height provided 40 percent of the island’s jobs. Airbnb owner Julia de la Rosa complained to me that “So many people opened businesses for American tourists” who then were prohibited from coming. Workers had to return to unproductive state employment, strengthening the Castro regime’s control. In short, sanctions worked no better in Cuba than in Venezuela, Syria, Iran, North Korea, and Russia, whose governments refused to abandon their most important political objectives despite U.S. economic pressure. Cubans expected Biden to return to the reform path. After all, he had pledged to “try to reverse the failed Trump policies that inflicted harm on Cubans.” Instead, after the July protests, he added new sanctions “to bolster the cause of the Cuban people.” And that was just a start, he warned: “There will be more, unless there’s some drastic change in Cuba, which I don’t anticipate.” Biden matched Trump in pious hypocrisy, announcing “we hear the cries of freedom coming from the island. We’re holding the regime accountable.” Alas, the Díaz‐​Canel government did not fold. In fact, the invincibly ignorant Cuba hawks—most notably Marco Rubio, Ted Cruz, and Robert Menendez—did the communist regime a favor by discouraging contact with America. Collin Laverty of Cuba Educational Travel, which develops trips to conform with U.S. law (and organized my second visit), observed: “If you want to create more space for debate, expanding the entrepreneurial class is one way.” Indeed, after encouraging the development of private business in a desperate attempt to spur the economy, the regime came to fear the rapid increase in private sector firms and cracked down. Some on the left agree. Antoni Kapcia, who has written sympathetically of the Cuban revolution, noted: I’ve always argued that if an American president really wanted to destabilize the Cuban system, they would get rid of the embargo, or promise to get rid of the embargo. To some extent, this is what Barack Obama did, at least in the sense of saying the established policy had failed and slightly easing some restrictions, although he certainly didn’t lift the embargo altogether. But most of the US presidents have done precisely the opposite, and tightened it, or at least continued the involvement. That gives the system and the leadership an alibi in Cuba. But it also plays into nationalism. John F. Kennedy might be excused for not knowing any better when he embargoed the new revolutionary state. Joe Biden has no such excuse. Cuba’s continuing oppression of its people is a tragedy. However, after six decades of futile economic warfare, the U.S. should stop punishing the Cuban people for the sins of their government. Biden should live up to his campaign promise to empower “the Cuban people to freely determine their own outcome, their own future.”

#### Diplomacy leads to regional stability

Bandow 21 [Doug, senior fellow at the Cato Institute, As Castro Rule Fades in Cuba, Americans Should Engage the Cuban People, 4/19/21, https://www.cato.org/commentary/castro-rule-fades-cuba-americans-should-engage-cuban-people, Herrity]

The Castro brothers ruled Cuba for more than six decades. The results have not been pretty. An island impoverished in body and mind. Even artists have been protesting of late, punished by the security forces for having the temerity to question the communist authorities. However, change is in the offing. Fidel died in 2016. A petty tyrant compared to the 20th Century’s murderous triad of Hitler‐​Mao‐​Stalin, he still oppressed millions. Raul, longtime defense minister before succeeding his brother as president and communist party head, quit the former three years ago and resigned the latter last week. Although his children are influential, they will not succeed him. Cuba will no longer belong politically to the Castro family. He said he would turn power over to younger officials “full of passion and anti‐​imperialist spirit,” meaning willing to continue holding the Cuban people in brutal bondage. The reality of communist rule has been dismissed by many on the Left ever since the Castros took control. Some self‐​styled progressives still wax lyrical about Cuban communism, energized by Fidel Castro’s well‐​publicized Cold War resistance to U.S. pressure. His legions arrived in Havana on New Year’s Day in 1959 promising to liberate the people. However, the soon‐​to‐​be global celebrity turned his country into an open‐​air prison and little has changed decades later. For instance, Freedom House rates Cuba as Not Free, scoring just 13 out of 100. On political rights the island scores a pitiful 1 out of 40, along with Saudi Arabia, Eritrea, Yemen, Libya, and Somalia. Washington should further improve the prospects for fundamental change by ending its decrepit and failed embargo plus additional sanctions. Explained Freedom House: “Cuba’s one‐​party communist state outlaws political pluralism, bans independent media, suppresses dissent, and severely restricts basic civil liberties. The government continues to dominate the economy despite recent reforms that permit some private‐​sector activity. The regime’s undemocratic character has not changed despite a generational transition in political leadership between 2018 and 2019 that included the introduction of a new constitution.” Human Rights Watch came to a similar judgment: “The Cuban government represses and punishes dissent and public criticism. Tactics against critics include beatings, public shaming, travel restrictions, short‐​term detention, fines, online harassment, surveillance, and termination of employment. In October 2019, Miguel Diaz‐​Canel was confirmed as president of Cuba, with nearly 97 percent of the votes of National Assembly members. His presidency has seen little change in the government’s human rights policy. Arbitrary detention and harassment of critics continue. Under his government, Cuba has used Decree‐​Law 370/2018, which came into effect in July 2019 and severely limits free speech, to detain, fine, and harass critics.” Victims of Castroite repression include intellectuals. The regime even targets artists, at least those who fail to praise their oppressors. Art in service of the totalitarian state — the famed “socialist realism” of the Soviet Union — was always the true communist ideal. Art reached its apogee as oppression beautified during China’s Cultural Revolution, with depictions of a benevolent, even cherubic Mao Zedong presiding over adoring crowds of besotted revolutionaries as a veritable civil war raged on streets and in communities across the land. Adoring artists of the Castros have been few of late. Last year, reported Reuters, featured a “crackdown on the San Isidro Movement of dissident artists and activists … that formed two years ago to protest curbs on freedom of expression, often through irreverent performances. The situation came to a head after authorities besieged the movement’s headquarters in Old Havana’s San Isidro district [and] then … broke up a hunger strike there that had started to gain international attention. Security forces forcibly removed and briefly detained the five members on hunger strike and nine other people in the house, citing violations of coronavirus protocols.” This crackdown in turn spurred 300 artists to protest outside the cultural ministry. Officials initially met with demonstrators, generating hope of an ongoing dialogue, but Diaz‐​Canel, Raul Castro’s successor who some in the West hoped would liberalize the system, denounced the artists for “an imperialist show” which he blamed on the Trump administration. Luis Manuel Otero, one of the San Isidro Movement’s founders, is under house arrest. He observed: “People are more and more miserable, more and more hungry, more and more desperate.” So much for younger apparatchiks being different than their predecessors. Cuban communism kills fewer people than did its Soviet and Chinese counterparts, but equally murders people’s spirits. The Castros did no better with the economy but predictably blamed the US However, if socialism is so wonderful, a system designed to cause the best of humanity to serve one another, people contributing according to their ability and receiving according to their needs, then American economic policy should be irrelevant. Cuba should be leading the world toward a new utopia after 62 years of selfless communist economic management. Instead, food rations go unfulfilled while communist politicos seek foreign investment to hide their failure. During the Cold War Cuba was both a humanitarian and security challenge. However, Washington didn’t worry much about human rights then, being happy to work with most anyone who was willing to resist communist revolutionaries. Such was America’s dalliance with Fulgencio Batista, the dictator ousted by the Castro brothers. And with a multitude of other authoritarian regimes across the region and well beyond. Had the Castros aligned themselves with the US rather than Moscow, American advisers with pockets full of cash would have immediately embarked for the island. However, the alliance with the Soviet Union, which led to the Cuban Missile Crisis, offered a security justification for the embargo, imposed in 1960. Human rights activists on the island complained that the regime used the embargo as an excuse for its failure. But the Castros’ survival only caused Washington to tighten economic sanctions, with no greater effect. Moscow kept the Castros afloat as they yet again proved that the quickest way to destroy an economy was to socialize it. The U.S.S.R.‘s collapse at the end of 1991 ended both the embargo’s justification and Soviet Union’s lifeline. Cuba ended up just a small, pitiful impoverished dictatorship fronted by a loquacious public showman so insecure that he imprisoned critics for years, even decades. The Cuban economy contracted by more than a third. The regime euphemistically termed that time as the “Special Period.” Washington should have responded by highlighting the alternative of freedom. Flood the island with Americans, especially those with family there. Send forth America’s best ambassadors, common folks who would share experiences and ideas. Such engagement wouldn’t directly overturn brutal Cuban state power, of course, but would be naturally subversive, undermining the regime’s very foundations. Unfortunately, Washington did the opposite, intensifying its attempt to starve the Cuban people into revolt. The Castro regime staggered on. All the while remaining a global symbol of resistance to US dominance. The more tightly Washington, in the service of the hardline Cuban‐​American community in Florida — no president wanted to risk losing that state’s electoral votes, no matter how counterproductive the policy — squeezed Havana, the harsher the Castros treated their domestic critics. Economic desperation forced the regime to turn to the market, however, allowing people to work privately. Access to foreign currency became a particularly prized opportunity. I met engineers who drove pedicabs and doctors who washed dishes. Families were allowed to open small businesses. “Capitalism,” with the hiring of outside employees, was not allowed, yet an amazing number of distant and long‐​lost “cousins” showed up seeking jobs. Over time more elaborate enterprises were allowed, generating around 40 percent of the economy’s jobs. Unsurprisingly, observed American University’s William LeoGrande, “among ordinary Cubans, the desire for a better relationship with the United States is almost universal.” In contrast, the regime was frustrated by success. It complained of entrepreneurs running too many businesses, avoiding taxes, and, perhaps worst of all, undermining Cuba’s socialist ethos, which sought to spread hardship as completely and widely as possible. The authorities also worried about losing control to an ever larger and prosperous private sector. Although there was no evidence that the communist system was about to collapse, popular dissatisfaction was rife. A retired diplomat told me that three of his four grandchildren left the country to seek work. Almost everyone recognized that the Castros had failed their people. After being reelected President Barack Obama addressed Cuba. He relaxed controls, though his discretion was limited by statute. Much of Cuba’s population turned out to see him when he visited in 2016. Decals with his photo still abounded on cars when I was there the following year. Raul’s regime — Fidel having retired and only a few months away from death — felt threatened by Obama’s presence. Foreign Minister Bruno Rodriguez criticized Obama’s “deep attack on our ideas, our history, our culture and our symbols.” The authorities “completely underestimated his popularity,” a Western journalist stationed in Cuba told me: “Obama’s visit was tremendously challenging, like Kryptonite.” The best way to further discomfit the regime would have been to expand the economic opening. Collin Laverty of Cuba Educational Travel, who arranged my 2017 trip, observed: “If you want to create more space for debate, expanding the entrepreneurial class is one way.” By creating not just more business owners, but more people employed by private firms. Instead, President Donald Trump reversed Obama’s limited opening to the island. Citing human rights violations of the sort that Trump ignored, and sometimes even seemed to celebrate, in Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, and elsewhere, he imposed new restrictions on investment in and travel to the island. He was urged on by faux friends of freedom, such as Marco Rubio, who has never visited the island and refused to even meet with Cuban entrepreneurs brought to the US by the State Department. Rubio’s priority, like so many other politicians who pontificate on the issue, was to win votes in America, not liberate people in Cuba. Trump’s policy worked no better than his economic wars against Iran, North Korea, Russia, and Venezuela. As Secretary of State Mike Pompeo strutted about the globe pompously celebrating his “swagger,” governments uniformly rejected his demands. In not one case did sanctions force an antagonistic regime to surrender, contra the administration’s predictions. The campaign proved to be an embarrassing and almost total failure. The Trump administration gave new evidence for the classic definition of insanity: constantly repeating something while expecting different results. Cubans with whom I met — owners of restaurants, Airbnbs, taxi services, and other small businesses — were frustrated that US politicians, including Cuban‐​Americans like Rubio, would put their political ambitions before the Cuban people’s future. These people invested in expectation of more American tourists and found the US government against them. Julia de la Rosa, who owned an Airbnb, noted that “So many people opened businesses for American tourists,” but after Trump’s action “there is little demand.” So far, the Biden administration has done nothing to reverse Trump’s counterproductive strategy. Of course, the president has been in office only three months and has much on his policy plate. Nevertheless, the decision should be easy. Today, lift every Trump sanction imposed over the last four years. Tomorrow, create a working group to explore the president’s authority to lift more restrictions. The day after, propose legislation ending all sanctions on the island. The Cuban people deserved liberation in 1959. Alas, the Castro brothers brought even worse oppression and poverty. The Cuban people almost certainly would have been better off today if the old regime had survived, eventually evolving into something more liberal, open, and productive. Unfortunately, the past cannot be relived, leaving the present dominated by poverty and tyranny. Shortly before taking over the presidency Diaz‐​Canel offered his depressing vision: “I think there always will be continuity.” However, Castro’s retirement reduces the regime’s revolutionary legitimacy and increases pressure for meaningful generational change. Diaz‐​Canel must respond to popular demands for change or risk eventually being swept aside. Baruch College’s Ted Henken opined that Diaz‐​Canel “was selected by the old guard to maintain continuity and control, but to have any legitimacy with most ordinary Cubans, he urgently needs to introduce fundamental reforms to halt a collapsing economy and address growing social and political unrest.” Washington should further improve the prospects for fundamental change by ending its decrepit and failed embargo plus additional sanctions. That wouldn’t guarantee Cuba’s freedom overnight. But Cubans with whom I spoke wanted US to stop making their lives tougher. “They are hurting us,” De la Rosa complained of Washington. The Cuban people see increased economic opportunities as their best hope. Insisted one: “We need the Americans back.”)

#### Relations with Cuba do not exist now

Oliver & Nodarse Venancio 22 [Isabella, program assistant for the Drug Policy, Women’s Incarceration, and Cuba programs, Mariakarla, Assistant Director for Cuba at WOLA, Understanding the Failure of the U.S. Embargo on Cuba, 2/4/22, https://www.wola.org/analysis/understanding-failure-of-us-cuba-embargo/, Herrity]

The comprehensive set of sanctions that is recognized today as the embargo was formalized by President John F. Kennedy in 1962. It banned all trade and financial transactions with the island unless licensed by the Treasury Department subject to detailed regulations contained today in the 56-page Cuban Assets Control Regulations. This embargo built on the precedent set by President Eisenhower who cut off U.S. exports to the island, except for food and medicine. President Johnson then expanded the embargo’s reach through a multilateral policy of economic denial in 1964, which severely inhibited Cuba’s efforts to foster economic relations with other countries. Despite continued efforts by the United States to cut off the island from the rest of the world, most of Europe and Latin America reinstated their relations with Cuba after close to a decade.

WOLA Senior Fellow Dr. LeoGrande examined how, prior to the Obama-era relaxations, certain parts of the embargo retracted or expanded under different presidents, each with their own political priorities. Some administrations employed tactics that make it significantly more difficult now to dismantle the embargo apparatus. President Reagan was the first to add Cuba to the State Sponsor of Terrorism List (SSOT), and President George H.W. Bush signed the Cuban Democracy Act to once again prohibit Cuba’s ability to buy products from U.S. companies operating in third countries. Further cementing the permanence of the embargo, the 1996 Helms-Burton Act made it virtually impossible for the president to undo the set of sanctions without congressional approval.

On December 17, 2014, President Obama broke the mold in the U.S. approach to Cuba policy. His administration lifted restrictions for Cuban-Americans to travel and to send family and donative remittances, reestablished the U.S. Embassy in Havana, removed Cuba from the SSOT list, expanded access to the internet, and licensed a range of trade opportunities for U.S. companies. Beyond these specific policies, this shift in discourse by a U.S. president signaled the biggest change in U.S.-Cuba policy since diplomatic relations were severed in 1961, and ushered in a new era in the relations, leading to 23 bilateral accords on issues of mutual interest. The next two years saw an unprecedented boom in private-sector activities in Cuba, significant openings for civil society discourse, and other reforms by the Cuban government.

In 2017, the Trump administration undid all the progress Obama achieved and more. It swiftly imposed new restrictions prohibiting U.S. companies from doing business with certain Cuban companies managed by the armed forces and prohibited U.S. visitors from staying in hotels operated by those companies. It eliminated people-to-people educational travel, placed strict caps on family remittances, and made it impossible to send remittances by wire service. It also interrupted consular services and significantly diminished staffing at the U.S. Embassy in Havana following the onset of unexplained health incidents, now known as the ‘Havana Syndrome’ cases, due to concerns of foul play by foreign states that have now been dismissed following findings by the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA).

Trump also decided to implement Title III of the Helms-Burton Act to enable U.S. nationals to pursue lawsuits against any business or person, U.S. or foreign, benefiting from property nationalized after 1959 discouraged foreign investment in Cuba. Finally, the Trump administration put Cuba back on the SSOT list during its final days in office in an effort to make it harder for President Biden to repair U.S.-Cuban relations.

Today, U.S. policy towards Cuba is at a standstill. Despite multiple campaign promises during the 2020 election campaign, the Biden administration has not advanced engagement policies with the island. It has begun restaffing the U.S. Embassy in Havana, but with no clear timeline on the resumption of consular services. Its policy review is still paused, and after having received recommendations from the Working Group on Remittances on the best options for re-opening wire services, there has been no word of when a more flexible policy will be in place. The Working Group was established in July of 2021 immediately following the protests of July 11.

As Dr. LeoGrande noted, “For sixty years, the economic embargo has failed to achieve any of its stated policy goals while exacting a high human cost, stifling the development of the Cuban economy and making daily life harder for Cuban families.”

#### Lifting Embargo key to Cuban economy

Bandow 21 [Doug senior fellow at the Cato Institute, specializing in foreign policy and civil liberties, Engage Rather than Sanction the Cuban People, 8/20/21, https://www.cato.org/commentary/engage-rather-sanction-cuban-people, Herrity]

After six decades of tyranny, the Cuban people made clear to the world that they wanted liberty. The American left, long with a soft spot for tyrants who espouse socialism, insisted that Cubans loved their jailers. However, last month’s demonstrations exploded across the island with people shouting ¡libertad!, or liberty. They want what most people around the world want: freedom.

Showing no concern for the sort of civil liberties that the left demands at home, Havana’s communist regime arrested hundreds of protestors and called out regime thugs to help restore order. However, opposition to the government is only likely to grow.

The Castro brothers overthrew a dictator, only to establish an even more brutal authoritarian rule. Committed communists, their collectivist policies impoverished Cubans in body and mind. Some self‐​styled progressives, enjoying the good life in America, still fawn over the supposed glories of Cuban communism, but Cubans who say otherwise risk prison. The group Freedom House rates Cuba as Not Free, scoring only 13 out of 100. In terms of political liberty, the island is at the same level as Eritrea, Libya, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, and Yemen.

Punishing the Cuban people by restricting travel, trade, and investment limits neither the regime’s desire nor their ability to oppress.

Fidel Castro has passed away. Raul Castro has retired, though he remains influential. Taking over was Miguel Diaz‐​Canel, a colorless apparatchik born after the revolution, but no less inclined to jail anyone who questions communist rule.

For six decades the U.S. government has waged war on the Cuban people rather than its government. What began as a simple embargo on Cuba has metastasized, as frustrated Cold Warriors failed to reverse the revolution. They used secondary, and then financial sanctions to strike out against people around the world doing business with the island. Although President Barack Obama relaxed the regulations and reopened diplomatic relations, President Donald Trump, playing to Cuban‐​American hardliners in Florida, shifted back toward a policy of economic isolation. He may have won some votes, but he mainly succeeded in imposing more misery on average Cubans.

Although the Cuban people hoped that Joe Biden would return to the path of Obama, they continue to suffer under Trump’s restrictions. And now, in response to the July protests, Biden has added new sanctions. His action, he said, was taken “to bolster the cause of the Cuban people.”

In fact, the penalties he imposed were largely symbolic, applying to Cuba’s internal special forces, defense minister, police force, and the latter’s leaders. None of those affected likely do much business in America and probably weren’t planning on playing tourist in Florida any time soon. No one imagines Diaz‐​Canel firing the defense minister or shutting down the cops in response to American sanctions.

However, Biden added ominously, “There will be more, unless there’s some drastic change in Cuba, which I don’t anticipate.” He went so far as to say “We hear the cries of freedom coming from the island. We’re holding the regime accountable.”

But this is political theater, aimed at Florida for next year’s midterm elections and the 2024 presidential campaign. Punishing the Cuban people by restricting travel, trade, and investment limits neither the regime’s desire nor their ability to oppress.

When I first visited Cuba, legally, with a journalist delegation, the dissidents we met complained that the regime used the embargo as an excuse for its economic failure. Soviet subsidies helped keep the regime afloat for its first three decades. And there was foreign investment; I stayed at a Dutch‐​owned hotel. Cuba’s economic backwardness—it appeared that Cubans were not aware of the invention of building paint, did not understand the importance of road maintenance, and believed auto production halted in 1960—was a product of socialist mismanagement.

While the usual apparatchiks sang the usual praises of the regime, the people knew better. There may be no better evidence of the failure of Castro & Co. than the fact so many young people head for the national exits when possible. I met a retired diplomat who allowed that three of his four grandchildren went overseas to work. His story is not unique. In Cuba socialism means poverty, and people know it.

In an open economy Cubans could not help but prosper. The Cuban people are enormously entrepreneurial and hard‐​working. The streets are filled with hawkers trying to get tourists to visit private restaurants and buy cigars snatched from government operations. An engineer drove a pedicab to earn much‐​desired hard currency. An anesthesiologist washed dishes in a restaurant to supplement his income. Nevertheless, noted American University’s William LeoGrande, “among ordinary Cubans, the desire for a better relationship with the United States is almost universal.”

Drop sanctions and the regime would have no more excuses. The sort of economic growth which would result would further undermine the regime. Indeed, even Obama’s partial liberalization had a dramatic impact on Cuba, spurring private business, which came to provide about 40 percent of the island’s jobs. Obama’s visit energized the population—when I went in 2017 I saw cars still adorned with decals bearing his likeness—and angered the regime. Foreign Minister Bruno Rodriguez criticized Obama’s “deep attack on our ideas, our history, our culture and our symbols.”

Trump should have lifted even more sanctions and asked Congress to remove the others. Collin Laverty of Cuba Educational Travel, who arranges trips, including mine, that comply with U.S. law told me: “If you want to create more space for debate, expanding the entrepreneurial class is one way.” Liberalization creates not just more private businesses, but also more employees.

I found the pro‐​American commercial class frustrated by Trump’s callous decision to reimpose sanctions, sacrificing their livelihoods in an appeal to hardline domestic political factions. I stayed at an Airbnb, ate at private restaurants, and traveled in private cabs. These and other businesses had expanded in expectation of more visitors, but then suffered a collapse in demand. Airbnb owner Julia de la Rosa observed that “So many people opened businesses for American tourists” and then saw demand shrink. Those who lost jobs had to go back to work for the state.

Last month’s ruthless political crackdown reminded the world of the brutal nature of communist rule. Sanctioning individual leaders is a harmless symbolic step, but if the Biden administration and Congress really want to challenge the regime they should end restrictions on the rest of the Cuban people, who have been waiting six decades for true liberation.

Washington should stop punishing the very people the Cuban government is oppressing. One frustrated Cuban told me that “We need the Americans back.” President Biden, let the American people go!

#### The embargo affects every level of life in Cuba

Adler 22 [David, political economist and general coordinator of the Progressive International, Cuba has been under US embargo for 60 years. It’s time for that to end, 2/3/22, https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2022/feb/03/cuba-us-embargo-must-end, Herrity]

“There is no embargo on Cuba.” This bold claim – made by Florida senator Marco Rubio on the floor of the US Senate last July – has quickly hardened into conventional wisdom across aisles of US Congress and among Rubio’s base of support in the Cuban diaspora. The US blockade is a myth, a bogeyman for the Communist party of Cuba. “Cuba is not isolated,” Rubio said. Those who say otherwise either “don’t know what they’re talking about … or they’re liars. Those are the only two options.” Here in Havana, though, the isolating effects of the US embargo are impossible to ignore. The docks are half-empty: the US has banned all cruise ships, cultural exchange and educational delegations that once drove the largest industry on the island. The Western Union branches are shuttered: the US has banned all remittances through Cuban firms and their affiliates to the millions of Cuban families that rely on assistance from abroad. The hospitals are understocked: the US embargo has forbidden the export of medical technology with US components, leading to chronic shortages of over-the-counter medicine. Even the internet is a zone of isolation: the US embargo means that Cubans cannot use Zoom, Skype or Microsoft Teams to communicate with the outside world. In short, the US embargo impacts every aspect of life on the island – and that is the precisely the point. Sixty years ago on this day, President John F Kennedy introduced Proclamation 3447, Embargo on All Trade with Cuba, designed to isolate Cuba and stop the spread of so-called Sino-Soviet Communism “Every possible means should be undertaken promptly to weaken the economic life of Cuba,” the assistant secretary of state, Lester D Mallory, wrote in an April 1960 memo. The goal of the Kennedy administration was clear: “To bring about hunger, desperation and overthrow of government.” Today, Joe Biden lives up to Kennedy’s legacy and the ambitions of his Cuban embargo. Not only has the president refused to undo the extraordinary sanctions imposed by the Trump administration, reneging on his campaign promise to restore diplomatic relations and leaving Cuba on the list of “state sponsors of terrorism”. He has also doubled down on the embargo, tightening restrictions and imposing a host of new sanctions against the Cuban government. Both the Biden administration and its Republican opposition claim that these measures are targeted at the regime, rather than the Cuban people. But the evidence to the contrary is not only anecdotal. The UN estimates that the embargo has cost Cuba over $130bn in damages – costs that are compounded by the penalties imposed by the US Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) on Cuba’s allies and investors. Between April 2019 and March 2020 alone, OFAC penalties amounted to over $2.4bn, targeting banks, insurance firms, energy companies and travel agencies alike. The effect of the embargo is therefore both local and global: it cripples the Cuban economy and undermines the multilateral system that the US claims to lead. The UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) reports that the embargo has had a “direct impact” on its operations in Cuba, citing costs, losses and damages that have resulted in drastic reduction of agricultural output on the island – despite the fact that FAO is “officially exempted” from the embargo. The UN development program (UNDP) cites its own challenges in the implementation of projects like its Global Fund to Fight Aids, Tuberculosis, and Malaria in Cuba – in particular, when Toyota Gibraltar Stockholdings was forced to cancel the supply of vehicles to the UNDP office as a result of tightened US restrictions in 2018. And the UN Environmental Program (UNEP) highlights the ways in which the US embargo “not only affects that Caribbean country but also the subregion and the United States itself”. According to the UNEP, the embargo “eliminates” the possibility of regional cooperation on environmental issues and prevents the diffusion of critical technology to drive a green transition on the island. Critics of the embargo often rely on moral claims to make their case. It is no doubt a strong case: by its own admission, the US aims to “starve” the island of Cuba, and it is succeeding. The US coast guard reports that 586 Cubans have attempted to cross the ocean in the first fiscal quarter of 2022 alone, but the US government – despite its clear intention to inflame outward migration – refuses to welcome them. “Allow me to be clear,” the homeland security secretary, Alejandro Mayorkas, said to Cuban migrants, “if you take to the sea, you will not come to the United States.” But a much broader buffet of arguments is on offer to challenge the Cuban embargo on the occasion of its 60th anniversary. One is legal: Biden has called to “defend the liberal international order”, but his embargo clearly violates the UN charter and the international law it enshrines. Another is geopolitical: for the 29th consecutive year, members of the UN general assembly have voted to end the embargo by an overwhelming vote of 184 to two; with US hegemony on the wane, it can little afford such a flagrant display of unilateral force. And still another argument is democratic: 57% of US voters support lifting the embargo, while only 29% oppose; by enforcing the embargo, Joe Biden has allowed a minority of ageing defectors in southern Florida to dictate the foreign policy of an entire administration. Most of all, though, the embargo fails the test of its own logic. In its comments to the UN general assembly last year, the Biden administration argued that the embargo aims to “support the Cuban people in their quest to determine their own future”. But the Biden administration does not dare to explain how making Cuba poorer, sicker and more isolated supports their quest for self-determination. It is a cornerstone of US foreign policy that growth, wealth, and international integration are pathways to freedom. “Starving” the island of Cuba, then, sounds more like administering torture than paving the way to freedom. In his speech on the Senate floor, Marco Rubio argued that the US embargo is just a scapegoat for the communists of Cuba, a “talking point” for the regime. If that is the case, then, why not lift the embargo and take the talking point away? If communism is a failed system, then why not let it fail on its own terms, and let Cubans see for themselves the true face of their revolution? What is Marco Rubio so afraid of? If we are committed to supporting Cubans’ “quest to determine their own future”, then there is only one way forward: end the embargo, and let Cuba finally live.

#### Biden has made no progress in fixing Trump’s failures in Cuba

Oliver 2022 [Isabella; Program assistant for the Drug Policy, Women’s Incarceration, and Cuba programs, B.A. in International Studies, certificate in Latin American Studies; “Understanding the Failure of the U.S. Embargo on Cuba”; February 4, 2022; <https://www.wola.org/analysis/understanding-failure-of-us-cuba-embargo/>, Lemon]

On February 3, 1962, President John F. Kennedy imposed the U.S. embargo on Cuba. The 60th anniversary of the embargo is a stark reminder of the United States’ policy failures of the longest lasting series of sanctions in its foreign policy history. Today, more than half a century since the embargo was put in place, the Biden administration continues to uphold this symbol of hostility between the U.S. and Cuba in the midst of the most challenging humanitarian crisis on the island since the 1990s.

On December 17, 2014, President Obama broke the mold in the U.S. approach to Cuba policy. His administration lifted restrictions for Cuban-Americans to travel and to send family and donative remittances, reestablished the U.S. Embassy in Havana, removed Cuba from the SSOT list, expanded access to the internet, and licensed a range of trade opportunities for U.S. companies. Beyond these specific policies, this shift in discourse by a U.S. president signaled the biggest change in U.S.-Cuba policy since diplomatic relations were severed in 1961, and ushered in a new era in the relations, leading to 23 bilateral accords on issues of mutual interest. The next two years saw an unprecedented boom in private-sector activities in Cuba, significant openings for civil society discourse, and other reforms by the Cuban government.

In 2017, the Trump administration undid all the progress Obama achieved and more. It swiftly imposed new restrictions prohibiting U.S. companies from doing business with certain Cuban companies managed by the armed forces and prohibited U.S. visitors from staying in hotels operated by those companies. It eliminated people-to-people educational travel, placed strict caps on family remittances, and made it impossible to send remittances by wire service. It also interrupted consular services and significantly diminished staffing at the U.S. Embassy in Havana following the onset of unexplained health incidents, now known as the ‘Havana Syndrome’ cases, due to concerns of foul play by foreign states that have now been dismissed following findings by the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA).

Today, U.S. policy towards Cuba is at a standstill. Despite multiple campaign promises during the 2020 election campaign, the Biden administration has not advanced engagement policies with the island. It has begun restaffing the U.S. Embassy in Havana, but with no clear timeline on the resumption of consular services. Its policy review is still paused, and after having received recommendations from the Working Group on Remittances on the best options for re-opening wire services, there has been no word of when a more flexible policy will be in place. The Working Group was established in July of 2021 immediately following the protests of July 11.

Dr. Ricardo Torrez Pérez, a leading Cuban economist who is currently a research and teaching fellow at American University, examined the impact of the U.S. embargo on Cuba at a macro level. As a small island, Cuba is in a position where it depends on trade to survive. As a result of the complete prohibition on trade with the United States, a 2021 estimate by the Cuban government found that the embargo has cost the country close to $144 billion. A similar figure has been acknowledged by the United Nations.

#### Lifting the embargo has positive effects for both Cuba and the US economically

McWhinney 2023 [James; 25+ years as communications professional working for some of the nation’s largest mutual companies and banks, contributor for Investopedia; “The Impact of Ending the U.S. Embargo on Cuba”; September 4, 2023; <https://www.investopedia.com/articles/investing/022415/impact-ending-us-embargo-cuba.asp>, Lemon]

The travel embargo has had so many holes in it that plenty of U.S. citizens have gone back and forth, and there are a few U.S. commercial airlines that fly there. As for other types of commercial activities, other countries long ago seized the opportunity to cash in on Cuba's famous cigars and rum.

After the passage of six decades that saw the collapse of the Soviet Union, the end of the Cold War, and the passing of the torch by Fidel Castro to his brother Raul, who has also now retired, it is clear to all parties that the trade embargo did not achieve its purpose. Today, many argue that the embargo makes no real sense and that ending it will not only make U.S. consumers happy but also will further the goal of bringing a greater level of freedom to citizens of the island nation.

The U.S. imposed an embargo on Cuba after Castro toppled the government and installed a communist regime, which at the time was when the U.S. and the Soviet Union were in the tangles of the Cold War, fighting for the dominance of their ideologies (democracy versus communism) throughout the world. The embargo has severely hurt Cuba's economy, and with the Soviet Union no longer existing, communism no longer a threat to U.S. interests, and Cuba's move towards a more liberal economy, many have called for a lifting of the embargo; however, when that may fully happen is unknown.

#### Embargo hurts Cuban economy

Becker 2015 [Gary; University Professor of Economics and of Sociology; “Is It Time to End the Cuban Embargo?”; January 29, 2015; <https://www.chicagobooth.edu/review/is-it-time-to-end-cuban-embargo>, Lemon]

The embargo has prevented American companies from doing business with Cuba, and discouraged tourism to Cuba. The American government also tried with quite limited success to prevent other countries from trading with Cuba. In general, economic embargoes are undesirable because they interfere with free trade among countries. Yet a case could be made for an embargo against Cuba. Castro not only allowed Russian missiles to be installed in Cuba, just 90 miles from Florida, but was also actively trying to interfere in other countries by sending troops and so-called advisors. The aim of the embargo was to impose economic hardship on Cuba that would force Castro to drop these international actions, and possibly even lead to the toppling of his government and the end of communism in Cuba. Castro did stop his international adventurism, but he and communism remained firmly entrenched for decades.

It is time to end the embargo on the export and import of goods and services between the US and Cuba. The Cuban people will benefit almost immediately. This may just be the time when such a move put added pressure on the Cuban government to end its failed experiment with communism. The Cuban economy has done badly, and has fallen behind the economies of many comparable countries.

#### Embargo is costing both the U.S. and Cuba billions of dollars

Adler 2022 [Political economist and general coordinator of the Progressive International; “Cuba has been under the US embargo for 60 years. It’s time for that to end”; February 3, 2022; <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2022/feb/03/cuba-us-embargo-must-end>, Lemon]

In short, the US embargo impacts every aspect of life on the island – and that is precisely the point. Sixty years ago on this day, President John F Kennedy introduced Proclamation 3447, Embargo on All Trade with Cuba, designed to isolate Cuba and stop the spread of so-called Sino-Soviet Communism.

Today, Joe Biden lives up to Kennedy’s legacy and the ambitions of his Cuban embargo. Not only has the president refused to undo the extraordinary sanctions imposed by the Trump administration, reneging on his campaign promise to restore diplomatic relations and leaving Cuba on the list of “state sponsors of terrorism”. He has also doubled down on the embargo, tightening restrictions and imposing a host of new sanctions against the Cuban government.

Both the Biden administration and its Republican opposition claim that these measures are targeted at the regime, rather than the Cuban people. But the evidence to the contrary is not only anecdotal. The UN estimates that the embargo has cost Cuba over $130bn in damages – costs that are compounded by the penalties imposed by the US Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) on Cuba’s allies and investors. Between April 2019 and March 2020 alone, OFAC penalties amounted to over $2.4bn, targeting banks, insurance firms, energy companies and travel agencies alike. The effect of the embargo is therefore both local and global: it cripples the Cuban economy and undermines the multilateral system that the US claims to lead.

The embargo fails the test of its own logic. In its comments to the UN general assembly last year, the Biden administration argued that the embargo aims to “support the Cuban people in their quest to determine their own future”. But the Biden administration does not dare to explain how making Cuba poorer, sicker and more isolated supports their quest for self-determination. It is a cornerstone of US foreign policy that growth, wealth, and international integration are pathways to freedom. “Starving” the island of Cuba, then, sounds more like administering torture than paving the way to freedom.

#### Cuban population is paying the toll

Rhodes 2021 [Christopher; Lecturer in Government at Harvard University, lecturer in Social Sciences at Boston University; “The US Embargo on Cuba has failed”; July 21, 2021; <https://www.aljazeera.com/opinions/2021/7/21/the-us-embargo-on-cuba-has-failed>, Lemon]

The strongest reason to end the embargo against Cuba is the massive toll that the policy continues to enact on the Cuban population. Both the Cuban government and the United Nations have estimated that the embargo has cost the Cuban economy $130 billion over six decades. It’s also worth noting that the US Chamber of Commerce estimates that the embargo costs the US economy billions of dollars each year, as well. The human toll is harder to quantify, but has clearly been significant. Human rights experts at the UN have urged the US to ease sanctions during the COVID-19 pandemic, arguing that such a change will save lives by allowing Cuba greater access to medical supplies and equipment.

Cuba-policy hardliners have implicitly accepted the human and economic costs of the embargo as acceptable in order to achieve the goal of undermining the communist regime. They will point towards the unprecedented level of protests currently going on in Cuba as evidence that the embargo is working. It’s not. Yes, Cubans are angry at the economic hardships and pandemic suffering happening amongst their population. But as Cuban President Miguel Díaz-Canel uses repression and anti-US rhetoric to contain the protests, there’s little indication that the regime is in immediate danger.

Counterintuitively, ending the embargo and promoting ties between the US and Cuba is the greatest weapon that America can deploy against the oppressive regime in Cuba. President Obama laid out the strategy when he opened up travel between the two countries: “Nobody represents America’s values better than the American people,” Obama said in 2014, “and I believe this contact will ultimately do more to empower the Cuban people.” Exposing Cubans to the freedoms and opportunities available to their American relatives will increase outrage and pressure towards the Cuban government for failing to provide these things. And removing the ability of the Communist Party to blame the United States for its own failures will lay bare the consequences of the Cuban government’s unwillingness to shift away from Soviet-era economic policies and political repression.

Republicans will no doubt accuse the president of being soft on communism or caving in to progressive demands. But if Biden truly wants to put principles, and effectiveness, ahead of politics, he should make a bold choice and end six decades of US failure and Cuban suffering.

#### Embargo kills US leverage over human rights abuse in Cuba

Sabatini 2022 [Chistopher; senior research fellow for Latin America at Chatham House; “Boxing Cuba In Benefits No One”; February 6, 2022; <https://foreignpolicy.com/2022/02/06/cuba-us-relations-isolation-sanctions/,> Lemon]

Cuba’s continued isolation may have geopolitical consequences. Responding to U.S. and NATO support for Ukraine, Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Ryabkov hinted that Russia is considering a military deployment to Cuba and Venezuela if talks with the West on European security and Ukraine fail to go its way. Although U.S. National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan dismissed the threat as “bluster,” the White House has few cards to play to punish or sway a Cuban government should it be tempted by the offer.

On the face of it, the reasons for policy stasis on U.S.-Cuba sanctions are pretty obvious. Cuba remains pretty far down the list of foreign-policy priorities—except for those whose families fled Cuban leader Fidel Castro’s repression, a declining number of lefties, and a small group of policy masochists who believe there is a better way to promote human rights and political change on the island than a punishing sanctions regime.

For now, the United States is in a weak position with very little diplomatic and economic leverage over the Cuban government when it comes to punishing the regime for further human rights abuses; courting U.S. rivals, such as Russia; or supporting Venezuela’s failed regime. With a little political courage though, that could change.

#### Cubans deserve a shot at freedom

Reuters 2022 [“Cuba calls U.S. trade embargo a ‘hurricane’ that never ends”; October 19, 2022; <https://www.reuters.com/world/americas/cuba-calls-us-trade-embargo-hurricane-that-never-ends-2022-10-19/>, Lemon]

The foreign minister's comments follow a Biden administration announcement on Tuesday saying it would provide $2 million to Cuba for emergency relief efforts following Hurricane Ian, a rare olive branch between the two long-time foes. "Despite the positive announcements... the blockade has not changed in its scope or depth," Rodriguez told reporters in a news conference in Havana. He said Cuba was grateful for the U.S. aid but was still crippled by the embargo, which he called a "hurricane" that never ceases to batter the island.

The broader embargo, however, has remained largely unchanged. The web of U.S. laws and regulations complicate financial transactions and the acquisition of goods and services by the Cuban government. The United States has said its policies are aimed at channeling "funds toward the Cuban people and away from a regime that has failed to meet the most basic requirements of a free and just society." Rodriguez on Tuesday blasted that assertion, saying the blockade was "aimed at causing the inability of the country to meet the fundamental needs of the population."

#### Cuban embargo is ineffective – multiple shortcomings, and multiple metrics of evaluation all show that it is a utter failure of a policy.

Vázquez 2021 [Jaime, Marcellus Policy Fellow, From Retribution to Re-engagement: A New Framework For US-Cuban Relations Fall 2021 - Marcellus Policy Analysis <https://jqas.org/from-retribution-to-re-engagement-a-new-framework-for-us-cuban-relations-marcellus-policy-analysis/> Accessed 4/24/2024]

Dissecting the Shortcomings of Isolation Evaluating the Impact of U.S. Sanctions Policy The shortcomings of the general U.S. policy towards Cuba are not really estimated or widely discussed within Washington. Democrats and Republicans alike share a mutual disdain for the authoritarian rule of the Cuban Communist Party, and its associated human rights abuses, and do not take regular assessments to see how the current policy hinders or improves U.S. interests or the well-being of Cubans. While the collapse of the Soviet Union put an end to the Cold War, U.S. policy towards Cuba has largely remained unchanged. Unfortunately, the longevity of U.S. policy towards Cuba does not prove beneficial to U.S. interests. Rather, a successful policy towards Cuba should achieve at minimum, three objectives: whether it make the U.S. safer; whether it advances U.S. economic interests and makes us more prosperous; and whether it genuinely improves the lives of the Cuban citizens living on the island. In all three of these areas, the dormant U.S. policy of isolation towards Cuba proves to be ineffective. The U.S.’s imposition of sanctions has not proven successful in changing the behavior or authoritarian rule within Cuba, and in fact, sanctions exacerbate the extent to which many Cubans suffer from poverty and humanitarian crises.29 The tightening of U.S. sanctions after the collapse of the Soviet Union, via the Cuban Democracy Act and the Helms-Burton Act, left Cuba not only isolated from doing business with the U.S., but also punished foreign businesses and foreign subsidiaries of U.S. businesses from engaging with Cuba.30 With the collapse of the Soviet Union, access to foreign currencies and opportunities to save itself became severely limited. This brought Cuba to immense poverty, in which is known as the Special Period.31 The Special Period of Cuba is often regarded with the onset of food and resource rationing.32 Many attribute Cuba’s poverty towards the follies of running a socialist economy, and however true that may be, Cuba’s internal mismanagement cannot fully explain why economic relations with the rest of the international community was not a viable option. Presently, the COVID-19 pandemic continues to ravage lives and test the fragility of economies and supply chains worldwide. Although Cuba has found success in its ability to create a homegrown, largely effective vaccine to prevent COVID-19, sanctions, an already constrained supply chain and imposed have compounded to hinder the production and distribution of Cuba’s vaccine to its population.33 UN human rights experts say that the U.S. embargo on Cuba exacerbates immensely the difficulty for Cuba’s leaders to procure the resources needed to run an effective vaccination campaign.34 U.S. sanctions have forced a burdensome exportation and re-exportation process that overwhelms an already fragile Cuban economy. Taken with the difficult transitioning to a single currency economy, and it does not become hard to see why Cuban capacity is incredibly strained, and why so many Cubans feel left behind. U.S. sanctions on Cuba have made life difficult for not only the Cuban government, but also the Cuban people. Meanwhile, sanctions have done naught to inspire or successfully coerce the Castro and Diaz-Canel regimes to democratize the island or stray from authoritarian tactics to maintain power. The U.S. policy of sanctions has done little to advance national interests or even inspire the diffusion of democratic values, and their maintenance will continue to drive Cuba in opposition to U.S. goals of hemispheric security and harmony.

#### Re-introducing engagement practices with Cuba is vital for change in the region and influences the entire region as a whole.

Vázquez 2021 [Jaime, Marcellus Policy Fellow, From Retribution to Re-engagement: A New Framework For US-Cuban Relations Fall 2021 - Marcellus Policy Analysis <https://jqas.org/from-retribution-to-re-engagement-a-new-framework-for-us-cuban-relations-marcellus-policy-analysis/> Accessed 4/24/2024]

The Case For Re-Engagement With Cuba The U.S. policy of isolation and sanctions does not produce changed behavior from the Cuban Communist Party or an improvement in the lives of Cubans. In comparison, the Obama administration rightfully considered the possibilities and benefits for U.S. national interests and the livelihoods of Cubans that are associated with normalizing relations. The benefits for Cubans on the island are obvious. In the interim, an ease on travel restrictions between the U.S. and Cuba can provide a significant boost to a struggling Cuban economy via a booming tourism industry.48 Easing up restrictions on remittances, money sent mainly from Cuban Americans to their families living in Cuba, will give the Cuban state greater access to the U.S. dollar and other foreign currencies. Greater access to capital for Cuban citizens could prove beneficial to reducing the dependency many citizens have from the State to provide for their needs and set the stage for Cubans to feel empowered to hold their leadership accountable on their own terms. The benefits to be gained by the United States are not to be overlooked either. As the Washington Office on Latin America (WOLA) points out, the past progress made in the U.S.-Cuban relationship is good for U.S. economic interests and further liberalization leaves U.S. businesses much to gain.49 Additionally, the U.S. is currently denying itself access to a $2 billion agricultural market and close to 20 million job opportunities by choosing an ineffective policy of isolation with Cuba.50 Statistics indicate that an overwhelming number of Americans support ending travel restrictions to Cuba, and an increasing number of Cuban Americans are in support of altogether lifting the embargo.51 Americans want increased engagement with Cuba and the benefits of redirecting the U.S.’s policy towards Cuba unlocks a plethora of benefits that are superior to a decades-long failed strategy of isolation.52 A strategy of engagement has benefits for the internal interests of both the U.S. and Cuba, however, understated are the external benefits of re-engagement. Cuba, despite its history of supporting movements and activity destructive to U.S. interests, can be a constructive partner towards stability in the Americas. For example, in parallel towards the de-thawing of relations between the U.S. and Cuba, Cuba played an influential role in helping broker an unlikely peace deal between the Colombian government and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Columbia (FARC).53 The failure of the subsequent right-wing government of Colombia – one of the U.S.’s most reliable allies in the Americas – to stay faithful to the Colombian peace deal is the reason for increased violence in the Southern Cone.54 The recent call to arms by the FARC has enabled violence and instability and enabled relationships between narcotraffickers and Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro.55 A policy of engagement can orient Cuba to be a constructive partner on shared goals, such as securing a sustainable climate for the Americas, limiting the power of narcotics groups relative to legitimate governments in the region, and even helping broker some form of peace and stability with Cuban-ally Venezuela. Additionally, a de-thawing for relations between the U.S. and Cuba limits China’s ability to hedge Cuba as another client state that runs counter to U.S. interests and influence in the region. And while not axiomatic, a policy of engagement removes an excuse for the Diaz-Canel regime to abdicate its responsibility to provide for the needs of its citizens. Removing the U.S. as the anti-imperialist bogeyman can eventually make headway and empower Cubans to take larger ownership of the future of their country.

#### Embargo and SSOT List classification doom overall US-Cuba relations

**Oliver 2022** [Isabella *WOLA Advocacy for Human Rights in the Americas Commentary* Understanding the Failure of the U.S. Embargo on Cuba February 4, 2022 [Understanding the Failure of the U.S. Embargo on Cuba (wola.org)](https://www.wola.org/analysis/understanding-failure-of-us-cuba-embargo/) Fruchterman]

On December 17, 2014, President Obama broke the mold in the U.S. approach to Cuba policy. His administration lifted restrictions for Cuban-Americans to travel and to send family and donative remittances, reestablished the U.S. Embassy in Havana, removed Cuba from the SSOT list, expanded access to the internet, and licensed a range of trade opportunities for U.S. companies. Beyond these specific policies, this shift in discourse by a U.S. president signaled the biggest change in U.S.-Cuba policy since diplomatic relations were severed in 1961, and ushered in a new era in the relations, leading to 23 bilateral accords on issues of mutual interest. The next two years saw an unprecedented boom in private-sector activities in Cuba, significant openings for civil society discourse, and other reforms by the Cuban government.

In 2017, the Trump administration undid all the progress Obama achieved and more. It swiftly imposed new restrictions prohibiting U.S. companies from doing business with certain Cuban companies managed by the armed forces and prohibited U.S. visitors from staying in hotels operated by those companies. It eliminated people-to-people educational travel, placed strict caps on family remittances, and made it impossible to send remittances by wire service. It also interrupted consular services and significantly diminished staffing at the U.S. Embassy in Havana following the onset of unexplained health incidents, now known as the ‘Havana Syndrome’ cases, due to concerns of foul play by foreign states that have now been dismissed following findings by the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA).

Trump also decided to implement Title III of the Helms-Burton Act to enable U.S. nationals to pursue lawsuits against any business or person, U.S. or foreign, benefiting from property nationalized after 1959 discouraged foreign investment in Cuba. Finally, the Trump administration put Cuba back on the SSOT list during its final days in office in an effort to make it harder for President Biden to repair U.S.-Cuban relations.

Today, U.S. policy towards Cuba is at a standstill. Despite multiple campaign promises during the 2020 election campaign, the Biden administration has not advanced engagement policies with the island. It has begun restaffing the U.S. Embassy in Havana, but with no clear timeline on the resumption of consular services. Its policy review is still paused, and after having received recommendations from the Working Group on Remittances on the best options for re-opening wire services, there has been no word of when a more flexible policy will be in place. The Working Group was established in July of 2021 immediately following the protests of July 11.

#### Embargo continues to escalate structural violence in Cuba

Business Standard 2024 [U.S. Trade Embargo causes $144 Billion Loses for Cuban Economy April 25, 2024 [US trade embargo causes $144 billion losses for Cuban economy | INTERNATIONAL ECONOMY NEWS - Business Standard (business-standard.com)](https://www.business-standard.com/article/international/us-trade-embargo-causes-144-billion-losses-for-cuban-economy-120102300520_1.html) Fruchterman]

The embargo violates human rights and international law, has a negative impact on the whole world, violates rules of trade and navigation, goes against multi-literalism, and lacks any moral justification, he said. The blockade, as Cubans call the embargo, because it effectively blocks the island from doing business with other countries, is "an act of genocide and economic warfare" that causes great suffering to the Cuban people and seeks to strangle the national economy by impacting all sectors, he added. In addition, the sanctions restrict freedom of travel between the two nations, as well as communication, visas and family reunions, said Rodriguez. In the past two years, the blockade has reached unprecedented levels and increased its extraterritorial reach, violating not just Cuban sovereignty, but also the rights of other nations and citizens around the globe, he noted.

#### Multiple sectors of Cuba are decimated from the embargo – hospitals, pharma, food and agriculture, and green tech

**Adler 2022** [David The GuardianCuba has been Under US Embargo for 60 years. It’s Time for that to End February 3 2022 [Cuba has been under US embargo for 60 years. It’s time for that to end | David Adler | The Guardian](https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2022/feb/03/cuba-us-embargo-must-end) Fruchterman]

Here in Havana, though, the isolating effects of the US embargo are impossible to ignore. The docks are half-empty: the US has banned all cruise ships, cultural exchange and educational delegations that once drove the largest industry on the island. The Western Union branches are shuttered: the US has banned all remittances through Cuban firms and their affiliates to the millions of Cuban families that rely on assistance from abroad. The hospitals are understocked: the US embargo has forbidden the export of medical technology with US components, leading to chronic shortages of over-the-counter medicine. Even the internet is a zone of isolation: the US embargo means that Cubans cannot use Zoom, Skype or Microsoft Teams to communicate with the outside world.

Today, Joe Biden lives up to Kennedy’s legacy and the ambitions of his Cuban embargo. Not only has the president refused to undo the extraordinary sanctions imposed by the Trump administration, reneging on his campaign promise to restore diplomatic relations and leaving Cuba on the list of “state sponsors of terrorism”. He has also doubled down on the embargo, tightening restrictions and imposing a host of new sanctions against the Cuban government.

Both the Biden administration and its Republican opposition claim that these measures are targeted at the regime, rather than the Cuban people. But the evidence to the contrary is not only anecdotal. The UN estimates that the embargo has cost Cuba over $130bn in damages – costs that are compounded by the penalties imposed by the US Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) on Cuba’s allies and investors. Between April 2019 and March 2020 alone, OFAC penalties amounted to over [$2.4bn](https://undocs.org/pdf?symbol=en/A/75/81), targeting banks, insurance firms, energy companies and travel agencies alike.

The effect of the embargo is therefore both local and global: it cripples the Cuban economy and undermines the multilateral system that the US claims to lead.

The UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) reports that the embargo has had a “[direct impact](https://undocs.org/pdf?symbol=en/A/75/81)” on its operations in Cuba, citing costs, losses and damages that have resulted in drastic reduction of agricultural output on the island – despite the fact that FAO is “officially exempted” from the embargo.

The UN development program (UNDP) [cites](https://undocs.org/pdf?symbol=en/A/75/81) its own challenges in the implementation of projects like its Global Fund to Fight Aids, Tuberculosis, and Malaria in Cuba – in particular, when Toyota Gibraltar Stockholdings was forced to cancel the supply of vehicles to the UNDP office as a result of tightened US restrictions in 2018.

And the UN Environmental Program (UNEP) [highlights](https://undocs.org/pdf?symbol=en/A/75/81) the ways in which the US embargo “not only affects that Caribbean country but also the subregion and the United States itself”. According to the UNEP, the embargo “eliminates” the possibility of regional cooperation on environmental issues and prevents the diffusion of critical technology to drive a green transition on the island.

### Engagement Key---SSOT

#### Trump reversed Biden’s removal of Cuba as a State Sponsor of Terrorism (SST)

Amberg et al 25 [Amberg, Paul, MNC advisor and handles international trade and compliance issues. Lamy, Alexandre, works in Baker McKenzie’s International Trade Practice Group. O’Brien, Rob, American Attorney, the 27th US National security advisor. Logsdon, William, associate at Baker McKenzie’s office, advises MNC’s on international trade, regulatory compliance, customs and import law, supply-chain, and cross-border compliance and commercial issues. “US Department of State Reinstates and Designates One Additional Party to Cuba Restricted List”. Global Sanctions and Exports Control Blog. https://sanctionsnews.bakermckenzie.com/us-department-of-state-reinstates-and-designates-one-additional-party-to-cuba-restricted-list/, skc]

On February 6, 2025, the US State Department reversed the Biden Administration’s revocation of President Trump’s National Security Presidential Memorandum 5 of June 16, 2017 and recreated the Cuba Restricted List (“CRL” or “List“), which identifies entities and subentities that are controlled by, or acting on behalf of, the Cuban military, intelligence, or security services or personnel. The US State Department also added a Cuban remittance provider to the CRL, effective March 10, 2025. For a more detailed discussion of this reversal and President Trump’s designation of Cuba as a State Sponsor of Terrorism, please see our recent blog post.The reinstated List includes some of Cuba’s government ministries and defense and security enterprises, and targets various sectors of the Cuban economy, including real estate, tourism, retail, and hospitality. Dozens of hotels are included on the List, including those located in areas popular with foreign tourists. The CRL also identifies five holding companies, four of which are affiliated with numerous subentities that are also now listed on the CRL. Entities or subentities owned or controlled by an entity or subentity included on the CRL are not themselves treated as restricted unless specified by name on the List.The decision to reinstate the CRL is significant, because the Cuban Assets Control Regulations prohibit persons subject to US jurisdiction from engaging in “direct financial transactions” with a CRL party under most circumstances. A person engages in a “direct financial transaction” by acting (i) as the originator on a transfer of funds whose ultimate beneficiary is an entity or subentity on the CRL or (ii) as the ultimate beneficiary on a transfer of funds whose originator is an entity or subentity on the CRL, including a transaction by wire transfer, credit card, check, or payment of cash.The other ramification of the CRL reinstatement is that the US Commerce Department’s Bureau of Industry and Security will apply a policy of denial under the Export Administration Regulations to license applications that propose to export/reexport items to CRL parties.

#### Trump’s reinstatement of Cuba as an SST kills all engagement

Oppmann 25 [Oppman, Patrick, a CNN international correspondent and CNN’s Havana bureau chief. “There’s a sudden thaw in US-Cuba Relations – but for how long?” CNN World. 1/16/25. https://www.cnn.com/2025/01/16/americas/us-cuba-relations-jose-daniel-ferrer-intl-latam/index.html, skc]

Havana, Cuba CNN — Cuban officials on Thursday freed a prominent opposition activist, a last-minute diplomatic change in fortunes for the Biden administration which had sought his release but long seemed unable to influence events on the island.Jose Daniel Ferrer, the leader of one of the largest banned anti-government groups in Cuba, was released two days after a surprise flurry of diplomatic activity involving the communist-run island in the waning days of the Biden administration.On Tuesday, State Department officials announced the removal of Cuba from a US list of countries that support terrorism, also saying that Cuban officials had agreed to a Vatican request to free Cubans jailed for anti-government activity among other crimes.Cuban officials said they would “gradually” free 553 prisoners, although they cautioned that they were not issuing an amnesty and that those being selected for release could be forced to complete their sentences if they didn’t exhibit “good social behavior.”For more than three years, US officials in particular had called on the Cuban government to release Ferrer, who was convicted of participating in the July 11, 2021 protests, the most wide spread demonstrations to take place on the island since Fidel Castro’s 1959 revolution.Biden administration announces plans to remove Cuba from state sponsor of terrorism list“Don’t be afraid to fight for a free, prosperous and just Cuba,” Ferrer said in a telephone interview following his release Thursday with Radio Martí, a US government-funded radio station that Cuban officials have long accused of trying to destabilize the island.While the fiery comments by Ferrer, whom the Cuban government calls “a mercenary” in the employ of the US, are likely to make officials in Havana grit their teeth, for years their top priority has been to convince US officials to remove them from the list of countries that support terrorism, which incurs devastating economic penalties.Upon taking office, Biden seemed poised to do that until the 2021 protests that led to more than a thousand Cubans convicted in mass trials for rising up against the government.Following the protests, State Department officials conditioned any improvement in relations on the release of the protestors while Cuban officials said they had received no concrete guarantees that economic sanctions would actually be lifted and that the US should stay out of the island’s internal affairs.Even visits by Vatican representatives to the island to press for the release of the protestors were unable to break the deadlock until the final days of the Biden administration.But even as governments across the region applaud the surprise diplomatic breakthrough this week, it looks unlikely that the incoming Trump administration will build upon the brief thaw in relations.On Wednesday, Sen. Marco Rubio, Trump’s pick for Secretary of State and one of the most hardline opponents to Cuba’s government, blasted their removal from the terrorism list and lifting of other sanctions.“There is zero doubt in my mind that they meet all the qualifications for being a state sponsor of terrorism,” Rubio said during his confirmation hearing.While Rubio said during that hearing that any policy changes would be decided by President Trump, he seemed confident of the incoming administration’s position on Cuba.“I think people know my feelings and I think they know what the president’s feelings have been about these issues when he was president previously,” he said. “And nothing that the Biden administration has agreed to in the last 12 or 18 hours binds the next administration, which starts on Monday.”But ramping up pressure on Cuba again after more than 60 years of US economic sanctions was unlikely to force the government to adopt political reforms said Peter Kornbluh, the co-author of “Back Channel to Cuba: The Hidden History of Negotiations Between Washington and Havana.”“Biden got some results,” he said. “He has reminded the world of the model of diplomacy and backchannel efforts to advance US interests. Trump and Rubio represent a model of coercion: sticks versus Biden’s carrots.”Speaking to reporters Wednesday, Cuban Foreign Minister Bruno Rodriguez Parrilla said if the incoming Trump administration did place Cuba back on the list of countries that support terrorism, it would prove his government’s point that the list had become political tool rather than a deterrent.“If another president came and included Cuba on the list again, we would have to ask ourselves what the reasons are, what the agencies of the US government would say, where the credibility of the government would be,” he said.

## Mexico

### Uniqueness

#### Quick Background: High-stakes engagement marked by tariffs and migration tensions; affs could explore border security collaboration, drug trafficking countermeasures, or labor rights agreements.

#### Trump makes discussions about relationship reset and collaboration unique---gives aff ground regarding drug trade and cartels, trade expansion, and immigration

**Rubio-Márquez ‘25** [Vanessa Rubio-Márquez, Associate Fellow, US and the Americas Programme, “Despite Trump’s threats, Mexico is of fundamental importance to the US economy,” Chattam House, 02/10/2025, https://www.chathamhouse.org/2025/02/despite-trumps-threats-mexico-fundamental-importance-us-economy, BADMUS]

In its first two weeks, the second Trump administration has enacted a barrage of executive orders and holds North America on the brink of an all-out trade war. Although President Trump’s phone call with President Claudia Sheinbaum, his Mexican counterpart, put the brakes (for now) on catastrophic 25 per cent blanket tariffs, Mexico must prepare itself for a tumultuous few years ahead. President Trump has signalled a sharp policy change on three key cross-border issues – trade, migration and drug trafficking – thereby jeopardizing the US relationship with Mexico, its first trading partner, and the future of North America as the world’s second largest trade bloc. Trump’s stark isolationist turn and the reshaping of supply chains are upending the established global order, and will likely result in a very different geopolitical landscape a decade from now. Nevertheless, Mexico should remain fundamentally critical to US interests; something the Mexican government must remember as it chooses how to deal with Trump. The US–Mexico trade relationship has taken on a new dimension under Trump and now has two distinct layers. The first is Trump’s threat of tariffs, which he seems to be using as a tool to extract concessions in other areas, like migration and drug trafficking. This also stems from the misunderstanding the US trade deficit with Mexico amounts to a ‘subsidy’, rather than a consumer benefit to American citizens. The second is the traditional trade relationship, culminating in next year’s renegotiation of the United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement (USMCA) free trade agreement (previously the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA)). Sheinbaum’s successful call with her US counterpart shows that the Mexican government has figured out a productive way to communicate with Trump. It should therefore be possible for the two countries to work together on their shared goals for migration and drugs, thereby avoiding tariffs in the future. This cooperation will also need to include a third issue that is very important for Mexico: the arms flowing south across the border into Mexico which give enormous gunpower to drug trafficking organizations. Most importantly, Sheinbaum’s ability to pause the tariffs shows that Mexico has a strong bargaining position and will not need to capitulate entirely to Trump’s demands. The vital next step is to properly assess the tariff threat. What sort of collaboration will ensure Mexico can keep tariffs off the table? How will cooperation efforts or success be measured? Many actions to stem drug trafficking and illegal migration to the US may take years to bear fruit – how will that factor into any decision to re-impose tariffs? Reassuring the US government on Mexico’s unequivocal opposition to drug cartels will likely require a new level of intelligence sharing in both directions. Trump has designated the cartels as foreign terrorist organizations (FTOs) while declaring that Mexico’s government is in an ‘intolerable alliance’ with them. Such unsupported claims, if taken seriously, could threaten Mexican sovereignty in several ways. Possible US actions could include extraterritorial strikes (from drones or otherwise), freezing of Mexican assets, and detention of Mexican citizens, including officials, through unauthorized and uncoordinated ground actions. Such measures must remain a red line for Mexico. Mexico can in fact point to clear progress on efforts to combat illegal migration and drug-related security issues. On migration, Mexico’s efforts to strengthen its own southern border and increase migrant interceptions elsewhere has already resulted in significant improvements. According to US Customs and Border Protection, migrant encounters at the US–Mexico land-border plummeted by more than 60 per cent between December 2023 and December 2024 – before Trump’s inauguration. Furthermore, **Sheinbaum has signalled she will play ball with Trump’s deportation efforts**. Her government has announced an ambitious and complex repatriation strategy called ‘México te abraza’, or ‘Mexico embraces you’, which aims to provide legal assistance, transport home, accommodation and cash transfers for deported Mexicans. She has also said Mexico will accept deportees from other countries. As agreed during the presidential phone call, Mexico immediately deployed 10,000 National Guard members to the US–Mexico border. With regards to drug-trafficking organizations, US demands give President Sheinbaum an opportunity to use her predecessor Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador (AMLO) as a scapegoat. AMLO’s presidency saw the most homicides (over 180,000) of any presidential term in Mexican history as he advanced his ‘hugs not bullets’ strategy. Sheinbaum has sought a make a stark policy shift. Homicides have already fallen 16 per cent from September to December of 2024, illustrating the early impact of Sheinbaum’s course-correction. She has increased intelligence coordination between the Ministry of Security, the army and the navy, resulting in more than 10,000 new detentions and over 90 tonnes of drugs seized (including the largest fentanyl bust in history) in the first four months of her term. In addition to Sheinbaum’s new security policy, two key factors are required to make progress on the issue of drug cartels. The first is a **bilateral relationship based on trust and transparency, with wide-ranging intelligence sharing and an increase in cartel extraditions to the US**. The second is recognition and action by the US on its soaring domestic drug demand and the epidemic of mass gun trafficking from the US to Mexico. Over 70 per cent of guns at Mexican crime scenes can be traced to the US, and hundreds of thousands of illegal guns cross over the border each year, based on data from both governments. In terms of the second layer of the US–Mexico trade relationship, USMCA negotiators on both sides must move beyond the noise and political rhetoric as they look to renegotiate the agreement. The US and Mexico – as well as Canada, another target of Trump’s tariff threats – should be able to have a technical dialogue which leads to a sectoral customs union where they share the same tariffs towards non-North American countries, including China, and become the most competitive region in the world. This will help reduce pressure on critical sectors such as aluminium, steel, electronics, microchips, auto parts and vehicles, and **include Mexico in a trusted and transparent system of information regarding trade and investment with third countries and export subsidies**. Both countries should also engage in a wide-ranging public consultation on USMCA in 2025, before its revision process in 2026. **Despite the chaos, Mexican officials must carefully balance efforts to appease Trump with the undeniable fact of Mexico’s inherent power at the negotiating table**. The bond between the US and Mexico is too structurally entrenched and mutually beneficial to disappear. Mexico is the world’s 15th largest economy, and was the second biggest buyer of American exports (after Canada) and the single largest US trading partner in 2023. The countries share long border (more than 3,000km), deep cultural roots and mutually dependent supply chains. US trade with Mexico and Canada accounts for a significant share of American jobs and supports critical US industries like automobiles, agriculture and energy. In a multipolar world where longstanding economic and political alliances become less certain**, close collaboration between the US and its only neighbours will be critical to America’s continued strength**. Trump would do well to remember this fact; in the turbulent years to come, Mexico may need to remind him.

#### The US needs to strengthen its relationship with Mexico to increase both countries’ political and economic stability.

Ramírez and Ugalde 25 [Carlos Ramírez, former member of Mexico´s Financial Stability Board, was the Chairman of the National Commission of Retirement Savings System, partner and co-director of Integralia Consultores, Luis Carlos Ugalde, was president of Mexico's Federal Electoral Commission, has taught at multiple universities in both Mexico and the United States, general director of Integralia Consultores, “2025: A High-Stakes Year for Political Risk in Mexico”, the Wilson Center, 1/14/25, https://chinafellowship.wilsoncenter.org/article/2025-high-stakes-year-political-risk-mexico, ALO]

North American economic integration faces unprecedented strain in 2025, driven by rising protectionism and shifting political dynamics. Donald Trump’s return to the U.S. presidency raises the likelihood of tariffs and persistent pressure on migration and security policies, escalating diplomatic and trade tensions while potentially dampening nearshoring investments. At the same time, Canada’s upcoming elections could usher in a Conservative government—an administration likely less committed to the USMCA’s trilateral framework.

In Mexico, Claudia Sheinbaum’s administration has demonstrated a strong commitment to the USMCA as the cornerstone of North American economic development. Nonetheless, these external pressures risk triggering a nationalist response within the Morena coalition, potentially leading to a more protectionist stance and diplomatic tensions with Mexico’s North American partners. Such dynamics could complicate the 2026 USMCA review and slow down investment projects.

Challenges for Security Policy and Rule of Law

Public security remains another critical risk. Sheinbaum’s administration has shown positive signs in this regard, distancing itself from AMLO’s “hugs, not bullets” policy and designing a more strategic and focused approach to combating organized crime.

However, the emphasis on capturing cartel leaders, combined with potential U.S. unilateral actions, could inadvertently escalate violence. The fragmentation of criminal groups and territorial disputes may intensify, particularly in regions with high levels of cartel activity, affecting transport routes and the operations of small and medium-sized businesses.

Adding to these challenges is Mexico’s sweeping judicial reform, which includes the election of half the country’s federal judges in 2025. This process, marred by a lack of transparency and short implementation timelines, risks further politicizing the judiciary. Many of the anticipated judicial appointees are closely aligned with the ruling coalition, raising concerns about their independence and technical qualifications.

For the business sector, this shift could undermine legal certainty, creating an environment where legal and political systems are increasingly intertwined. This may force businesses to rely on alternative mechanisms, such as international arbitration, further complicating Mexico’s business climate.

The Road Ahead: A Test for Mexico-U.S. Relations

The combination of these risks paints a complex picture for Mexico’s economic and political landscape in 2025. For U.S. businesses and stakeholders, this should serve as a wake-up call. Mexico is a vital partner in the North American economic ecosystem, and its challenges are intrinsically linked to the prosperity and security of the region.

Proactive engagement from U.S. businesses and non-governmental stakeholders, along with a steadfast commitment to preserving the USMCA, will be essential for navigating the challenges ahead. The stakes are immense—not just for Mexico, but for the entire trilateral relationship that underpins North America’s economic strength and global competitiveness. To gain deeper insight into these risks and Mexico’s political outlook, we invite readers to explore our full report, “Mexico’s Ten Political Risks for 2025.”

#### The US-Mexico relationship’s overfocus on migration risks collapsing cooperation on a litany of shared challenges that collapse rule of law.

Chivvis, 23 [Christopher S. Chivvis is the director of the American Statecraft Program at the Carnegie Endowment, "The U.S.-Mexico Relationship Is About More Than Migration," Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, https://carnegieendowment.org/2023/12/14/u.s.-mexico-relationship-is-about-more-than-migration-pub-91254]

The **relationship with Mexico** is among America’s most important, but the global shocks of recent years from the coronavirus pandemic to the war in Ukraine to the ongoing Middle East crisis have turned attentions elsewhere and narrowed the public conversations on this relationship to challenges at their nearly 2,000-mile-long border all too often.

To be sure, the two countries faced significant shared challenges at the border, including irregular migration, trafficking, and organized crime. But there’s also a story of interconnectedness. In states like California and Texas, hundreds of thousands of people commute across the border each day to work, to attend school, to visit family members, to take part in daily life.

Earlier this year, Mexico became America’s largest trading partner, surpassing China. Bilateral trade during the first four months of 2023 represented over 15 percent of all the goods exported and imported by the United States. In addition to growing trade, Mexico is a site for American companies to invest, for global firms to move production, as part of a growing trend toward nearshoring. And Mexico’s economy minister said that some 400 companies were interested in relocating facilities from Asia to Mexico.

Nor can we ignore the shared challenges these countries face in a broad range of areas well beyond the border. The climate crisis and extreme weather were affecting agricultural productivity, livelihoods, and coastlines in both countries. Global shocks have had serious effects on the cost of living in both countries, and there’s an urgent need to control inflation. And of course, both countries face serious domestic challenges in their democracies. For all these reasons, today’s conversation about a more **strategic approach** to the U.S.-Mexico relationship is **particularly important**.

Christopher S. Chivvis, moderator: Vanda, you’ve written some great articles in Foreign Affairs and other publications recently, with the implicit view that U.S. policy toward Mexico is too focused on migration. Not that it’s not important, but that the way that the United States has approached Mexico has debilitated its capacity to address issues such as drug trafficking and fentanyl. Would you put less priority on migration than most people in the United States do right now?

Vanda Felbab-Brown: Migration is important to very many people. To me, the issue is not to downgrade it, but not to sacrifice other national interests and to be able to separate it from other issues where we need to have tough conversations with the Mexican government.

Unfortunately, what has happened since President Donald Trump’s administration is that successive Mexican governments, especially the current government, have learned that as long as they control the migration spigot and cooperate with the United States, but also allow migration flows to take place, they can deflect pressure from other issues such as cooperation on fentanyl, the collapse of rule of law in Mexico, and the way the criminal groups are really taking over the country. All of that is handled with velvet gloves because the migration issue so dominates the agenda. Essentially, it puts the United States in a straitjacket.

What I would really love to see is a robust migration reform at home that will allow the United States to have regularized flows of migrants so that it is not in this bind.

Christopher S. Chivvis: How do you think about U.S. interests in Mexico, Shannon?

Shannon O’Neil: I look at U.S. national security policy and its evolution in recent years, particularly the **growing concern** with the economy in national security and **securing critical supply chains**, whether it’s semiconductors, large-capacity batteries, electric vehicle batteries, critical minerals, or pharmaceuticals.

As the United States looks around the world, Mexico provides the most viable commercial solution to those challenges. How do you secure access to medicines, technologies, critical minerals? Mexico is a big part of that solution. There’s the drug issue, but a safer and more economically vibrant Mexico is incredibly important for U.S. national security because it reverberates into the United States across all of these dimensions.

Christopher S. Chivvis: How do you see the promise of an even deeper economic relationship with Mexico?

Vanda Felbab-Brown: We are already seeing deglobalization and the movement to nearshoring or friendshoring, which accounts for the fact that Mexico is now the number one U.S. trading partner. But Mexico also suffers from enormous challenges—the most significant and fundamental one is the collapsed rule of law.

Criminal groups have a daily presence and impact on the lives of many Mexicans. They are essentially ruling larger and larger parts of Mexican territory. They are deeply implicated in manipulating elections. They are taking over legal economies in Mexico. It’s kind of notorious that if you buy an avocado in the United States from Mexico, you have paid money to a cartel. You can extend that to corn and citrus too. Water distribution to Mexican citizens is deeply penetrated by Mexican criminal groups. So very many domains of what the state should be in charge of are, at minimum, interfered with and sometimes outright controlled by vicious criminal groups. For the two countries to deeply integrate economically requires rule of law in Mexico, and we have the opposite of it.

Christopher S. Chivvis: Shannon, what do you think about that?

Shannon O’Neil: The rule of law is a huge issue, especially as you move down these supply chains. The big multinationals can pay for security or get the attention of the governors and the like in order to deal with some of the challenges they face. But the suppliers that are often smaller, down the tiers of the supply chain, often have significant challenges.

Another challenge is access to energy, particularly clean energy. Many of these companies have made climate promises, and not having access to clean energy in manufacturing might be a no-go for shareholders. There are also infrastructure challenges in Mexico. It hasn’t invested in the kinds of infrastructure that would really allow the manufacturing boom you’re seeing in some other places, particularly in Asia.

Christopher S. Chivvis: Some members of the U.S. Congress have discussed the possibility of an authorization for the use of military force against the cartels. There’s been talk about designating them as foreign terrorist organizations. What do you think are the pros and cons of that kind of an approach to Mexico?

Vanda Felbab-Brown: I think there really are no significant pros to military action into Mexico. So whether this would be the use of drones, for example, or special operations forces, one can imagine a set of targets. But they will be very limited in what they can actually accomplish. They will be able to take down a lab or a certain amount of cartel members—none of which really have a significant impact.

What we need is for Mexico to find the will to start taking back its sovereignty. Mexico is often complaining about the imperialist gringos undermining its sovereignty, but the reality is that the criminal groups have taken Mexican sovereignty away from the Mexican people. The Mexican people and government need to realize that for their own reasons they need to be moving against the cartels. And this is not what’s going to be set off by any kind of U.S. military action into Mexico. In fact, that agenda, in my view would, be worsened.

There are Mexican law enforcement officials, military officials, and people who are enormously frustrated by how the cartels are undermining their lives. They would like to see far more robust cooperation, and they would like to see far smarter security policies in Mexico. But even those voices would be hampered in the ability to embrace cooperating with the United States if we had U.S. military action.

### Engagement Key---Cartels

#### A new binational security framework is urgently needed to confront transnational crime and restore U.S-Mexico cooperation

**Payan ‘25** [Tony Payan, Ph.D., is the Claudio X. Gonzalez Fellow in U.S.-Mexico Studies, the Françoise and Edward Djerejian Fellow for Mexico Studies and the executive director of the Center for the U.S. and Mexico at Rice University’s Baker Institute for Public Policy, “An Effective US-Mexico Security Framework Requires Cooperation”, Rice University’s Baker Institute for Public Policy, 1/24/2025, https://www.bakerinstitute.org/research/effective-us-mexico-security-framework-requires-cooperation, BADMUS]

**Security, Organized Crime, and Drug Trafficking**

The United States and Mexico have rarely seen eye to eye on security or public safety, particularly when it comes to combatting organized crime (OC). Criminal organizations, dozens of which operate in Mexico and have active cells in the United States, have been a constant thorn in the binational relationship, contributing to some of the lowest points in bilateral cooperation, especially regarding the issue of drug trafficking.

The United States is the largest illegal drug market in the world, and Mexico has been the staging area for much of the supply chain — from production to cross-border trafficking to broad bulk distribution — of psychotropic substances in the U.S. The two governments often talk past one other on these important issues. While the United States has increasingly labeled Mexico’s OC groups as a major threat to its public safety and security, with a focus on the supply side, Mexico has emphasized the demand side of the illegalized drug chain and more recently argued that the United States is the primary source of powerful weapons that provide OC groups with their firepower.

In general, security issues have been a point of significant tension in the binational agenda. One such moment was the torture and assassination of Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) agent Enrique Camarena Salazar in 1985 in Guadalajara, Jalisco, Mexico. At the same time, security concerns have also provided moments of close cooperation, such as during the tenure of Mexico’s former President Felipe Calderón Hinojosa (2006–12). This cooperation, although more controlled and less public, continued under the Obama (2008–16) and Peña Nieto (2012–18) administrations.

**Recent History of Binational Security Cooperation**

The advent of the first Trump administration in 2017 and the election of Andrés López Obrador in 2018, however, came to change the dynamic of the binational relationship. Washington and Mexico City focused primarily on two issues:

1. Cooperating to stem the flow of migrants and asylum seekers toward the U.S.-Mexico border.
2. Renegotiating the United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement (USMCA), formerly known as the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA).

Cooperation on security was largely off the agenda, prompting complaints from U.S. law enforcement agencies. Mexico’s strategy took a course of nonaction against OC groups. López Obrador, president between 2018 and 2024, explicitly spoke of not taking any action against OC groups, leaving them instead to operate freely throughout the country. This strategy known as “Abrazos, no Balazos” — or “Hugs, not Bullets” — was meant to reduce crime and violence in the country, largely by ending all open confrontation with members of drug cartels and other criminal groups. The strategy failed, and OC groups have now gained enormous power and influence in Mexico, intensifying U.S. law enforcement agencies’ concerns and allowing Mexico to fall into a spiral of crime and violence that has far surpassed the country’s material capacity to combat it.

Mexico’s new administration under Claudia Sheinbaum (2024–30), faced with a mounting challenge from OC groups throughout the country and a degraded institutional capacity to address crime and violence, appears to have suspended the “Abrazos, no Balazos” strategy. Instead, the administration has launched a new security initiative, which resembles that of the Calderón and Peña Nieto administrations by leaning toward binational cooperation and countering OC groups.

However, an important tension exists between the Sheinbaum administration’s new security strategy, led by Secretary of Security and Civilian Protection Omar García Harfuch, and the National Regeneration Movement (MORENA) party-led governing coalition’s preference for a more passive approach to the challenge of organized crime. It is unclear which of the two approaches will prevail, but the Sheinbaum administration may no longer have the luxury of a Washington preoccupied with immigration, the recovery after the COVID-19 pandemic, and the intensifying U.S.-China geostrategic rivalry. The reelection of Donald Trump to the U.S. presidency now poses more serious challenges to the Mexican government.

**Current Status of Binational Security Cooperation**

As of late January 2025, this is the state of affairs: Trump, who had threatened to designate Mexican OC groups as terrorist organizations, has now made good on that promise. Within hours of taking office on Jan. 20, he officially declared these groups terrorist organizations. This declaration would enable U.S. law enforcement agencies to conduct operations deep in Mexican territory. While it would be preferable to do so with Mexico’s cooperation, this designation certainly permits the U.S. to carry out certain operations without Mexico’s consent, especially if the Sheinbaum administration were to refuse to come to the table with a new framework for cooperation against criminal organizations.

The Trump administration’s declaration, however, may give Sheinbaum just the excuse she needs to overrun MORENA and López Obrador’s preferred strategy of “Abrazos, no Balazos.” The Mexican government faces a serious degradation of its institutional capacity to face organized crime, as evinced by unyielding homicide and violence statistics, as well as a worrisome number of missing persons. In fact, because these organizations are truly transnational, and given Trump’s high-stakes political pressure, Sheinbaum may have no choice but to engage Washington in a new strategy. What is true is that the status quo — largely ignoring the problem of OC groups as an important issue for both countries — will no longer be possible.

**Recommendations for a New Security Cooperation Framework**

Given the current fluidity of security issues in both countries, it is possible that both Washington and Mexico City will entrench their positions, with Mexico articulating a more nationalistic stance and the United States conducting unilateral operations. Addressing a joint problem under this logic is ineffective. While the Mérida Initiative may have been responsible for adding fuel to the violence in Mexico and the Bicentennial Framework became Mexico’s way of stalling security cooperation with the United States, a new framework is required — one that will recognize the many dimensions of a joint problem.

Some of the key components of a new strategic framework to reduce drug trafficking and help Mexico restore law and order are evident, as follows.

**Recognizing Drug Trafficking as a Transnational Issue**

Both countries should recognize their responsibility in drug trafficking as a transnational problem. The United States should accept that more resources are needed to address the demand side in the country, and Mexico should acknowledge its important role in supplying illegal drugs and the failure of its inaction strategy, which has increased violence and crime within the country itself. Recognition of this joint problem’s existence should serve as the basis on which to build a new cooperative relationship.

**Combating OC Groups Through a Systemized Approach**

The problem of OC groups should be treated as various important components rather than a singular issue, although different parts may be a priority to each government. For the United States, a key component is to reduce the trafficking of fentanyl, among other illegal narcotics. To aid in this work, Mexico should:

Deploy a strategy to stem the flow of precursor chemicals at its ports.

Identify and destroy laboratories where fentanyl is processed.

Use intelligence and law enforcement operations to dismantle organizations dedicated to drug trafficking.

Share actionable intelligence to track and freeze OC groups’ financial resources.

These actions can also apply to OC groups’ operations that have expanded to human smuggling and human trafficking.

An important lesson of past efforts is that these operations should be the product of collaborative intelligence gathering and targeted discrete operations, rather than an all-out confrontation with these groups. These are essential concerns for Washington, and they should be continuously highlighted by the second Trump administration.

**Strengthening Mexico’s Resources Through Cooperation**

Simultaneously, the United States should deploy a plan to strengthen Mexico’s institutional capacity to combat OC groups. This plan should include:

Intelligence sharing on the operations of OC groups.

Anti-corruption surveillance targeting compromised police departments and law enforcement agents.

Resources and equipment to conduct operations against OC groups.

Additionally, Washington should acknowledge that American weapons fuel the firepower of OC groups and should escalate its operations against arms trafficking along the U.S.-Mexico border. Increasing institutional capacity and the material wherewithal of the Mexican government as well as stemming the flow of guns south of the border will be an important priority to Mexico City.

**Organizing a Comprehensive, Cooperative Operation**

These operations, however, should be framed as a comprehensive initiative, rather than individual bilateral or unilateral operations. Establishing an agreement to articulate lines of cooperation, deploy resources, and setting the parameters of individual and joint operations is key to ensure that binational trust is built over time, and a degree of effectiveness is achieved for the benefit of both peoples.

Thus far, the reactions in both the United States and Mexico have been largely composed of aggressive unilateral statements and defensive stands. Trump’s idea that the issue can be solved through unilateral action is largely misguided. Mexico’s idea that defending OC groups is protecting national sovereignty is also mistaken. These stances do not align with the objectives of either the United States’ or Mexico’s government.

The need to establish a joint working group to frame the problem, define principles of cooperation, determine the level and use of resources, and evaluate results is urgent and should be a priority within weeks, if not days, following the installation of the new U.S. administration.

**New Security Framework Is Crucial for US-Mexico Cooperation**

The United States’ inability to obtain Mexico’s agreement on a new effective framework for cooperation, coupled with Mexico’s more ideological and nationalistic approach to crime and violence, has created a situation harmful not only to Americans but also Mexican citizens. This cannot be the path to reduce OC groups’ drug and arms trafficking on both sides of the border.

Both sides should collaborate to develop a regional strategy that fosters a cooperative relationship, which can then extend to other areas of mutual benefit, including freer and fairer trade, orderly and legal labor market integration, and overall regional prosperity.

**Without a new security framework for binational cooperation, tensions are likely to rise, and unilateral actions could create a more acrimonious relationship, making the region less equipped to address the greater challenges both countries face on the global stage.**

### Engagement Key---Water/Climate

#### Mutual cooperation between U.S and Mexico is necessary to address climate-driven water crisis

**Levy-Pearlman ‘25** [Devorah Levy-Pearlman, freelance writer, “The right to water: A new front in Trump’s aggression on Mexico,” Liberation News, 04/23/2025, https://liberationnews.org/the-right-to-water-a-new-front-in-trumps-aggression-on-mexico/, BADMUS]

For the first time in 81 years, the U.S. denied Mexico’s request to supply water from the Colorado River to Tijuana. The move comes in the wake of Trump’s escalating aggression against its southern neighbor. While Mexico is experiencing a historic drought, Trump absurdly blamed the country for stealing the U.S.’ water. In a Truth Social post, he wrote: “Mexico OWES Texas 1.3 million acre-feet of water under the 1944 Water Treaty, but Mexico is unfortunately violating their Treaty obligation.” Mexico has been unable to complete its usual water deliveries to the U.S. due to severe drought conditions caused by climate change. The drought poses an existential threat to Mexican farmers, wildlife, and communities. It also impacts the Southern U.S. border states that share the Rio Grande with Mexico. The U.S. has also had to scale back water shipments to Mexico due to drought conditions, but holds Mexico to a different standard. Trump’s aggressive policy is rooted in a centuries-old U.S. war on Mexico’s land, national resources, and territorial sovereignty. **Instead of cooperating with Mexico to mitigate the climate crisis affecting both countries, the administration has resorted to bullying** its southern neighbor and threatening the country with increased tariffs and sanctions.

**Climate change and drought in Mexico**

Mexico is over 1 million acre-feet of water behind in its usual shipments, due to a paralyzing drought. According to a February 2024 report, nearly 60% of the country is experiencing moderate to exceptional drought. The drought has hit the arid northern states the hardest, but extends as far down as Mexico City. Reservoirs are running dangerously low, with some sitting at only 10-15% of storage capacity. The water shortages, caused by lack of rainfall and prolonged heat waves, are so severe that thousands of cattle have died of starvation. Essential crops like wheat, corn, sorghum, and coffee beans are at risk. In the northwest state of Sonora, every single one of the state’s 72 municipalities is in severe drought. In Chihuahua, entire populations of bees and fish are on the brink of extinction. Last November, Mexican President Claudia Sheinbaum, a climate scientist, initiated a five-year mitigation plan to tackle the water crisis. The Plan Nacional Hídrico (National Water Plan) will mobilize government ministries to reduce water waste, improve irrigation and purification technology, and work with local and state governments to increase access to clean drinking water. Meanwhile, in the U.S, Trump is working to shrink the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and repeal key environmental regulations, giving petrochemical corporations the green light to pollute our air and water as much as they want.

**Trump’s colonial-style aggression**

If the threats to the climate weren’t bad enough, Mexico also has to deal with increasing threats from its northern imperial neighbor. Trump is weaponizing a decades-old treaty to demand that Mexico fork over more of its scarce water supply to the U.S. In 1944, the U.S. and Mexico signed a treaty guaranteeing that the two countries share the water from the rivers on their shared border, primarily the Rio Grande and Colorado River. The treaty delineates the amount of water that each country is entitled to and dictates that the countries equitably share their water supply. Trump demands 1.3 million acre-feet of water from Mexico, but Mexico hardly has enough water to provide for its own people. Texas Senator Ted Cruz echoed Trump on X: “Texas farmers are in crisis because of Mexico’s noncompliance.” It is true that drought conditions have seriously impacted communities on both sides of the border, but at no fault of Mexico. **The U.S. emits five times more greenhouse gas than Mexico;** the Pentagon is the world’s single biggest polluter. Pitting Texan farmers against Mexican farmers does nothing but sow division and deflects from the fact that **the U.S. has declined to take responsibility for climate mitigation** and has left its own population to fend for itself amidst escalating climate chaos. The U.S. empire’s legacy of snatching precious resources from the Global South is nothing new. Texas belonged to Mexico until annexation in 1845, when the U.S. secured it as a part of its southern slaveocracy. Thousands of Mexican citizens of Texas were sent into exile and forced to abandon their farms and ranches. It is ironic that Trump now wants to blame Mexico for hurting Texan farmers. Trump’s water wars on Mexico are an extension of his tariff war against the country, which is an extension of a longstanding U.S. colonialist policy. Trump wants to continue the tradition of old-fashioned, racist 19th-century colonialism to reinforce the U.S. empire’s chokehold over the rest of the world.

**Mutual cooperation, not imperialist bullying!**

The U.S. will not bully Mexico into submission. The Mexican people have resisted U.S. imperialism for hundreds of years and they will continue to defend their sovereignty. Tackling the climate crisis will require mutual coordination and a commitment to shared stewardship over the land and waters we share on this earth. Imperialist bullying does no one any favors; only a people-led, climate-centered approach can resolve the crisis.

#### Mexico has yet to submit an NDC for climate change, which could be an area of collaboration with the US.

Koop 25 [Fermín Koop, the Latin America managing editor at Dialogue Earth, a teacher at Argentine University of Enterprise, holds an MSc in environment and development from Reading University, holds a postgraduate degree in law and economy of climate change from Latin American Faculty of Social Sciences, “Latin America readies new UN climate plans as emissions rise”, Dialogue Earth, 3/5/25, https://dialogue.earth/en/climate/latin-america-readies-new-un-climate-plans-as-emissions-rise/, ALO]

Every five years, parties to the Paris Agreement on climate change must submit action plans that increase their level of ambition in meeting its goal: to halt the average global temperature rise at 2C above pre-industrial levels, if not 1.5C. The current slate of submitted plans, which cover targets to be met by 2030, are **only sufficient to halt the heat at somewhere between 2.6C and 3.1C.**

This year, parties have the opportunity to improve this trajectory, as they submit new plans to the United Nations. These plans are known as **nationally determined contributions (NDCs) and the new batch will look further ahead, to 2035**. The submission deadline was February, but so far only 21 parties out of 195 have done so. **From Latin America, that number includes only Brazil, Uruguay and Ecuador.**

Latin America accounts for less than 10% of global greenhouse gas emissions, but it is highly vulnerable to the effects of climate change. Responding to these effects and further reducing emissions is a challenge, considering the region receives an average of 17% of the total international climate finance pot per year.

Despite their current NDC plans, **emissions in Mexico and Brazil – the two largest emitters in the region – are on the rise**, as they are too in Argentina, Colombia, Chile and Paraguay. These emissions are monitored by biennial transparency reports, a mechanism of the Paris Agreement that requires parties to update their emissions information.

“The region’s emissions are still growing and there is no decoupling from economic growth,” says Alejandra López, who directs climate diplomacy at Transforma, a climate action NGO. “The NDCs are an opportunity to rethink development models. Countries will have to consider the actions they will take to become carbon neutral.”

The process of new goals

**Building a national climate plan is not simple**. Although it is usually led by a government’s environment department, all ministries are involved, as the commitments to be included will involve them directly or indirectly. It also requires securing the necessary funding to put plans into practice.

**NDCs reflect the realities of a country**, and each one is different. Governments are therefore able to choose how they present their commitments. Although they are not legally binding commitments, NDCs are often associated with laws – for example, Chile’s Framework Law on Climate Change and Uruguay’s Climate Change Policy.

### Engagement Key---Trade

#### The USMCA sets up the US to have a stronger relationship with Mexico to improve economic security.

Laing 3/5 [Candace Laing, CEO and President of the Canadian Chamber of Commerce, has an MA in leadership, has 20 years of business experience in both private and public organization, “Setting a North American economic security agenda”, Brookings Institution, 3/5/2025, https://www.brookings.edu/articles/setting-a-north-american-economic-security-agenda/, ALO]

In recent years, a variety of disruptive global forces—including the COVID19 pandemic, heightened geopolitical tensions, rising protectionism, and climate change—have shifted the way that we think about international trade. As governments and businesses around the world navigate an increasingly fragmented and complex international landscape, **economic security and resiliency have emerged as major priorities for policymakers.**

For Canada, the **U.S., and Mexico, the increasingly uncertain** international environment **presents risks, but it also offers a critical opportunity.**

The United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement (USMCA) has expanded and modernized the provisions of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), providing a stable and predictable framework for trade and investment within North America. Since coming into effect in 2020, there has been a remarkable 47% increase in trade within North America. This growth has positioned Mexico and Canada as the top two trading partners of the U.S. with both countries outpacing U.S.’ trade with China in 2023 as well as in 2024.

The three North American countries, as members of one of the world’s largest and most comprehensive trading bloc, **are ideal partners for collaboratively addressing the shared economic and national security challenges that we face.** Such challenges—ranging from supply chain disruptions, skills gaps in our workforces, to risks posed by new and emerging digital threats—weaken the resilience of the North American economies as well as our competitiveness on the global stage.

As we approach the 2026 review of the USMCA, Canada, the U.S., and Mexico should aim to adopt a robust North American economic security agenda. To be clear, although preserving the provisions of the USMCA should be a key priority for all three governments, the 2026 review also presents an opportunity to move beyond the status quo when it comes to the security and prosperity of the continent.

Establishing a North American economic security agenda

China’s recent export restrictions on critical minerals targeting the U.S. demonstrates why resilient North American supply chains are important. As part of a series of tit-for-tat measures between China and the U.S., the latest restrictions seek to curb China’s exports of gallium, germanium, and antimony to the U.S. These are important inputs for defense technologies, semiconductors, solar cells, and other advanced technologies—all of which are vital to U.S. national security.

Canada’s natural resource wealth presents an obvious solution to the overreliance on China and other non-market economies for critical minerals. According to the U.S. Department of Defense’s June 2021 review of U.S. critical minerals supply chains, Canada has substantial resource potential for supplying U.S. demand for more than twenty strategic and critical minerals.

Canadian companies are well placed to meet the growing U.S. demand for a sustainable and reliable source of critical minerals. In fact, Vancouver-based metals producer Teck Resources Ltd., one of the world’s largest integrated germanium producers, is already examining options for increasing their production capacity of germanium in response to China’s latest export restrictions.

To mitigate such vulnerabilities in regards to critical minerals supply chains as well as other strategic areas, the three governments should leverage their partnership to establish a renewed North American economic security agenda. As a starting point, this should include the following key measures.

The USMCA Competitiveness Committee should play a more significant role in advancing a cohesive and strategic competitiveness agenda for North America. In particular, the committee should prioritize fostering resilient and competitive North American supply chains that are critical for preserving North American economic security. Key supply chains for the committee’s consideration should include automotive, aerospace and defense, critical minerals, energy, and life sciences.

The USMCA Competitiveness Committee should play a more significant role in advancing a cohesive and strategic competitiveness agenda for North America. In particular, the committee should prioritize fostering resilient and competitive North American supply chains that are critical for preserving North American economic security.

Canada, the U.S., and Mexico, should **prioritize strengthening cooperation and coordination on policy responses** to unfair trade practices by China, as well as other non-market economies. While all three countries committed to jointly expanding collaboration on these matters at the fourth annual meeting of the USMCA Free Trade Commission, **more deliberate and concrete action is required**. As a first step, the three countries should coordinate efforts to address unfair trade practices related to electric vehicles (EVs), as well as risks posed by certain connected vehicles. While both Canada and the U.S. have acted on the risks posed by Chinese EVs, **greater coordination and alignment with Mexico is needed.**

Given our closely aligned economic and security interests, Canada and the U.S should develop a new bilateral pact to advance common economic security interests. This pact should seek to enhance Canada-U.S. cooperation on economic security, building upon key bilateral initiatives such as the 2021 Roadmap for a Renewed U.S.-Canada Partnership. This new measure should be complementary to existing provisions of the USMCA and should be viewed as a model partnership that can eventually be expanded to include Mexico.

Toward a more prosperous and secure North America

The future of the North American economic partnership is increasingly uncertain as we approach the 2026 USMCA review.

**Rather than turning inwards, erecting trade barriers, or implementing counter-productive tariffs,** Canada, the U.S., and Mexico should instead lean into the North American economic partnership, **creating the conditions to unleash the full potential of our industries**.

#### Mexico is emerging as a strategic trade partner, but to capitalize on their new advantage Mexico revise its geopolitical strategies and trade policies to maximize nearshoring benefits with United States’ companies

European Institute for International Relations 4/25 [EIIR, The Institute is an independent organization promoting scientific centers for studies, research and training on issues of application of laws and its effects on social life. The European Institute for International Law and International Relations (EIIR) is a laboratory for strategic studies whether they are influenced by law, legislations and other legal aspects or not, adopting academic standers of publications and wise methods of working to present rich advice to governments around the world in different fields of international relations., "Mexico’s role in global geopolitics amid rising US-China tensions," European Institute for International Relations, 4-25-2025, https://www.eiir.eu/strategic-affairs/international-development/mexicos-role-in-global-geopolitics-amid-rising-us-china-tensions/, TRI]

Recent international developments are causing the geopolitical landscape to change drastically and at the centre of this transition lies the economic rivalry between the US and China. However, amid this geopolitical rivalry, Mexico is emerging as a strategic player, particularly with regard to global trade and supply chain realignment. This can most likely be linked to the popularisation of Nearshoring strategies, which are aimed at relocating manufacturing from Asia to geographically closer regions and have placed Mexico as a key alternative to China. If Mexico wants to capitalise on this newly gained advantage it must first address structural challenges and bolster its trading policy. A major advantage for Mexico is its geographical position as a neighbour of the United States, which can make it an attractive manufacturing hub for US industries. Additionally, the United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement, which has strengthened economic ties amongst the three countries, has made Mexico into an exciting opportunity for Foreign Direct Investment. American and European companies are increasingly looking to Mexico for manufacturing solutions, seeking to mitigate risks associated with China’s supply chain disruptions and trade restrictions. Nevertheless, despite a significant increase in FDI, Mexico still faces major problems related to its infrastructure, regulatory inconsistencies, and security concerns, which may pose obstacles for further international investment. Security and governance issues seem to be the biggest deterring factors for potential investors. Organized crime, corruption, and a weak rule of law, particularly in Mexican manufacturing areas, contribute to a lack of security and an increase in costs and operational risks for multinational corporations. In order for Mexico to become a leading manufacturing hub, the Government must, thus, first carry out policies to tackle these issues. Mexican authorities should implement more robust security policies, ensure judicial transparency, and foster an investment-friendly environment. This could be achieved by establishing special economic zones with enhanced security measures and regulatory stability which, in turn, would provide businesses with the confidence needed to invest in the Mexican manufacturing sector over the Chinese or Southeast Asian industries. Furthermore, Mexico must revise its geopolitical strategy and its trade policies, in order to maximise the potential of its manufacturing industry. Despite benefitting from easy access to the US’ market due to its geographic location and economic ties, its trade relations with China remain complex. Given that China is one of the biggest suppliers of raw materials and components for Mexican industries, particularly regarding the manufacturing of automotive and electronics, Mexico should avoid adopting a confrontational stance towards China. Instead it should strive to balance trade relationships with both the US and China while attempting to position itself as a mediator between the two superpowers, promoting balanced economic diplomacy that would safeguard its interests while maintaining strong trade relationships with both. Another issue standing in the way of Mexico’s manufacturing potential is infrastructure development. Despite the recent proliferation of its industrial capabilities, logistical challenges such as outdated ports, inefficient railway systems, and limited energy infrastructure could undermine its potential. In order to combat these inefficiencies, the government should prioritise investing in logistics and sustainable energy sources and could partner and increase cooperation with international financial institutions which could help bridge the infrastructure gap and boost Mexico’s competitiveness in global markets. Moreover, as tensions between the US and China escalate, Mexico should leverage its geographical and cultural ties to other American nations in order to play a stabilizing role in North American and Latin American diplomacy. By strengthening regional alliances through organizations such as the Pacific Alliance and fostering deeper cooperation with South American economies Mexico can significantly enhance its negotiating power on the global stage. In conclusion, if Mexico wants to fully capitalise on the current geopolitical situation, it must implement pragmatic and forward-thinking policies. A comprehensive security strategy, infrastructure development, and a balanced trade approach will allow Mexico to transition from being a manufacturing alternative to a leading global economic player. By effectively addressing these challenges, it will not only benefit from nearshoring but it will also reshape its position in the international order, reinforcing its role as a key actor in an increasingly multipolar world.

#### Mexico and US engagement towards security and economic investment is vital for both nations development

Pellicer 23 [Olga, Americas Quarterly writer Why Mexico Is a Quiet Presence on the World Stage <https://www.americasquarterly.org/article/why-mexico-is-a-quiet-presence-on-the-world-stage/> Accessed 4/24/2024]

The U.S. is, however, eager to engage on the much-heralded process of nearshoring to Mexico. The opportunities provided by China’s faltering role in U.S. and European supply chains are enormous, and it would be a grave error for Mexico not to do everything possible to capitalize on them. And yet, Mexico has failed to take certain basic steps that would encourage potential benefits to materialize. For example, it still lacks an industrial policy and legal framework to clarify its new goals and provide certainty to potential new investors. This is especially important given that Mexico’s deficient communications, energy and water infrastructure, along with rampant insecurity, also pose serious impediments. ¶ The best chance for meaningful, creative and effective dialogue remains the creation of a binational technical commission staffed with experts and technocrats. The commission could craft proposals for feasible, cooperation-oriented action to manage urgent problems like drug trafficking, migration and arms trafficking from the U.S. to Mexico. ¶ But such a commission has yet to materialize, like so many other obvious opportunities. For now, far from a leader on the international stage, Mexico will remain a cautionary tale of how an insular foreign policy results in untapped potential.

### Engagement Key---Tariffs

#### US tariffs would hurt real GDP and increase inflation in both Mexico and the US.

McKibbin and Noland 25 [Warwick McKibbin, Professor of Economics and Public Policy at the Australian National University, Director of the Centre for Applied Macroeconomic Analysis at the Australian National University, Director of research at the McKibbin Software Group, has a PhD in economics from Harvard University, Marcus Noland, Executive Vice President of the Peterson Institute for International Economics, Director of Studies for the Peterson Institute for International Economics, specializes in research on economics, political science, and international relations, has a PhD from Johns Hopkins University, was a senior economist at the Council of Economic Advisers in the Executive Office, has multiple published books, “US tariffs on Canada and Mexico would hurt all three economies; retaliation would worsen the damage”, Peterson Institute for International Economics, 2/4/25, https://www.piie.com/blogs/realtime-economics/2025/us-tariffs-canada-and-mexico-would-hurt-all-three-economies, ALO]

On February 1, 2025, President Donald J. Trump announced he would impose **25 percent tariffs on most imports from Canada and Mexico** (except imports of Canadian energy, which faces a lower 10 percent tariff) and an additional 10 percent tariff on imports from China. He had been threatening to do so since November. His initial justification was the need to stop fentanyl and unauthorized immigrants from entering the US. Later, he complained that these countries, and many more, were “ripping us off” because they run bilateral trade surpluses with the US.

In response, Canada and Mexico announced **in-kind retaliation**. The mood was captured by Mark Carney, favored to replace Justin Trudeau as Canada’s prime minister, who vowed that Canada would “stand up to a bully.”

Reports from Mexico City and Ottawa on February 3 suggested that the tariffs are being “paused” to give the three countries time to work out their differences. Trump’s 10 percent additional tariffs on China, however, went into effect shortly after midnight on February 4, and China retaliated by announcing tariffs on US coal, liquefied natural gas, crude oil, farm equipment, and other US goods. It also opened an antitrust investigation into Google.

Modeling the Economic Damage from Trump’s Tariffs on Canada and Mexico and Their Retaliation

We look at what would happen to the three North American economies if the US applies a 25 percent tariff on all imports from the two neighbors and they do the same to their imports from the US. We analyze this scenario using G-Cubed, a multi-country, multi-sector hybrid dynamic stochastic general equilibrium–computable general equilibrium model (McKibbin and Wilcoxen 1999, 2013).[1] We find that **retaliation by Canada and Mexico would worsen the effects on real GDP and inflation** in all three countries. The results assume that the tariffs are permanent and regarded as such. Brief imposition of tariffs and subsequent removal would not have the same effects. (In an earlier blog, we examine the economic damage that an additional 10 percent tariff could inflict on the Chinese and US economies, including a scenario with retaliation by China.)

The impacts of the threatened US tariffs and the retaliatory Canadian and Mexican tariffs on real GDP and inflation are shown in figures 1 and 2, respectively. The US tariffs alone result in **lower real GDP and higher inflation** in all three countries than otherwise, or compared with their baseline forecasts. Adding the retaliatory tariffs on top of that compounds the losses for all involved. Compared with a scenario of only US imposition of 25 percent tariffs on Canada and Mexico, at its peak in 2027, retaliation reduces the size of the US economy by nearly 0.5 percent relative to its baseline forecast. Score one for Canada and Mexico. But the same action shrinks their economies relative to their baselines even more—by 2.3 percent for Canada at its peak in 2027-28 and 3.4 percent for Mexico at its peak in 2032-33. Make that an own goal.

Same story for inflation. **The initial move by the US raises prices in all three economies** faster than otherwise. But retaliation raises inflation rates even further in all three economies, **with inflation spikes of 3 to 4 percentage points relative to baseline in Canada and Mexico in 2025**. By 2028 the price level is 5.2 percent higher in Canada and **8.7 percent higher in Mexico than the baseline**.

Tariffs cannot solve the illicit fentanyl or illegal immigration problems; they can only encourage negotiations to address those issues. Ironically, those concerns seem easier to address than the charge of “ripping us off,” which could lead to managed trade to directly affect trade balances, as it did with China in Trump’s first term. While it is understandable that politicians would seize upon the retaliatory measures threatened by Canada and Mexico, our analysis suggests that it would only compound the damage to everyone’s detriment.

#### Removing the new tariffs spillover to better collaboration on migrant diplomacy.

Ruiz Soto and Selee 25 [Ariel G. Ruiz Soto, Senior Policy Analyst at MPI, research specializing in the interaction of migration policies in the region that stretches from Panama to Canada, holds a Master’s Degree from the University of Chicago’s School of Social Service Administration with an emphasis on immigration policy and service provision, Andrew Selee, President of the MPI, research specializing in migration globally, with a special emphasis on immigration policies in the United States, Latin America, and the Caribbean, has several published books, holds a PhD in policy studies from the University of Maryland, “Amid Tariff Threats, Migration Management Is Key to the Evolving Trump-Sheinbaum Relationship”, Migration Policy Institute (MPI), 2/25, https://www.migrationpolicy.org/news/tariff-threats-trump-sheinbaum-migration, ALO]

**No country is more important to U.S. migration management than Mexico**. The most recent evidence for this is the current reality at the U.S.-Mexico border, where unauthorized arrivals have dropped to the lowest rate in five years, in significant measure due to stepped-up Mexican enforcement. Yet **bilateral collaboration that has been years in the making now appears to be on loose footing amid recent U.S. threats, paused for 30 days, to impose 25 percent tariffs on Mexican imports** in response to perceived inaction on slowing the arrival of irregular migrants and fentanyl at U.S. borders.

Policymakers, migrants, and many others on both sides of the border have been intently watching for signs of what to expect next from U.S. President Donald Trump and Mexican President Claudia Sheinbaum, whose relationship is new and being forged in the cauldron of high-stakes negotiations over tariffs. Much of the attention has been focused on the optics and early linguistic volleys between both presidents and less on concrete negotiation demands and policy agreements. Who won and who ceded ground, for example, in Mexico’s decision to deploy 10,000 National Guard to the border in exchange for the 30-day tariff pause has preoccupied much interest.

What has been missing from much of the analysis, though, is the recognition that Mexico has new leverage compared to 2019, which was the first time the Trump administration threatened to impose tariffs—and what this changed dynamic means for this round of negotiations. Since December 2023, Mexico has conducted dramatically more migration enforcement and controls than in 2019, making it indispensable to managing migrant arrivals at the border today. And Mexico has absorbed many migrants who have stayed in Mexico rather than continuing their journey north. Finally, many of the border-related policies announced during the early days of this second Trump term in fact depend on Mexican cooperation.

To avert a tariff war that would have disastrous effects on both sides of the border, **the priority for U.S. and Mexican negotiators should now be to set realistic policy commitments that match the demands of each government as closely as possible**, in full recognition of their existing legal limitations and institutional capacities, so agreed actions can be sustainable and predictable over the long term.

Turmoil amid an Era of Strong Cooperation

The wild-card nature of the negotiations over tariffs, which could inflict **major harm on businesses, workers, and consumers on both sides of the border**, comes against a backdrop of significant cooperation on migration management developed in recent years through negotiations that weighed both countries’ interests.

Relations between former Presidents Joe Biden and Andrés Manuel López Obrador set a high-water mark for U.S.-Mexico collaboration on migration, resulting in heightened levels of Mexican controls and immigration enforcement in exchange for new U.S. legal migration pathways. In addition to implementing additional checkpoints along migrant transit routes and deploying National Guard and military units at its borders, Mexico also agreed to receive thousands of Cubans, Haitians, Nicaraguans, and Venezuelans who were expelled under the U.S. Title 42 pandemic-era policy. When the Biden administration terminated Title 42 expulsions, Mexico agreed, for the first time, to receive non-Mexican nationals from these same countries who were formally removed from the United States.

These actions were conditioned on the expansion of U.S. humanitarian parole programs—including a process that allowed half a million Cubans, Haitians, Nicaraguans, and Venezuelans with U.S. sponsors to fly to the United States, as well as use of the CBP One app, which allowed nearly 1 million migrants to seek appointments at U.S. ports of entry.

This collaboration reduced irregular migrant arrivals at the shared border dramatically in 2024, to levels not seen in five years, and mostly without public threats from either government. **It now remains to be seen how this collaboration will fare with new heads of state in both countries and a dramatic shift in tone in the relationship.**

A Turn in the Dialogue

The Trump administration has put a strong emphasis on reducing unauthorized migration through Mexico even further and deporting millions of resident unauthorized immigrants, including Mexicans. To achieve these, plus its drug interdiction goals, Trump on February 1 announced the imposition of 25 percent tariffs on goods coming from Mexico and Canada.

Given the incredibly high stakes for both countries politically and economically amid the threat of tariffs, the Sheinbaum administration has adopted a pragmatic strategy, repeatedly calling for respectful, ongoing diplomatic negotiations, setting her apart from other leaders in the Western Hemisphere who have opted for a more confrontational tone. Sheinbaum has indicated that Mexico will continue to collaborate but will not become a subordinate of the United States.

Her cool-headed approach has prioritized protecting Mexicans who live in the United States and scaling up capacity and services to receive Mexican returnees. So far, the strategy has successfully buffered tariffs and other possible conflicts with the Trump administration without explicitly articulating what new migration policies Mexico would be willing to undertake. Despite threatening tariffs, Trump so far has largely avoided direct confrontation with Sheinbaum and not engaged in personal attacks on her that could sour the relationship further.

Migration Priorities on the Negotiating Table

Both governments have already publicly declared some of their primary objectives. Many of the recent Trump executive orders are contingent on Mexico receiving migrants who are returned, repelled, or removed (each term with varying legal consequences) from the United States. For example, the Trump administration immediately reinstated the Migrant Protection Protocols, often known as Remain in Mexico, a 2019 policy to return non-Mexican asylum seekers to Mexico while their cases are adjudicated in the United States. Trump also ordered his administration to identify governments willing to receive and provide protection to asylum seekers returned from the United States, as part of safe third country agreements.

Saying she considers Remain in Mexico to be a unilateral U.S. decision, Sheinbaum articulated that Mexico would receive migrants as a humanitarian response; it is unclear, however, if the program is already active. And so far, she has maintained her opposition to signing a safe third country agreement. However, since the current number of migrant encounters at the U.S.-Mexico border is quite low, these measures may prove to be less politically difficult for Mexico to accept than they would have at a prior moment.

As for the Mexican government, its demands remain largely the same as under the López Obrador administration: Protecting the rights of the estimated 5.5 million Mexican unauthorized immigrants in the United States who may be subject to repatriation under new U.S. enforcement policies. Sheinbaum has stressed, in particular, the need to protect the 436,000 Mexicans who are shielded from deportation and allowed to work legally in the United States under the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program. She also has called for the U.S. government to respect migrants’ due-process rights and for returns to be conducted humanely and under existing repatriation protocols established with the Mexican government.

Sheinbaum also has requested that the U.S. government maintain or expand lawful pathways that allow migrants to move to the United States legally, either as permanent or temporary workers. Except for commenting on the willingness to find an alternative for DACA holders, the Trump administration has not publicly acknowledged these demands.

Landscape of New Negotiations

Even as demands from both sides remain largely the same, the negotiating landscape today is far from what it was in 2019 when, under threat of tariffs, the Mexican government agreed to step up enforcement, receive non-Mexican migrants under Remain in Mexico, and increase collaboration to disrupt migrant-smuggling networks.

The difference today is that the **Mexican government already has deployed drastically more migration controls and enforcement than in 2019**, despite significant changes in the nationalities and composition of irregular migrants transiting through Mexico. In June 2019, the peak of Mexican enforcement that year, Mexican authorities recorded 31,000 migrant encounters. By contrast, in 2024, they achieved116,000 encounters on average each month. Mexican authorities have apprehended more migrants every month than their U.S. counterparts at the border since May 2024, with a fraction of the resources and institutional capacity.

Mexican authorities have also imposed visa restrictions on migrants from several countries and commonly used buses to relocate migrants, primarily Venezuelans, from central and northern Mexico to southern Mexico, making it increasingly hard for most unauthorized migrants to reach the U.S. border. And they have maintained a robust asylum system that each year provides tens of thousands of migrants seeking protection a chance to stay in Mexico rather than head to the U.S. border.

Mexican migration enforcement and policies to integrate migrants have become **indispensable to U.S. agencies’** ability to manage daily migrant arrivals and processing capacity. Newly announced U.S. migration policies are not enough on their own to reduce irregular migration and, in fact, many depend on Mexican cooperation. In these ways, Mexico has more leverage to negotiate pragmatic collaboration than it did when tariffs were last threatened.

Recalibrating Commitments and Achieving Realistic Outcomes

The changing nature of migration flows across the region and the economic, cultural, and social ties that bind the United States and Mexico together make it nearly impossible and surely impracticable for both governments to stop collaborating on migration management and other fundamental bilateral policy interests. This means that **an effective, high-level negotiation to permanently take tariffs off the table should prioritize recalibrating each government’s commitments** by taking stock of migration policies and controls on both sides of the border, analyzing their outcomes, and setting realistic expectations given existing legal limitations and institutional capacities.

It is key for U.S. negotiators to recognize that Mexican migration enforcement is necessary and complementary to U.S. policy objectives. If the United States wants Mexico to receive larger numbers of Mexican and non-Mexican returnees or bolster enforcement at its borders, U.S. negotiators should consider existing limitations in Mexico’s capacity and legal framework and be respectful of the country’s sovereignty. Beyond migration controls in its territory, Mexico could also play a crucial leadership role **in improving coordination with other Latin American governments**, especially those (such as Venezuela and Cuba) that have limited diplomatic relations with the United States.

If Mexico agrees to continue or even increase its existing levels of migration controls, Mexican negotiators should focus on achieving commitments from the United States to assist in expanding its capacity and infrastructure to integrate migrants who want to stay in Mexico—not just detain and deport migrants. Expanding capacity to (re)integrate Mexican returnees and other migrants into Mexico’s economic and social life could also help match work supply with demand across growing industries there.

Averting a tariff war will likely continue to be a priority for U.S. and Mexican negotiators over coming months given its devastating impacts on both sides of the border. The economic dislocation resulting from tariffs could potentially **fuel irregular migration** to the United States and **economically cripple industries** and U.S. border towns that depend on Mexican trade and goods.

Negotiators should build a process that creates the stability, trust, and predictability that are necessary to collaborate on an issue as sensitive and urgent as migration management, in ways that give real weight to each country’s needs, capacities, and constraints. Jeopardizing the gains that have made U.S.-Mexico migration collaboration successful so far is simply **not a smart option** for either government.

#### The relationship between the US and Mexico is on shaky ground and the addition of tariffs hurt the 1.5 billion dollar a day trade relationship between the countries.

Sarukhan 25 [Arturo Sarukhan, international consultant based in Washington, D.C., a board member of the Americas Society, was the Mexican ambassador to the U.S., was a diplomat for over 20 years, “The Storm for U.S.-Mexico Ties Is Only Beginning”, Americas Quarterly, 2/4/25, https://www.americasquarterly.org/article/the-storm-for-u-s-mexico-ties-is-only-beginning/, ALO]

A Republican victory in November was always going to bring a recalibration of the United States’ stance on key issues ranging from Ukraine and the Middle East to NATO and China. But the writing was on the wall—and it is now patently clear—**that Mexico would bear the brunt of President Donald Trump’s speak-loudly-and-carry-a-big-stick diplomacy**, for reasons that go much deeper than any single dispute over fentanyl and immigration.

Despite Monday’s postponement of Trump’s 25% tariffs on its Southern neighbor, the bilateral relationship will continue to be plagued by a host of underlying structural issues, including Mexico’s democratic backsliding, institutional decay and neglect of security challenges, that have deteriorated sharply in recent years.

The confrontation has been a long time coming, the product of strategic errors on both sides of the border. The Biden administration’s need to ensure Mexico’s collaboration on migrant flows in the months prior to the presidential election—something which Mexico did indeed deliver—led it to turn a blind eye to the erosion of Mexican democracy and institutions. Washington was almost totally silent as former President Andrés Manuel López Obrador doubled down on eroding checks and balances and the independence of the judiciary, weaponizing the state against critics, avoiding direct confrontation with organized crime groups, and overall trying to steer Mexico back to a one-party hegemonic system like the golden days of the PRI that ruled my country for the last 70-plus years of the 20th century.

We saw the results of these decisions in the White House’s justification of the tariffs announced on February 1 when it stated, in no uncertain terms, that “the Mexican drug trafficking organizations have an intolerable alliance with the government of Mexico.” Never in the course of modern U.S.-Mexico ties—the aftermath of DEA agent Enrique “Kiki” Camarena’s murder in 1985 would be the closest we get—had a charge like that been leveled at a government in Mexico City. This was not the proverbial shot across the bow, **it was a rhetorical intercontinental ballistic missile**, an ICBM.

AMLO’s shadow

Memories are short in today’s world, but this accusation did not come out of nowhere. Over the past six years, López Obrador consistently hacked away at the fundamental pillars of the bilateral agenda with the U.S., most saliently those related to security and law-enforcement cooperation. For a man who claimed that “the best foreign policy is domestic policy,” it has paradoxically been the shortcomings and misconceptions of his domestic policies that made Mexico vulnerable to these kinds of external pressures.

There are too many examples to count: a disastrous public security and law-enforcement policy, infamously known as “Hugs not bullets”; a seriously flawed judiciary reform bill that could open the door to organized crime intimidating or cherry-picking judges à-la-carte all the way up to the Supreme Court; policies and reforms that entail violations of different chapters and disciplines of the USMCA, most relevantly in energy, agriculture, legal certainty, and now most recently in this new Mexican administration with the elimination of regulators (like the antitrust, telecoms or energy bodies) and autonomous institutions (our transparency and access to information agency); the evisceration of the Mexican state and the bandwidth and agency of governmental bureaucracies and departments; playing footsie with Russia and providing cover and succour to authoritarian regimes in Cuba, Venezuela and Nicaragua; ad hominem attacks against Republican lawmakers from the Mexican presidential bully pulpit, or lashing out against the international press because of its coverage of Mexican democracy or counternarcotics policies; and more.

A looming recession

Unless Mexico changes its approach, the consequences could be dire. **Tariffs, if implemented a month from now, could push our economy into recession** and set the whole North American project **back four decades**. Trump seems likely to bypass the novel USMCA review process, which kicks off in July of 2026, and instead impose from the get-go another renegotiation of the free trade deal that binds the three North American economies together. We could see the Trump administration, having already designated some transnational criminal groups operating in Mexico as Foreign Terrorist Organizations, evaluating ways of striking them inside Mexico, with or without the consent of the Sheinbaum government. This latter scenario is tantamount to a violation of international law.

The U.S. should have **clear incentives to reach an accommodation with Mexico**. At the top of the list is its competition with China, which involves the most important reset of American foreign and national security policies since the end of the Cold War. Both Mexico and Canada play a pivotal role in the success of that process. They are key to **trade (and our integrated supply chains and joint production platforms) and economic policies; to energy resilience, sustainability, security, and independence; and to common-domain awareness and cybersecurity for North America as a whole**.

The bottom line is that the U.S. needs Mexico and Canada if it is to successfully decouple from China without shooting itself in the foot with disruption of essential supply chains and triggering inflation, all the while remaining the preeminent global economic power. If the North American trade edifice unravels or is torn asunder because of tit-for-tat trade disputes and the potential demolition of the USMCA, the only winner will be China. That’s why Beijing has very likely been rubbing its hands over the past two months as Trump predictably threatened the U.S.’s two neighbors and partners. And all of this is happening on the road to the North American soccer World Cup in 2026, which should be an opportunity to highlight the promise and future of the region to Canadians, Americans and Mexicans—and to the rest of the world.

Retrograde threats

There’s no doubt that Trump’s persistent threat of tariffs could set the North American project back four decades, not only in terms of what trade has done to the region and the region’s future global competitiveness at a time of deepened geopolitical rivalry with China, but also in terms of the type of strategic relationship that, notwithstanding the real asymmetry of power, had developed between Mexico and the U.S., regardless of which party had been in power on either side of the border. The central tenet of shared responsibility, where transnational challenges and opportunities are handled with transnational solutions and thinking, could be on the road to extinction.

As a former Mexican ambassador to the White House, it is profoundly troubling and disheartening to see a bilateral relationship floundering due to the lack of strategic bandwidth and attention, with the sole exception of ensuring Mexican collaboration on immigration enforcement. If these two nations were irrelevant to one another, maybe it would matter less. But with a 2,000-mile land border, a unique **trading partnership like no other in the world worth $1.5 billion a day in bilateral commerce**, **with millions of Mexicans and Americans living on either side of the border**, I struggle to identify another moment in recent history so fraught and so discouraging, but so critically important, for the future and shared well-being, prosperity and security of both nations and peoples.

Mexico needs to quickly get its head out of the sand. It would certainly have no other choice but to respond surgically with **countervailing tariffs** on specific U.S. exports, extracting pain from Republican states and districts. But it also needs to address underlying issues; it needs to quickly rebuild and reset security cooperation with Washington, avoid the temptation of resorting to chest-thumping nationalism, and ensure there is a high-level Cabinet dialogue taking place with the U.S. administration, as was hopefully agreed to during the call yesterday between Sheinbaum and Trump.

### Engagement Key---Migration

#### Current visa structure is going to hurt farmers who are in desperate need of workers which will affect prices and production

**Duncan**, (**01-06-2024**)[ Brian Duncan is the president of Illinois Farm Bureau, Duncan: Agriculture needs a stable workforce in 2024, 01/06/2024, <https://www.farmweeknow.com/opinion/perspectives/duncan-agriculture-needs-a-stable-workforce-in-2024/article_829de828-ab38-11ee-8534-77b6d62c3681.html>, GMU JAF)

**Finding and affording labor are among the top challenges** Illinois **farmers, suppliers and processors** tell me they **face** in 2024. From locating qualified truck drivers to haul grain, to sourcing enough hands to pick vegetables or manage livestock, the **shortage of links in the transportation and agricultural supply chains continues to undermine food access** **and threaten farm profitability** in Illinois and **nationwide**. I spotlighted last spring in a FarmWeek column the shortage of available local labor to fill valuable agricultural jobs. **This shortfall** has existed in rural communities for years, was amplified during the COVID pandemic and **continues to grow**.This **reality has ultimately led** **more farmers** **to depend on immigrant workers**, with producers turning to options like the H-2A temporary agricultural program, the H-2B temporary non-agricultural worker program or the trade national visa program for skilled workers classified as nonimmigrants.**Those who have navigated the H-2A program know just how cumbersome and expensive the program has become**, chiefly **due to its unsustainable and unpredictable wage increases and misguided rulemaking**.Illinois farmers can expect more of the same this upcoming growing season, as the state’s Adverse Effect Wage Rate (AEWR) is set to increase 6% from 2023. **Nationwide**, **farmers planning to use H-2A workers in 2024 will** have to **raise wages in some states up to 15%**, according to calculations by American Farm Bureau Federation (AFBF).**Contributing to this increase are eight new rules advanced by the U.S. Department of Labor in 2023**. **One rule**, finalized in March, impacts how a state’s AEWR is calculated. Specifically, the rule **disaggregates wage rates by job function and derives the new rates from non-farm data, which does not reflect market wages for ag employees**. **Ag employers** **will be required to pay the rates, regardless of their inaccuracies** or what percentage of an employee’s contract they devote to certain tasks. **This new rulemaking alone is estimated to add double-digit increases in labor costs**, according to AFBF. In fact, this is the sixth straight year of elevated wage growth for H-2A workers, with the rate of hourly wage growth outpacing all other private employees. H-2A **employers will also face additional program costs stemming from required housing and transportation for workers. For smaller farming operations**, many of which are interested in hiring just one or two temporary workers, the **complexity of the process and the cost of complying with new requirements will be especially detrimental.**I have met with Midwest state Farm Bureau presidents and the AFBF Board of Directors to discuss all the difficulties farmers are currently facing with labor and with the H-2A program, specifically.One of the biggest challenges in trying to find solutions in this space is that legislative and regulatory remedies soon become entangled in the broader discussion of immigration reform. Congress in past years has tried and failed to advance many pieces of legislation around immigration. The Dignity Act of 2023 was the latest attempt.This type of broad legislation eventually becomes the home for divisive political issues like employer liability protection and private right of action, the annual number of visas allowed, visa holder touchback requirements and expedited immigration processes. These kinds of polarizing issues make passage of any legislation difficult.In light of this, AFBF board members decided farm needs were urgent enough to prioritize two immediate legislative solutions: a freeze of wages at 2023 levels for three years and a rollback of the DOL’s AEWR methodology that was enacted in March.AFBF President Zippy Duvall sent a letter in December, calling on congressional leaders to look for any opportunity to enact these legislative priorities. Illinois Farm Bureau (IFB) has followed up with our congressional delegation ex pressing both the urgency of the problem and the critical need for solutions.Illinois **farmers are committed to paying a fair wage**, but **they cannot pay well beyond the means of their farm incomes**, **which are forecast to fall this year.** Along with completing the vital work of the 2023 farm bill, IFB is also committed to working with elected officials from both parties in 2024 to find meaningful ways to modernize guestworker programs and stabilize our workforce. **Solutions to worker shortages in the U.S. agricultural supply chain are needed to maintain** not just farm profitability, but more importantly **food security**, **and**, ultimately, our **national security**.

#### Increasing Migrant diplomacy with Mexico allows for the renegotiation of visas like the TN visa which would help fill the gaps in labor shortages and avoid the downfalls of the HB visas that are hurting the agriculture industry in the squo

**Payan**, (**03-04-2024**) [Tony Ph.D., is the Françoise and Edward Djerejian Fellow for Mexico Studies and director of the Center for the United States and Mexico at Rice University’s Baker Institute for Public Policy. He is also a professor of social sciences at the Universidad Autónoma de Ciudad Juárez in Ciudad Juárez, Chihuahua, Mexico. America Is Facing Severe Labor Shortages. Expanding the TN Visa Can Help, 03/04/2024, https://www.bakerinstitute.org/research/america-facing-severe-labor-shortages-expanding-tn-visa-can-help , GMU JAF]

**Allowing more migrants through our borders would help promote the capable workforce the country needs**. But the prospect is increasingly unpopular, at least among legislators — many of whom profit politically from taking a hardline stance against migration. Our Economy Depends on Immigrant Labor. But some facts about today’s American workforce should make our politicians take pause. Despite congressional gridlock on immigration reform and general doubts surrounding the role of immigrants both with and without permanent legal status in the U.S. economy, **U.S. labor markets are relying on a huge number of noncitizens, including temporary workers with employment authorization visas and unauthorized workers, to make the economy run.** These are in addition to the country’s 12.7 million permanent residents, who are not citizens although they may be eligible for citizenship. First, the country employs millions of migrants who entered or are living in the country illegally. According to some counts, there are as many as 10.57 million people residing in the U.S. without legal status, most of whom are part of the workforce. Additionally, millions of noncitizens are permitted to work through the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals and Temporary Protected Status programs or under asylum law. And on top of that are the many people legally employed through various visas, including high-tech workers with H1-B visas, seasonal workers with H2-A and H2-B visas, and so on. Altogether, **these workers fill critical gaps and boost innovation in all kinds of industries**. They contributed $2 trillion to the U.S. economy in 2016 and nearly $500 billion in state, local, and federal taxes in 2018. In other words, the U.S. already relies on a huge number of workers who are neither citizens nor permanent residents — but who contribute significantly to our economy and perhaps should be rewarded accordingly. The TN Visa Has Already Shown Its Utility **One group of temporary workers participates in the U.S. labor force through a visa that is** often underestimated and **overlooked**, but has already proven efficient and convenient: the TN visa. **The TN** **visa** was **created as part of the N**orth **A**merican **F**ree **T**rade **A**greement **in 1994 and in 2020 was grandfathered into** the **U**.**S**.-**M**exico-**C**anada **A**greement. It has quickly become a pivotal pathway for attracting talented professionals and technical workers to the United States. This is in part because **the** **TN visa is easy to get, is cheaper than other visas, can be renewed indefinitely, and doesn’t have the caps by country** or total number that other visas do. The catch is this: It can only be obtained by Canadians and Mexicans, and it includes only 63 occupational categories. Despite these limitations, the TN visa has already shown its utility. Over time, **hundreds of thousands of workers from** Canada and **Mexico have used the visa to obtain temporary employment in the U.S**., **filling workforce gaps that tend to go unnoticed** precisely because authorized noncitizen workers are occupying those positions. **The visa has enormously benefited U.S. businesses and industries**, but the pathway it provides for the U.S. to close its growing workforce gaps — and for the legal, orderly integration of North American labor markets — has been largely overlooked. Expanding the TN Visa Would Help Fill Growing Workforce Gaps The TN visa remains poised to fill in critical U.S. workforce gaps — in a way that promotes order and rule of law. The country is undergoing major demographic shifts, and in the absence of congressional willingness to open new visa categories, expanding the TN visa can serve the U.S. economy while helping integrate the North American workforce in a way that is palatable to those concerned by unauthorized migration. It would also allow employers and workers to find each other more easily, with little or no government intervention. **Congress should expand the types of professionals who qualify for the TN visa**. If this proves politically infeasible, the visa category should be regulatorily reinterpreted to include more professions and technical abilities. **This would give the American labor market the boost it will require in the coming decades** and help make our workforce one of the most competitive in the world by virtue of being well integrated with the rest of North America. The U.S. economy remains the most dynamic in the world. Its GDP grew 5.9% in 2021, 2.1% in 2022, and 2.8% in 2023. But **American labor markets will demand more workers**, and **Congress is unlikely to deliver them through immigration reform**. **Thus, we are left with the visa categories we already have** — and the TN visa is both underemployed and among the most advantageous for workers and employers. It should be used more. Policymakers and government should look to the TN visa to promote competition, bring more order to human mobility in North America, and promote ongoing efforts to integrate, in particular, the U.S. and Mexican labor markets.

#### Expanding Immigration Promotes Enhanced Engagement between US and Mexico

Martinez 21 [Joel; opinion contributor for The Hill, “Remaking and improving the US Mexico relationship”, March 9, 2021, <https://thehill.com/opinion/international/542295-remaking-and-improving-the-us-mexico-relationship/>, Farjah]

Biden is right to change the tone in the bilateral relationship with Mexico. There is an inextricable linkage between the two countries — not just in trade and commerce, but also the shared cultural, environmental and demographic destiny — that, to American’s detriment, was overlooked during the past four years. Biden’s early engagement with Mexico is an important step in reversing that mistake, demonstrating to López Obrador and to the Mexican public that the United States values its relationship with Mexico and intends to preserve and strengthen it.

Some experts have called *on* the Biden administration to share manufacturing capacity with its closest neighbors, such as Mexico, to spread production lines for critical components that drive their respective economies. Doing so would not only safeguard existing supply chains between the United States and Mexico but it would also better prepare the two countries for the next global disruption.

The U.S. and Mexico should also join forces on a COVID-19 response to help reduce secondary economic impacts in both countries and ensure that long-established, cross-border lifestyles are neither limited nor further contribute to the spread of the virus. Mexico is currently reporting over 185,000 COVID-19 deaths — the third highest death toll in the world. And

The U.S. and Mexico should also use this new opening to improve the management of shared migration challenges in ways that help both countries, instead of building walls that aid the prosperity of neither. While the U.S. reforms its immigration system — and its asylum and refugee systems — into one that is fair, humane and actually works, it can simultaneously help build up Mexico’s own internal asylum system, building up capacity on the Mexican side of the U.S. border and encouraging a humanitarian response on Mexico’s southern border.

Biden already announced an economic aid and security plan designed to address the root causes that drive people to migrate toward the U.S. from the region, and López Obrador expressed his desire to help address migration coming out of Central America and from Mexico to the U.S. The success of this endeavor will depend heavily on extensive collaboration with one another but also with civil society, the private sector, international organizations and other governments in the region. The ultimate goal must be the promotion of safe, legal and orderly paths for those who wish to reunite with family abroad or seek out greater opportunities. The U.S.-Mexico relationship will not be perfect. Obstacles will emerge between the two neighbors that will make cooperation on these issues challenging. Recent events such as the arrest of Mexican Gen. Salvador Cienfuegos Zepeda by the U.S. government and López Obrador’s attempts to overhaul Mexico’s electricity market offer previews of what can, and will, strain bilateral cooperation. But these challenges notwithstanding, the U.S. and Mexico are bound to a shared destiny. There is more that connects us than divides us and all that is required is for the U.S. and Mexico to both pursue a productive, interest-driven relationship. So far, it’s off to a new and promising start with plenty more to come.

## Nicaragua

### Uniqueness

#### Quick Background: Authoritarian drift; affs in democracy promotion, civil society strengthening, or anti-corruption initiatives.

### Sanction Removal---Economy

#### Increasing sanctions pressure could damage Nicaragua’s economy.

**Toosi 3/23** [Nahal, senior foreign affairs correspondent, “America dealt with a Nicaraguan dictator. It didn’t go as hoped,” https://www.politico.com/news/2023/03/18/nicaragua-deal-freed-222-people-boosted-dictator-00087548, Lam]

The Biden administration thought its pressure campaign on Nicaragua might be getting some traction when the Central American country’s authoritarian government handed over 222 political prisoners to the United States last month. **The hopes didn’t survive long.** Almost immediately, Nicaragua stripped the ex-detainees of their citizenship, threatened to seize their property and sentenced a Catholic bishop who declined to leave to 26 years in prison. So much for a possible rapprochement with Washington or political softening in Managua. The moves by Nicaraguan President Daniel Ortega and Rosario Murillo — his powerful wife and vice president —now seem more like a way to consolidate power and continue repression than make amends with Washington. “For the prisoners, it’s good. For the country, it sucks,” said Eddy Acevedo, a Republican former Capitol Hill staffer who has helped craft U.S. policy on Nicaragua over the past seven years. “Ortega just deported his whole opposition. What happens if this gets replicated in other countries?” The U.S. will keep on or possibly intensify the pressure campaign on Nicaragua, maybe adding new sanctions, say Biden administration officials. Yet America is struggling to protect and promote democracy not just in Nicaragua but across Latin America. Democracies in Peru and Brazil have wobbled. Relations with Mexico are strained. These diplomatic challenges for Washington come at a time when China and Russia, its chief global rivals, are making in-roads in the region. “We’re already seeing a troubling drift toward authoritarianism and deliberate attacks on democratic institutions in Nicaragua’s neighbors, such as Guatemala and El Salvador,” said Rebecca Bill Chavez, a former Defense Department official in the Obama administration. Nicaragua is a test case. Washington has devoted a lot of effort both to weaken and sway the Ortega regime, but has come short of its goals — a situation likely being watched by others in the region. Some of the prisoners now released in America are urging the Biden administration to keep up the pressure on the dictatorship they hope to weaken from abroad. “We were not the most important part of the story,” said the newly freed Juan Sebastian Chamorro, a former Nicaraguan presidential candidate. “The most important part of the story is that there are no liberties in Nicaragua. There’s no freedom. There’s no democracy.” A bad relationship turns toxic U.S.-Nicaragua links began unraveling more than a decade ago as it became clear that Ortega — a former rebel who fought another Nicaraguan dictator — wouldn’t leave the presidency. Relations worsened over the past five years as Ortega and Murillo strengthened their grip. The Trump administration imposed economic sanctions and other penalties, mainly targeting individuals such as Murillo, in 2018, a year when the regime brutally cracked down on widespread protests. In June 2021, Secretary of State Antony Blinken told his Nicaraguan counterpart that the United States could ease up on those penalties if Nicaragua were to move back toward democracy and improve its human rights record. (Abuses such as torture and extrajudicial executions in Nicaragua may constitute crimes against humanity, a U.N. investigative panel said earlier this month.) Blinken’s message failed to sway the ruling power couple. Over the next few months, Ortega and Murillo imprisoned more dissidents ahead of an election. The U.S. responded by slapping sanctions on a Nicaraguan state-owned mining company and banning visas for hundreds of Nicaraguan officials and their relatives. Biden also issued orders in October that authorized his administration to impose future sanctions on various economic sectors in Nicaragua, as well as trade and investment. This was a major threat because it would, effectively, circumvent a trade deal between the United States, Nicaragua and a number of other countries. The United States is Nicaragua’s largest trading partner. A no-brainer operation On Jan. 31, Murillo called U.S. Ambassador to Nicaragua Kevin Sullivan and urged him to get in touch with the foreign ministry for a matter that could improve ties. Ten days later, the 222 prisoners landed in the Washington area. According to three U.S. officials familiar with the issue, Nicaragua demanded nothing in return. Biden aides saw taking the prisoners as a humanitarian no-brainer — so non-controversial that it was largely handled at the assistant secretary level, according to a senior National Security Council official. Biden was kept apprised throughout, a second senior NSC official said. The NSC officials, like other U.S. officials quoted, were granted anonymity to describe sensitive diplomatic matters. Multiple U.S. departments were involved in the logistics, including screening the prisoners for security risks and preparing mental health services for those who might need them. They rejected a handful of people on the original list of 228. Two people, including Catholic Bishop Rolando Alvarez, declined to go to the United States. Biden administration officials knew that Ortega and Murillo could benefit by putting distance between themselves and their rivals. But the opposition hadn’t been able to do much inside Nicaragua because all the key figures were in prison. One of the prisoners described being awakened by guards in the early morning on Feb. 9 and told to dress and be ready in 10 minutes. The prisoner and fellow detainees then boarded buses with windows covered by bars and wood. They were told to keep their heads down and mouths shut. Toward the end of the road trip, guards on the bus handed the prisoners papers to sign. It was dark and some prisoners were reluctant to sign a document they could barely see. The guards told them that if they didn’t sign, they wouldn’t be able to leave the country. That was the first clue many prisoners had that they could soon be free. Once the prisoners were let off the buses, they saw they were on the tarmac of the airport, next to a massive plane. “We saw a box on the tarmac that had the passports of all of us — new Nicaraguan passports,” said the former prisoner, who was granted anonymity to protect their family in Nicaragua. “This was quite an operation.” Searching for rifts The prisoner release could be a sign of dissension within the ruling ranks. A video said to be from late December appeared to show Ortega and Murillo parting after a disagreement, spurring ongoing speculation about a rift between the pair. After the release of the prisoners to the United States, Ortega appeared to suggest the idea came from his wife. Reports last spring that Laureano Ortega, the child thought most likely to succeed the ruling couple, had reached out to U.S. officials about sanctions relief also led to questions about potential tensions within Nicaragua’s elite. This all comes amid speculation that Daniel Ortega’s health is failing and a lack of clarity about how loyal his supporters are to his wife. Ortega and Murillo were once leaders in the Sandinista rebel movement, helping topple the dynastic autocracy of Nicaragua’s Somoza family. Today, they have turned into what they once loathed, their critics say. After revoking the citizenship of the exiled dissidents, at least one of whom also has American nationality, Nicaragua’s government also stripped 94 other people of their Nicaraguan passports. Many of the latter are activists living outside the country. Nicaragua’s ambassador in Washington did not respond to requests for comment. Limits of U.S. power Still, America’s options in Nicaragua are limited. Increasing sanctions pressure could damage Nicaragua’s economy and worsen the migration crisis in the hemisphere. Ortega and Murillo have other potential options for international support — Russia and China. The regime supports Russia’s war in Ukraine and has permitted Moscow to place troops and military equipment on its soil. In late 2021, Nicaragua switched its diplomatic recognition away from Taiwan in favor of Beijing, in a sop of the Chinese. Hawkish figures such as former Trump administration national security adviser John Bolton have called Nicaragua, Cuba and Venezuela the “troika of tyranny” because of their repressive rule. The United States has taken particularly harsh measures toward each, with little success. The Cuban communist regime has survived decades of U.S. sanctions. Biden has yet to embrace a brief diplomatic flowering of relations with Havana that began under then-President Barack Obama but was ended by then-President Donald Trump. The Venezuelan regime of Nicolas Maduro, too, has weathered years of sanctions and other U.S. pressure. A U.S.-backed opposition effort to overthrow Maduro has largely fizzled in the past six months, and the dictator appears secure. Some of the former Nicaraguan prisoners already are in touch with each other, looking at uniting around a common platform to oppose Ortega and Murillo from exile. “This is one of the mistakes Ortega made — he made us closer,” said Chamorro, the former presidential candidate. Yet diaspora-led opposition movements are rarely successful, noted Christopher Sabatini, a Latin America analyst with Chatham House. Such campaigns “don’t command the resources, they don’t command diplomatic legitimacy … they’re often very fractious,” Sabatini said. Inside Nicaragua, “there’s not going to be a popular uprising that unseats Daniel Ortega at this point. There can’t be. There’s no one to lead it.”

### Sanctions Removal---Ortega

#### Ortega uses sanctions to justify massive military expansion and nuclear alignment with Russia and China

**Ellis 8/22** [Evan, research professor of Latin American studies at the U.S. Army War College Strategic Studies Institute, Nicaragua: Dictatorship and Collaboration with Extra-Hemispheric U.S. Rivals, https://www.csis.org/analysis/nicaragua-dictatorship-and-collaboration-extra-hemispheric-us-rivals, Lam]

On June 9, 2022, Nicaragua’s Sandinista National Liberation Front (FSLN) government renewed the authorization of Russian military forces to operate in the country. In doing so, it reminded the United States and the hemisphere that the dictatorial regime of Daniel Ortega not only continues to abrogate the rights of its own people for democratic choice, free expression, and other fundamental human rights, but also serves as an entry point for the projection of threats into the region by extra-hemispheric rivals of the United States, such as Russia, Iran, and the People’s Republic of China (PRC). Closure of Democratic Spaces---In the four years since the nationwide protests against the Sandinista regime began in April 2018, the authoritarian regime of Daniel Ortega and Rosario Murillo has doubled down on consolidating its power, arguably determined never again to allow political organizations or public organization and expression that could lead to comparable mass challenges to its power. The Ortegas’ repression of the initial protests involved hundreds of arrests and caused at least 300 deaths and 2,000 injuries. In the years that followed, they passed a series of laws effectively criminalizing expression of dissent. The defining moment in their consolidation of authoritarian rule was the rigging of the nation’s November 2021 national elections, giving the dictatorial couple a new term in power by disqualifying virtually all of the other opposition parties and jailing 40 leading opposition figures, including the seven opposition presidential candidates. The leaders of Nicaragua’s former political opposition movements have been, almost to a person, either arrested or forced into exile. Only a handful of parties, defined by their collaboration with the Ortegas and the FSLN including the Liberal Constitutionalist Party (PLC), remain legal. Following the November 2021 elections, in the wake of expanded sanctions by the United States and the European Union, the Ortegas and the FSLN have continued to move against virtually all public or private institutions that could speak out against them or otherwise mobilize public opposition against the Sandinistas. The Ortega regime has shut down more than 550 NGOs, disbanding 93 groups in June 2022 alone. The Ortega regime has also moved against the press, including the confiscation of the facilities of the independent El Confidencial in December 2018, and repeated actions against Nicaragua’s largest newspaper La Prensa and its personnel. The regime raided the offices of La Prensa in August 2021 and searched and ransacked of the homes of its reporters in July 2022, obliging reporters to flee the country. During the same month, the Ortega regime also closed four Nicaraguan cable channels and 11 radio stations, including the iconic Radio San Carlos. In August 2022, the Ortegas ordered the dismantling of the La Prensa building to eliminate the last vestiges of its 100-year role in the history of Nicaragua’s media. The Ortegas have gradually increased repression against the Catholic Church, a traditional pillar of Nicaraguan society. They have targeted priests and other leaders who speak critically of the regime during their masses and other public engagements. Nicaraguan bishop Rolando Alvarez was subject to unexplained police harrassment and later, arrest. Others in the Catholic Church and in Nicaragua’s important evangelical movement have been intimidated into remaining silent about such repression. The Ortegas have become increasingly suspicious and intolerant of the private sector. Both the president and vice president of Nicaragua’s main business federation, COSEP, have been imprisoned. The properties of numerous Nicaraguan businesspeople have been searched and sometimes confiscated without legitimate legal justification. Other commercial elites, such as Carlos Pellas, have avoided publicly opposing the Ortegas, arguably hoping to avoid the same fate. As the United States, European Union, and even states in the Western Hemisphere have become increasingly critical of the Ortega regime, Nicaragua has increasingly broken ties with them. In May 2022, following critical reports and statements from the Organization of American States (OAS)-based Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) about the Sandinista regime, Nicaragua announced its withdrawal from the OAS. In some ways, the control the Ortegas have achieved over Nicaragua is even greater than the domination of the Chavistas over much larger and resource-rich Venezuela. In Nicaragua, there are no indications of significant divisions within the national police or armed forces regarding the regime. Key political, economic, and security sector leaders have already been stripped of their visas for traveling to the United States, among other sanctions. In July 2022, 23 more Nicaraguans were added to the “Engel list” of actors barred from conducting business with U.S. financial actors. Isolated Nicaraguan elites arguably have few other options than to continue to work with the Ortegas. The current focus of the Ortegas expanding efforts to control all of Nicaragua’s political and social spaces is the November 2022 municipal elections. There, the Ortegas seek to capture the few municipalities in the country they do not currently dominate. In the prior local elections in 2017, the Sandinistas won 135 of 153 municipalities. In July 2022, in anticipation of the November elections, the FSLN government seized control of five municipalities it had lost in 2017 to the opposition party, Ciudadanos por la Libertad, whose party status had been revoked during the November 2021 presidential contest. Noting the inability to politically compete in a viable fashion in the November 2022 contests, Hector Mainera, a leading politician in exile with opposition coalition Unidad Nacional Azul y Blanco (UNAB), called for UNAB and others to boycott the elections. Economy and Covid-19---Prior to Covid-19, the Nicaraguan economy had been one of the fastest growing in the region. Despite sanctions, Nicaragua’s economy has rebounded relatively well from Covid-19, in part because of continued preferential access to the U.S. market through the Central American Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA-DR) free trade agreement. It has also now overcome initial shortages of vaccines and Covid-19-related supplies. Nonetheless, the U.S. end to tariff rate quota (TRQ) purchases of Nicaraguan sugar at preferential prices, announced in July 2022, is anticipated to impact the economy to some degree. As an agricultural economy, Nicaragua has reportedly benefited from the increased prices of coffee and dairy goods fueled indirectly by Russia’s Ukraine invasion, although it has also been hurt by inflation, which, as of late 2022, was running at 10.37 percent. In contrast to confiscatory polices adopted by the Sandinista government in the name of land reform during its first time in power after the 1979 revolution, since returning to power in 2007, the Ortegas have wisely refrained from moving against small-scale agriculture. Thus, by avoiding policies that significantly impaired food production, the Ortegas have helped keep protests manageable by ensuring Nicaraguans can at least feed themselves. Although investment in Nicaragua from the United States and the West has been limited with the deteriorating political situation, the country has continued to benefit from loans from the Central American Bank for Economic Integration (BICE). In June 2022, the bank loaned the country $382 million for infrastructure facilitating access to coastal tourist sites. In July 2022, BICE provided an additional $200 million to help the Sandinista government subsidize the cost of fuel. Despite sanctions and uncertainty regarding inconsistent protection for businesses under the law, Nicaragua has seen foreign investment increase, rather than decline, particularly in the energy and mining sector. In 2021, the country received $1.22 billion in foreign direct investment, 39 percent more than the prior year. Remittances from outside the country in the first quarter of 2022 were 26.4 percent higher than in 2017, with 70 percent of those remittances coming from the United States. In 2021, reflecting the combination of such factors, as the nation recovered from the Covid-19 pandemic, the Nicaragua economy grew 10.1 percent—one of the highest rates in the region, adding to the political space available to the Ortegas. Nicaragua as an Entry Point for Extra-Hemispheric Actors

As noted previously, Nicaragua’s increasingly authoritarian government has become a key bridge for the entrance of anti-U.S. extra-hemispheric actors into the region. Russia---The most significant of the extra-hemispheric U.S. rivals Nicaragua has enabled in the hemisphere has been Russia, with which the Ortega regime renewed its Cold War era strategic alliance in 2008. The Ortegas have continued to receive both military and economic aid from Russia. Russia-Nicaragua military collaboration has included the Ortega regime’s hosting of nuclear capable Russian Tu-160 Blackjack bombers in 2008, and again in 2013, during which time those bombers, departing from Nicaragua, violated Colombian airspace. On June 9, 2022, the Sandinista-dominated Nicaraguan congress authorized the presence of Russian troops, warships, and military vehicles in the country under Decree 10-2022. The legislation authorized Russian presence to support a combination of training on countering drugs and other activities. Although Russia’s invasion of the Ukraine and provocative talk of deploying military forces to the region gave the agreement particular significance, the authorization was not a wholly new phenomenon. Rather, it was a renewal and expansion of the recurring approval of the presence of Russian forces by the Sandinista congress, that had occurred for more than a decade. Russia has provided a significant volume of military assistance to Nicaragua relative to the its limited size and security needs. This has included selling or giving the country T-72 tanks to replace Nicaragua’s outdated Russian Cold War-era T-55s, BMP-1s, BTR-152s, BTR-60s, BTR-70s, and Tigr armored vehicles, Antonov An-26 transport aircraft, ZU-23 antiaircraft guns, Mizrah patrol boats, Molina missile boats, and possibly Mi-17 transport helicopters. The Russian counter-drug organization FSKN has constructed a law enforcement training facility in the Las Colinas neighborhood of Managua. In the first year of the facility’s operation, 2017, the facility trained at least 260 personnel across 12 courses, including representatives from Mexico, El Salvador, Guatemala, the Dominican Republic, and Nicaragua. Russia has also built a downlink station for its global positioning satellite system GLONASS in the Nejapa lagoon area just outside Managua. With respect to economic assistance, Russia has provided wheat and transit buses, although the buses have experienced problems operating in Nicaragua’s tropical climate. Most recently, in August 2022, Nicaraguan finance minister Iván Acosta announced the delivery of 300 more Russian buses, although they were reportedly purchases, not donated. In March 2022, Nicaragua also agreed to cooperate with Russia in unspecified ways on energy, medical, and nuclear projects. People’s Republic of China---The Ortega regime first diplomatically recognized the PRC in 1985. Daniel Ortega’s successor Violeta Chamorro switched relations back to Taiwan after coming to power in 1990. When Ortega returned to power for a second time in 2007, he did not immediately reestablish diplomatic relations with the PRC. Indeed, he waited until the widespread international condemnation of the his misconduct in rigging the November 2021 elections, including the associated prospect of loss of access to U.S. and other markets made possible by the 2021 U.S. RENACER Act, forced his hand. Nicaragua reestablished relations with the PRC in December 2021. Pursuant to that recognition, Nicaragua and the PRC named ambassadors to each other's countries, although the delay of almost six months to complete that process was notable. The PRC has announced a token amount of aid for Nicaragua, including Covid-19 vaccines and a $60 million project for China International Development Cooperation Agency to build a small quantity of public housing in Managua. More significantly, on June 7, 2022, the PRC and Nicaragua announced a new trade agreement to be implemented in two phases. In phase one, the PRC committed to purchasing Nicaraguan goods covering 90 percent of the exports the country previously sent to Taiwan. In phase two, the two governments have committed to negotiating a broader trade agreement that will likely open up the Nicaraguan economy to penetration by PRC-based infrastructure companies. Remarkably, in contrast to other countries which have recently established relations with the PRC, including Panama, El Salvador, the Dominican Republic, and Costa Rica, Nicaragua’s change was not accompanied by announcements of memorandums of understanding (MOUs) between the governments, or major new investment or infrastructure projects by PRC-based companies. Chinese billionaire Wang Jing, developer of the much discussed but never constructed Nicaragua Canal, mysteriously appeared in Managua in November 2021 during the run-up to national elections, following an unexplained 18-month absence, reminding Nicaraguans that the authorization for the canal still remains in effect. To date, however, there has been no further information about the canal moving forward, or signs of new construction. Islamic Republic of Iran---Beyond Russia and China, the Ortega regime has also reached out to Iran for commercial and political engagement. Prior to recent Nicaragua-Iran interactions, the Iranian government’s last major public diplomacy with Nicaragua was the visit by then-president Mahmoud Ahmadinejad in 2012. Despite talk of multiple Iranian investment projects in Nicaragua at the time, no commercial projects floated between the two countries came to fruition. On May 2022, Iranian oil minister Javad Owji visited Nicaragua and signed MOUs in both oil and agriculture. These included commitments by Iran to supply fuel to Nicaragua, as well as discussion of possible Iranian investments in a new oil refinery for the country, the Supremo Sueño de Bolívar. In July 2022, the government subsequently announced that Iran would also begin purchasing Nicaraguan beef. Outlook---For both moral and strategic reasons, the United States should not turn a blind eye to the fate of the Nicaraguan people and the direct and indirect dangers the authoritarian Ortega regime presents to the United States and the region. There are presently few signs that economic hardship or discontent within elite military business circles that collaborate with the regime is leading to exploitable fractures. As in Venezuela, a U.S. military solution to restoring democracy in Nicaragua would probably be unjustifiably expensive and counterproductive in terms of the dynamics it would unleash in the country, and the associated damage to the U.S. reputation across the region. Despite the apparent intractability of the Ortega problem in the near term, the U.S. government should continue to advocate for a restoration of Nicaraguan democracy, and work with like-minded European and other democratic actors to apply pressures and incentives to that end. The United States should work with like-minded democratic allies to provide intelligence and offer assistance in countering organized crime to Nicaragua’s neighbors, as well as assist them in managing the burden of Nicaraguan refugees who have fled to those countries. While the United States should continue to look for opportunities for constructive dialogue with the Ortegas, the most viable U.S. posture over the long term is arguably to stand steadfast with the Nicaraguan people in defense of their right to democratic self-determination, fundamental rights and the rule of law, and to send the message that the United States will not compromise with criminally connected authoritarian actors who maintain power through the brutal suppression of their own people.

### Sanctions Removal---Migration

#### Sanctions cause mass migration

**Selser 2/23** [Gabriela, Associated Press reporter, Fleeing Nicaraguans a boon to economy back home, https://apnews.com/article/politics-united-states-government-caribbean-nicaragua-economy-91f36e3904cb542b2c2e0fa3be2bd690, Lam]

MEXICO CITY (AP) — Each month, Antón Martínez, 38, sets aside $200 from his wages as a dishwasher in the United States to send home to his mother in Nicaragua. Martínez wishes it could be more, but he’s still trying to find his footing in the new country and pay off the debt of his migration. His monthly contribution to family back home was part of a 50% surge in remittances to Nicaragua in 2022, a massive jump that analysts attribute to the thousands of Nicaraguans who emigrated to the U.S. in the past two years. They have been leaving as the government intensifies a crackdown on opposition voices since early 2021, high global inflation slams families’ buying power and job opportunities remain limited at home. That swell of Nicaraguan arrivals to the U.S. was part of the reason the Biden administration announced in January that it would begin turning them away at the border if they did not first register online to make asylum petitions. Their numbers have dropped precipitously since. But Martínez, who arrived in late 2021, and others already there are keeping Nicaragua’s economy afloat with the more than $3.2 billion they sent home last year. Last year’s huge jump, “can only be explained by the disproportionate increase in migrants,” Nicaraguan economist Enrique Sáenz said. Emigration “has become (President Daniel Ortega’s) main macroeconomic policy and his main social policy,” Saenz said. Ortega’s increasingly authoritarian government has drawn sanctions from the U.S. government and Europe, but the measures have been targeted toward his inner circle and members of his administration to avoid adding more economic hardship for average Nicaraguans. Still, for the fiscal year ending last September, U.S. authorities recorded more than 163,000 encounters with Nicaraguans, more than three times the 2021 total. Encounters peaked in December with more than 35,000 and then plummeted to 3,377 in January. The reasons vary from a lack of economic opportunity to outright persecution of political opponents and voices of dissent. Ortega cracked down violently after popular protests broke out in April 2018. He ratcheted up the pressure in 2021 ahead of national elections. Earlier this month, he put 222 imprisoned opponents on a plane to Washington, saying he was sending the “terrorists” back to their foreign sponsor. Until last year, Costa Rica had been the primary destination for Nicaraguans in recent years. But the small neighboring country’s asylum system is overwhelmed, the wait now stretches years and its economy has struggled to recover from the COVID-19 pandemic. Costa Rica President Rodrigo Chaves tightened the generous asylum system in December, arguing that it was being abused by economic migrants. Those factors made the U.S. a more attractive destination despite the distance. Ortega blames the U.S. sanctions for the emigration. In Martínez’s case, he left because he had participated in anti-government protests in 2018 and feared he could be arrested at any moment. “I miss my mother and I love Nicaragua, but there was nothing else to do. It was leave or be taken prisoner at some point.” Many others reached the same decision. Nicaragua’s government released data late last year showing that between Sept. 17 and Oct. 7, it issued 20,192 passports. In the capital, residents camped out on sidewalks just to get one of the limited numbers called each day to process a passport application. Sabrina Gazol Moncada, a 28-year-old college student who had to drop out to find work, left Nicaragua in October, the month after her husband travelled to the U.S. “It’s a really difficult decision to make, because ultimately you are leaving your country, your family, the people who support you and love you,” she said. Gazol moved north on buses, on foot and stuffed into semi-trailers with 200 others. After three weeks of often rough and frightening travel through Central America and Mexico, Gazol crossed the Rio Grande near Eagle Pass, Texas, turned herself over to Border Patrol and began the process to seek asylum. In Nicaragua, “people who are not with the Ortega regime are threatened and persecuted, there’s no freedom of expression,” she said. She had not been able to send money home since arriving in the U.S., because she was still awaiting permission to work as she pursued asylum. “In Nicaragua, the government does what it wants and everybody is looking for a way out,” she said. “In the end, Nicaragua is going to be left without young people, it’s going to be a ghost country.”

#### Massive migration has led to Nicaragua posting low economic growth

**Miranda 8/23** [Wilfredo, Nicaraguan journalist working for Confidencial, a specialized investigation and analysis newspaper, Exiled Nicaraguans and family remittances: A financial pillar of the Ortega regime, https://english.elpais.com/international/2023-08-02/exiled-nicaraguans-and-family-remittances-a-financial-pillar-of-the-ortega-regime.html, Lam]

Income from family remittances in 2022 stood at close to $2.5 billion, a figure that is forecast to double in 2023 with 725,000 people having fled the country in five years. Humberto arrived in Miami less than 13 months ago, after leaving Nicaragua on an “excursion” to Guatemala, subsequently crossing Mexico and turning himself in to the U.S. Border Patrol on the north bank of the Rio Grande. He was held for a few weeks in a detention center until his aunt vouched for him; she paid for a plane ticket to Florida and put him to work in a family restaurant, where the college student has applied for asylum. Sending money to his mother and younger brother, who stayed behind in Managua, was one of his priorities when he received his first pay checks. “I came before they approved the humanitarian parole issue. I crossed over illegally, because I did not see a future in Nicaragua. I earned about $350 a month in a clothing store, but it was not enough to pay for my college and to help my brother and my mother with the house,” Humberto told EL PAÍS. “Now I send them more or less that amount as a remittance, but I hope to be able to increase that money when I am granted asylum, and manage to continue studying and to have a better job in this country.” Humberto, who was studying for an engineering degree, is part of the exodus of 725,000 Nicaraguans who have left the country since 2018, when social protests broke out and the nation was plunged into a socio-political crisis, mixed with unemployment and a totalitarian shift. Almost 7% of Nicaragua’s entire population is on the run. Between 2021 and 2022, U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) estimates more than 200,000 Nicaraguans have crossed into the United States. Most of them, like Humberto, share the same priority: sending remittances back to their families. According to figures from the Central Bank of Nicaragua (BCN), as of last May, remittances from the United States were growing at a rate of over 80%. Three out of every four dollars that came from family remittances in 2022 originated in the United States, followed by Costa Rica and Spain. In total, family remittance inflows totaled $2.47 billion in 2022. Paradoxically, these overseas remittances provide the regime of Daniel Ortega and Rosario Murillo with one of their main economic supports. A “policy of expulsion and exclusion A recent report by the U.S.-based Inter-American Dialogue think tank describes the Nicaraguan exodus as a “policy of expulsion and exclusion” on the part of the Ortega government. “Growth is largely driven by family remittances, which are projected to increase to $5 billion in 2023,” says the study, conducted by political scientist Manuel Orozco. “This means that economic dependence on remittances will be over 30% of GDP and one million households will receive money.” On the other hand, these figures reflect the importance of the United States as Nicaragua’s main trading partner, despite the fact that the Ortega and Murillo regime maintains an anti-imperialist discourse and diplomatic relations are experiencing serious flashpoints, to the extent that Washington has been left without an ambassador in Managua. “Exports to the United States represent 35% of GDP, half of which comes from the free trade zone, from 130 companies - 34 U.S. and more than 40 Nicaraguan,” adds Orozco in his analysis. Enrique Sáenz, an economist and exiled opponent of the regime in Costa Rica, explains to EL PAÍS that family remittances represent “liquid dollars or euros, since if they come from Spain, they are also transformed into dollars. [Remittances] from Costa Rica are also called liquid currency, because they directly feed the reserves of the Central Bank, where we see servants of the dictatorship boasting about the magnitude of the reserves in the BCN.” “While the tyrant rails against imperialism, Nicaraguans are turning to the empire and it is from the empire that they send these dollars with their sweat, with their sleeplessness, to be able to help their families who suffer from unemployment and the consequences of the high cost of living,” says Sáenz. The economist points to the latest Gallup survey. Published last March, the poll reveals that 47% of Nicaraguans’ economic projections for 2023 are negative, compared to 42% who are optimistic that things will get better. In Gallup’s view, a factor that generates feelings of economic stability is remittances from migrants to their families. Massive migration, economists and experts agree, has led to Nicaragua posting low economic growth of 3% in 2022. Although macroeconomic figures keep the economy out of trouble — albeit without generating wealth — Nicaraguans still fail to make ends meet, in a context of a constant rise in the basic cost of goods and services. “Nicaraguans continue to live on 2017 income levels of $2,200 per capita per year (the basic family income in Nicaragua is $250 per month), while the basic cost of food is $6,000 per year,” says Orozco. “Nor is there an increase in the labor force in the formal economy. On the contrary: informality is growing. Those who are doing well are the Nicaraguans who work in commerce or receive remittances,” notes the Inter-American Dialogue report.

### Engagement Key---China/Russia

#### Chinese companies in Nicaragua to pursue its strategic aims against U.S.

**Ellis 12/23** [R. Evan, Latin America research professor at the U.S. Army War College, China’s Growing Strategic Position in Nicaragua, https://thediplomat.com/2023/12/chinas-growing-strategic-position-in-nicaragua/, Lam]

The October 2023 announcement of multiple major infrastructure projects to be performed by Chinese companies in Nicaragua highlights China’s deepening strategic position in that country, with significant implications for the United States and the region. Nicaragua’s December 2021 recognition of China and its corresponding abandonment of long-standing ties with Taiwan initially did not produce significant fruit. The delay likely reflected the lack of pressure on China to consolidate its gains in the country, due to the Ortega regime’s political isolation from the United States and Europe, and its relative pariah status even among democratic leftist governments in the region. The lacuna was also likely Beijing’s subtle but forceful punishment of the Ortegas, for having waited 14 years after having returned to power in 2007 before restoring Nicaragua’s 1985-1990 relationship with China. The Ortega regime only did so after having exhausted other economic and political options while spending years extorting benefits from the Taiwanese. The slow start to the current phase of the China-Nicaragua relationship does not lessen its strategic significance and prospects for expansion. As Beijing’s commercial, political and military position in Nicaragua grows, it is likely to significantly increase dependence by the Ortega regime, and corresponding leverage China can use in Nicaragua to pursue its strategic aims. The relationship is also likely to develop in a lopsided fashion, on terms highly favorable to China. As with China’s engagement with other authoritarian populist regimes in the region, including Hugo Chavez and Nicolas Maduro in Venezuela, the Rafael Correa regime in Ecuador, and the Evo Morales regime in Bolivia, the open door given by the Ortega regime to Beijing will not bring prosperity to the country. It will, however, help to sustain the regime in power by providing not only resources, but corruption opportunities through non-transparent transactions with China-based entities. This provides Nicaraguan business, military, and other elites incentives to remain loyal to the Ortegas in the face of international sanctions and the deterioration of Nicaragua’s economic situation and democracy. As with other small countries that have recently abandoned Taiwan, Nicaragua’s commerce with China is poised to significantly expand, but in ways that substantially favor Beijing. The largely one-sided expansion of trade will be facilitated by the 13 MOUs which the Ortegas signed with China, as well as the new China-Nicaragua fee trade agreement (FTA), signed in August 2023, following an unprecedentedly short 13 months of negotiations. The FTA will go into effect in 2024. Reflecting Nicaragua’s lack of experience with the Chinese market, and the cost disadvantage of sending perishable exports long distances to China via aircraft or in refrigerated containers, in the first half of 2023, over a year after recognition, Nicaragua’s exports to China were a mere $6.7 million, compared to almost a billion dollars in exports to the United States. Beyond trade, China-based companies are poised to establish a significant presence in Nicaragua, on terms beneficial to them. The absence of China in Nicaragua’s list of external aid donors indicates that none of the extensive number of projects being done by China-based firms are gifts. China’s advance into Nicaraguan infrastructure projects began with a housing project done by a China-based company with Chinese workers, but paid for by the Nicaraguan government. The $60 million project involves construction of 12,000 low-income housing units in 85 municipalities across the country, with work beginning in April 2023. In the mining sector, in July 2023, the Nicaraguan government awarded two concessions totaling 15,400 hectares to the China-based company Zhong Fu Development The concessions are controversially located in a Miskito Indian self-governing area in Nicaragua’s northeast coast. In the retail sector, in August 2023, a new retail chain “Casa China” opened its doors in Managua, providing an expanded vehicle for channeling consumer products imported from China to the Nicaraguan market, in competition with established local goods and retailers. In October 2023, in the framework of the third Belt and Road Forum in China, Nicaragua and China formally announced seven new infrastructure projects. These include a $492 million project for China’s CAMC Engineering to expand the Puerta Huete military airfield into a new commercial airport. They also include a train line from Managua to Masaya to Granada, to be designed and built by the Chinese company China Civil Engineering Construction Corporation (CCECC), plus a study by CCECC for an ambitious interoceanic railway connection from Managua in the northwest, to Corinto and Bluefields on Nicaragua’s Atlantic coast. China-based companies have agreements with the Nicaraguan government for multiple highway projects, including a China Communications and Construction Corporation (CCCC) project to improve road segments from Guanacaste to Nandaime to Rivas and from Rivas to Sapoa. The Ortega regime has also promised China State Construction and Engineering (CSCE) work on Phase 2 of the “littoral highway” along Nicaragua’s Pacific coast. In November 2023, Nicaragua committed to seven projects for CSCE, including expansion of highway segments from Chinandega to Somotillo, from Mateare to Empalme Izapa, from Sébaco to Matagalpa, and from Portezuelo to Las Mercedes, as well as construction of the Lisawe, Labu and Prinzapolka bridges. Beyond road and rail projects, Nicaragua had purchased 500 buses from the China-based company Yutong with plans to buy 2,000 more in 2024. In the electricity sector, the Ortega regime has earmarked 523 MW of new capacity to China-based companies, including construction of the 120 MW Mojokola and the 253 MW Tumarin hydroelectric facilities, and the150 MW San Benito thermoelectric project in San Benito, all assigned to the China Huadian Overseas Investment group. The Ortegas have also announced that CCCC will be paid to build a $72 million solar park in Matagalpa. There has been no indication of the resumption of the high-profile transcontinental canal by Chinese billionaire Wang Jing, although his company HKND still has legal authorization from the Sandinista-controlled Nicaraguan congress to build projects within the framework of the canal. Chinese firms, including Xinwei, are established in Nicaragua’s digital sector. China-based Huawei is currently collaborating with the Ortega government to eventually build a 5G network in the country. Strategic Considerations China’s footprint in Nicaragua is expanding beyond commercial matters. In July 2023, Foreign Minister Wang Yi expressed China’s willingness to upgrade its strategic relations with the country, during a visit by Daniel Ortega’s son Laureano. In the media domain, in October 2023, a Nicaraguan media delegation met with the China Media Group and China Global Telecommunications Network (CGTN) to increase cooperation in media matters. China-Nicaragua security cooperation is also expanding. In August 2023, the Ortega regime named a brigadier general as its military attaché in Beijing, indicating a high level of priority to China-Nicaragua military cooperation. In September 2023, the director general of Nicaragua’s National Police, Francisco Diaz, met with his Chinese counterpart, Public Security Minister Wan Xiaohong, exploring avenues for expanded police training collaboration. The strategic risks to the region and to the United States of an Ortega regime empowered by Beijing are complemented by the growing political and economic strength and aggressiveness of other anti-U.S. actors in the region, including the Maduro regime in Venezuela. Maduro has been enriched by the lifting of U.S. sanctions and emboldened by having substantially reneged on corresponding commitments to release U.S. prisoners and move toward free elections without incurring substantial consequences from Washington. The Maduro regime is now posing military threats against neighboring Guyana. Beyond the region itself, the anti-U.S. orientation of the Ortega regime and its pattern of significant military cooperation with Russia complements its growing dependence on China. In the context of a hypothetical China-U.S. war in the Indo-Pacific, Nicaragua’s security relationships with Cuba, Russia, and Iran could also present opportunities for Beijing to coordinate operations with those actors against the U.S. from Nicaraguan soil. The Path Forward --- The acceleration of China’s engagement with Nicaragua, in the context of other developments in the region, creates strategic dilemmas for the United States. It is imperative for Washington to decisively, yet pragmatically, respond. This includes expanded use of diplomatic and economic tools, short of military intervention, to reduce Nicaragua’s ability to host threats to the U.S. and undermine regional democracy from Central America. The United States should consider fuller application of its own laws, such as the Reinforcing Nicaragua’s Adherence to Conditions for Electoral Reform (RENACER) Act of 2021, and the possible expulsion of Nicaragua from the Dominican Republic-Central America FTA (CAFTA-DR). As Nicaragua’s relationship with China expands, the U.S. should be alert for the almost inevitable instances of mismanagement, corruption and outcomes that benefit Beijing over the Nicaraguan people, in order to publicly leverage such examples to better make the case to others how a populist embrace of China brings more problems than benefits. In its security planning, the United States should contemplate the wartime possibilities afforded to China from its commercial and other presence in Nicaragua, including those involving collaboration with Russia, Iran, and other adversaries, and U.S. response options. Beijing’s engagement with Nicaragua is likely to reinforce the country’s descent into authoritarianism, while giving China expanding options to work against U.S. interests in both peacetime and wartime. The challenge of Nicaragua is yet another reason for Washington to dedicate attention and resources to the region, with which U.S. prosperity and security are intimately linked through bonds of commerce, geography and family.

#### Dangerous friendships with Russia and China may increase Nicaraguan regime to committing atrocity crimes

**Ochab 2/24** [Ewelina, lawyer and human rights advocate, What Is Happening In Nicaragua And Why We Should Care?, https://www.forbes.com/sites/ewelinaochab/2024/02/17/what-is-happening-in-nicaragua-and-why-we-should-care/?sh=19009e5c6f31, Lam]

On February 8, 2024, British politicians launched a Parliamentary inquiry to consider the situation in Nicaragua and the ever-growing suppression of the rights of religious leaders and institutions, the media and the opposition (the Nicaragua Inquiry). The inquiry follows concerning reports of targeted attacks against anyone being critical of the Ortega regime, including as seen over Christmas 2023. Around Christmas 2023, the government arbitrarily arrested and detained clergymen including Father Silvio Fonseca, who has openly criticized the Nicaraguan government’s intense persecution of the Catholic Church, and Bishop Isidro Mora and Father Pablo Villafranca, each of whom offered prayers for the wrongfully imprisoned Bishop Rolando Álvarez prior to their arrests. Furthermore, on December 24, 2023 (Christmas Eve), the government sentenced six former employees of the Catholic charity Caritas, Julio Sevilla, Julio Berríos, Bladimir Pallés, María Verónica Herrera Galeano, Freydell Andino, and Mariví Andino, to six years imprisonment on dubious money laundering charges. The targeting of the opposition around Christmas 2023 was nothing new, and indeed, recent years have seen similar practices. The targeting of human rights defenders and other critics became a legacy of the Ortega regime, with death threats, assaults, intimidation, harassment, surveillance, online defamation campaigns, and arbitrary detention and prosecution, among others. The government severely limits freedom of expression for journalists and media outlets, including with the use of threats, physical attacks, detentions, arbitrary financial investigations, arbitrary prosecutions, and forced closures. As reported by Human Rights Watch, “police frequently station themselves outside the houses of government critics, preventing them from leaving, in what amounts to arbitrary arrest. Those harassed are unable to visit friends and family, attend meetings, go to work, or participate in protests or political activities. Some have been detained repeatedly—sometimes being abused during detention—for periods ranging from several days to several months.” The human rights violations in Nicaragua are being considered as crimes against humanity by the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR). The situation in Nicaragua requires urgent attention, to alleviate the suffering of the people, but also as Ortega is developing dangerous friendships with Russia and China, countries standing accused of committing atrocity crimes: with China standing accused of committing genocide against the Uyghurs and other Turkic minorities in Xinjiang, and Russia perpetrating war crimes, crimes against humanity, and possibly genocide against Ukrainian, and also oppressing the opposition in Russia. Since 2016, Russia has been supplying Nicaragua with military equipment and satellite monitoring infrastructure, in addition to the long-standing agreement on Russian troops training in Nicaragua and the military accessing the country. In January 2024, Nicaragua and China formally started trading under a new free trade agreement. The Nicaragua Inquiry, led by prominent parliamentarians working on human rights, including Baroness Kennedy of the Shaws KC, Lord Alton of Liverpool, Baroness Hooper, Mark Menzies MP, Brendan O’Hara MP, Philip Mounstephen - Bishop of Winchester (author of the Truro Independent Review into the Persecution of Christians), and Fiona Bruce MP - the Prime Minister’s Special Envoy for Freedom of Religion or Belief, is conducted under the auspices of three Parliamentary groups, All-Party Parliamentary Groups (APPGs), on Central America, the International Freedom of Religion and Belief, and International Law, Justice, and Accountability. Lord Alton of Liverpool, convener of the Inquiry, commented: “it is a privilege to convene such an impressive panel of expert parliamentarians to look into the credible reports of human rights violations in Nicaragua, particularly human rights violations that may meet the legal definition of crimes against humanity.” Among the first experts to testify was Bianca Jagger, human rights defender, founder and president of Bianca Jagger Human Rights Foundation. Over the years, Bianca Jagger has been an outspoken critic of the Ortega regime and especially of the persecution of religious leaders in the country. Speaking to the Inquiry, she emphasized that Nicaragua is “probably one of the worst dictatorships in the world today” with “the Catholic Church [being] the last bastion of opposition left in Nicaragua.” The Nicaragua Inquiry is seeking written submissions from individuals and organizations with relevant information in relation to the human rights situation to establish the nature and scale of the human rights violations in the country and identify recommendations for the U.K. government and other actors. Their report will be published in April 2024, in the lead to Nicaragua’s review by the United Nations’ Universal Periodic Review.

### Engagement Key---Human Rights

#### US coop with Nicaragua is key to check authoritarian encroachment in the region & promote human rights protections for the Nicaraguan public

Ellis, 8-29-2022 (Evan Ellis, Evan Ellis is a senior associate (non-resident) with the Americas Program at the Center for Strategic and International Studies in Washington, D.C., "Nicaragua: Dictatorship And Collaboration With Extra-Hemispheric U.S. Rivals," CSIS, https://www.csis.org/analysis/nicaragua-dictatorship-and-collaboration-extra-hemispheric-us-rivals, accessed on 4-23-2024)

Nicaragua as an Entry Point for Extra-Hemispheric Actors

As noted previously, Nicaragua’s increasingly authoritarian government has become a key bridge for the entrance of anti-U.S. extra-hemispheric actors into the region.

Russia

The most significant of the extra-hemispheric U.S. rivals Nicaragua has enabled in the hemisphere has been Russia, with which the Ortega regime renewed its Cold War era strategic alliance in 2008. The Ortegas have continued to receive both military and economic aid from Russia.

Russia-Nicaragua military collaboration has included the Ortega regime’s hosting of nuclear capable Russian Tu-160 Blackjack bombers in 2008, and again in 2013, during which time those bombers, departing from Nicaragua, violated Colombian airspace.

On June 9, 2022, the Sandinista-dominated Nicaraguan congress authorized the presence of Russian troops, warships, and military vehicles in the country under Decree 10-2022. The legislation authorized Russian presence to support a combination of training on countering drugs and other activities. Although Russia’s invasion of the Ukraine and provocative talk of deploying military forces to the region gave the agreement particular significance, the authorization was not a wholly new phenomenon. Rather, it was a renewal and expansion of the recurring approval of the presence of Russian forces by the Sandinista congress, that had occurred for more than a decade.

Russia has provided a significant volume of military assistance to Nicaragua relative to the its limited size and security needs. This has included selling or giving the country T-72 tanks to replace Nicaragua’s outdated Russian Cold War-era T-55s, BMP-1s, BTR-152s, BTR-60s, BTR-70s, and Tigr armored vehicles, Antonov An-26 transport aircraft, ZU-23 antiaircraft guns, Mizrah patrol boats, Molina missile boats, and possibly Mi-17 transport helicopters.

The Russian counter-drug organization FSKN has constructed a law enforcement training facility in the Las Colinas neighborhood of Managua. In the first year of the facility’s operation, 2017, the facility trained at least 260 personnel across 12 courses, including representatives from Mexico, El Salvador, Guatemala, the Dominican Republic, and Nicaragua.

Russia has also built a downlink station for its global positioning satellite system GLONASS in the Nejapa lagoon area just outside Managua.

With respect to economic assistance, Russia has provided wheat and transit buses, although the buses have experienced problems operating in Nicaragua’s tropical climate. Most recently, in August 2022, Nicaraguan finance minister Iván Acosta announced the delivery of 300 more Russian buses, although they were reportedly purchases, not donated.

In March 2022, Nicaragua also agreed to cooperate with Russia in unspecified ways on energy, medical, and nuclear projects.

People’s Republic of China

The Ortega regime first diplomatically recognized the PRC in 1985. Daniel Ortega’s successor Violeta Chamorro switched relations back to Taiwan after coming to power in 1990. When Ortega returned to power for a second time in 2007, he did not immediately reestablish diplomatic relations with the PRC. Indeed, he waited until the widespread international condemnation of the his misconduct in rigging the November 2021 elections, including the associated prospect of loss of access to U.S. and other markets made possible by the 2021 U.S. RENACER Act, forced his hand.

Nicaragua reestablished relations with the PRC in December 2021. Pursuant to that recognition, Nicaragua and the PRC named ambassadors to each other's countries, although the delay of almost six months to complete that process was notable.

The PRC has announced a token amount of aid for Nicaragua, including Covid-19 vaccines and a $60 million project for China International Development Cooperation Agency to build a small quantity of public housing in Managua.

More significantly, on June 7, 2022, the PRC and Nicaragua announced a new trade agreement to be implemented in two phases. In phase one, the PRC committed to purchasing Nicaraguan goods covering 90 percent of the exports the country previously sent to Taiwan. In phase two, the two governments have committed to negotiating a broader trade agreement that will likely open up the Nicaraguan economy to penetration by PRC-based infrastructure companies.

Remarkably, in contrast to other countries which have recently established relations with the PRC, including Panama, El Salvador, the Dominican Republic, and Costa Rica, Nicaragua’s change was not accompanied by announcements of memorandums of understanding (MOUs) between the governments, or major new investment or infrastructure projects by PRC-based companies. Chinese billionaire Wang Jing, developer of the much discussed but never constructed Nicaragua Canal, mysteriously appeared in Managua in November 2021 during the run-up to national elections, following an unexplained 18-month absence, reminding Nicaraguans that the authorization for the canal still remains in effect. To date, however, there has been no further information about the canal moving forward, or signs of new construction.

Islamic Republic of Iran

Beyond Russia and China, the Ortega regime has also reached out to Iran for commercial and political engagement. Prior to recent Nicaragua-Iran interactions, the Iranian government’s last major public diplomacy with Nicaragua was the visit by then-president Mahmoud Ahmadinejad in 2012. Despite talk of multiple Iranian investment projects in Nicaragua at the time, no commercial projects floated between the two countries came to fruition.

On May 2022, Iranian oil minister Javad Owji visited Nicaragua and signed MOUs in both oil and agriculture. These included commitments by Iran to supply fuel to Nicaragua, as well as discussion of possible Iranian investments in a new oil refinery for the country, the Supremo Sueño de Bolívar. In July 2022, the government subsequently announced that Iran would also begin purchasing Nicaraguan beef.

Outlook

For both moral and strategic reasons, the United States should not turn a blind eye to the fate of the Nicaraguan people and the direct and indirect dangers the authoritarian Ortega regime presents to the United States and the region.

There are presently few signs that economic hardship or discontent within elite military business circles that collaborate with the regime is leading to exploitable fractures. As in Venezuela, a U.S. military solution to restoring democracy in Nicaragua would probably be unjustifiably expensive and counterproductive in terms of the dynamics it would unleash in the country, and the associated damage to the U.S. reputation across the region.

Despite the apparent intractability of the Ortega problem in the near term, the U.S. government should continue to advocate for a restoration of Nicaraguan democracy, and work with like-minded European and other democratic actors to apply pressures and incentives to that end. The United States should work with like-minded democratic allies to provide intelligence and offer assistance in countering organized crime to Nicaragua’s neighbors, as well as assist them in managing the burden of Nicaraguan refugees who have fled to those countries.

While the United States should continue to look for opportunities for constructive dialogue with the Ortegas, the most viable U.S. posture over the long term is arguably to stand steadfast with the Nicaraguan people in defense of their right to democratic self-determination, fundamental rights and the rule of law, and to send the message that the United States will not compromise with criminally connected authoritarian actors who maintain power through the brutal suppression of their own people.

#### U.S. makes it harder for Nicaragua to access multilateral loans

**Lopez and et. al. 2/19** [Ismael, reporter, Loan of $100 million from Taiwan gives lifeline to Nicaragua's Ortega, https://www.reuters.com/article/idUSKCN1Q901J/, Lam]

MANAGUA/TAIPEI (Reuters) - Nicaragua's congress on Tuesday accepted a $100 million loan offered by Taiwan, giving a line of support to President Daniel Ortega's government, which has become increasingly isolated after a brutal crackdown on protesters last year. Lawmakers approved the 20-year loan a day after U.S. President Donald Trump declared that "socialism is dying" in Nicaragua, Cuba and Venezuela. The United States enacted a law late last year making it harder for Nicaragua to access multilateral loans. The bill approved by lawmakers from the ruling Sandinista party funds were destined to support the country's budget priorities this year. Taiwan's Foreign Ministry said in a statement that the unrest in the country had caused serious damage to Nicaragua's economy. "In order to help re-building work in Nicaragua, our side has agreed, after prudent assessment, to provide a commercial loan for re-building," it said. "The relevant help is based upon humanitarian considerations to help the Nicaraguan people, and we hope people's lives in Nicaragua and social order can return to normalcy and stability as soon as possible," the ministry added. "Nicaragua's government has promised to use this loan appropriately in the aforementioned areas," it said. Nicaragua is one of a shrinking number of countries in Central America that still offer U.S.-ally Taiwan diplomatic support over China, which considers Taiwan sacred Chinese territory. China and Taiwan have for years traded accusations of "dollar diplomacy" as they seek support around the world, offering generous aid packages in return for diplomatic recognition. Self-ruled and democratic Taiwan now has formal relations with only 17 countries, almost all of them small and less developed nations in Central America and the Pacific, including Belize and Nauru. Former guerrilla leader Ortega's rule was challenged by the protests against a social security reform last year. More than 320 people died in a crackdown that suppressed the protests but led to deep rifts with the private sector and Washington. The United States has imposed sanctions on officials close to Ortega, including his wife, Vice President Rosario Murillo. The Netherlands and Luxembourg last year suspended aid funding to Nicaragua, citing repression during the protests. In the 2019 budget, Nicaragua's congress forecast a budget deficit of $320 million, up from $170 million in December 2018.

### Neg---Sanctions Good

#### Nicaragua is ideologically different---US needs to increase economic leverage, not decrease it!

Rhodes 24 [Brennan Rhodes, a former young global professional with the Atlantic Council’s Adrienne Arsht Latin America Center., "Nicaragua is consolidating an authoritarian dynasty. Here’s how US economic pressure can counter it.," Atlantic Council, 12-17-2024, https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/new-atlanticist/nicaraguas-government-authoritarian-dynasty-us-economic-pressure/, accessed on 4-22-2025, GMU AE]

On November 22, the Nicaraguan National Assembly all but solidified the country’s dynastic dictatorship, led by President Daniel Ortega and his wife, Rosario Murillo. The legislature approved a constitutional reform providing the regime power over all sectors of government, extending the presidential term from five to six years, and elevating Murillo from vice president to “co-president” alongside Ortega. The reform strengthens the Ortega-Murillo regime’s pressure campaign against civil society, the Catholic Church, and the media, all while it claims to protect the country from “foreign interests.” This constitutional reform has caused serious concerns among international watchdogs over a further escalation of human rights and civil liberties abuses. All the while, the regime has **grown economic** and strategic **ties with China** and Russia as well as **weaponizing vulnerable migrants against the United States**. As Nicaragua’s top trading partner, the United States is well-positioned to leverage economic policy to push more against the country’s brand of dynastic authoritarianism. Applying stronger economic pressure would hold Nicaragua’s co-presidents accountable for their human rights violations, help promote democratic reform, and prevent further consolidation of the regime. Nicaragua’s malign activity The China-Latin America and the Caribbean Business Summit, held in Managua in November, marks the culmination of China and Nicaragua’s growing economic ties over the past year. With Nicaragua having joined the Chinese Belt and Road Initiative in January 2022, relations between the two countries have developed considerably. In January, China and Nicaragua signed a free trade agreement, which was followed by the inauguration of their first direct maritime trade route from Tianjin, China, to Corinto, Nicaragua, in August. Furthermore, the ship that inaugurated the trade route was carrying materials for the Chinese-sponsored construction of Punta Huete International Airport. Even more recently, Nicaragua sent a delegation of thirty-one business leaders, led by Laureano Ortega Murillo, son of the two co-presidents, to the China International Import Expo. During the event, he stated, “Our government is fully open to Chinese investment. We are under the guidance of our president to facilitate everything we can do for Chinese businesses.” Chinese foreign investment oftentimes undermines US geopolitical interests, which has made curbing such investment a key foreign policy priority of the incoming Trump administration. For example, Nicaragua severed diplomatic ties with Taiwan right before joining the Belt and Road Initiative. China’s willingness to engage with authoritarian actors like Nicaragua greatly impacts US hemispheric goals for democracy. On the national security front, military cooperation between Nicaragua and Russia has intensified. Over the past decade, nearly 3,500 Russian military personnel have entered the country, and Moscow has been providing the regime with military equipment and training since 2016. In March, the legislature, which is dominated by Ortega’s ruling party, permitted the construction of a police training center run by the Russian Interior Ministry. This deal builds upon previous espionage concerns associated with Mokorón Base, claimed as a hub for Russian espionage, and the Russian Global Navigation Satellite System. At the beginning of December, the Russian government approved a draft proposal establishing a joint military working group and extending military cooperation. In reference to Russia’s military presence, Laureano Ortega Murillo stated, “Nicaragua is Russia’s strategic ally in Central America. We position ourselves as its regional platform in all fields and we are committed to enhancing Moscow’s influence and action in the region.” Furthermore, the Nicaraguan government traffics migrants to systematically increase migration pressure and fuel remittance payments, which comprise 30 percent of Nicaragua’s gross domestic product. In an effort to protest existing sanctions, the regime loosened visa restrictions for countries across the Caribbean, Asia, and Africa and sold ninety-six-hour visas to migrants looking to bypass the treacherous journey through the Darién Gap. The Nicaraguan government organizes charter flights for migrants through third-party airline companies while creating a million-dollar enterprise charging migrants predatory visa fees. Between May 2023 and May 2024, an estimated 200,000 migrants arrived in Augusto Sandino International Airport on “pseudo-commercial flights.” Approximately 10 percent of all migrants arriving at the United States’ southern border start the trek in Nicaragua. Countering Chinese influence, curtailing immigration, and bolstering national security are issues that President-elect Donald Trump campaigned on. Since Nicaragua poses a threat to all three of these goals, the question becomes: What tools are at the disposal of the Trump administration? Go for the gold One option for the incoming administration is to enact wider sectoral sanctions, but there are pros and cons to this approach. Following the 2018 antigovernment protests in Nicaragua, the first Trump administration issued Executive Order 13851 sanctioning key officials, including Ortega and Murillo. These individual sanctions did not have a significant impact on the regime. Therefore, the Trump administration should consider imposing wider sectoral sanctions on key economic sectors, such as gold and precious metals. The Biden administration slowly began to target the gold sector, designating multiple private companies and a government-run mining organization. All the while, the Biden administration still negotiated through diplomatic channels to release 135 political prisoners. However, the sanctioned companies comprise only 1 percent of Nicaraguan mining concessions. Broader sectoral sanctioning on the gold industry would send a strong message by targeting one of the country’s top exports, serving as a bargaining chip to release remaining political prisoners and to promote democratic reform. Gold exports already outnumber Nicaraguan production rates, hinting at illegal gold mining and smuggling, which gold sector sanctions would likely exacerbate. As such, the administration must prepare a holistic framework to tackle illicit gold trade from artisanal and small-scale mining operations through commodities tracking, custody ledgers, or even chemical trace analysis measures. Lastly, the Trump administration should harmonize sanctions programs with allies such as the United Kingdom and the European Union to increase their efficacy. Considering that the United States imports the majority of Nicaraguan gold, targeting this sector would eliminate a large cash flow for the regime. Push where the regime feels pressure: Trade In recent years, some policymakers have proposed expelling Nicaragua from the Central America-Dominican Republic Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA-DR) to increase pressure on the Ortega government. For example, the first Trump administration considered it in 2019, seeing the agreement as providing an economic lifeline to an authoritarian regime. The Biden administration also considered expelling Nicaragua in 2022. But without an expulsion clause, there is no feasible avenue to expel Nicaragua without dismantling the entire agreement. As Trump discusses the renegotiation of the US-Mexico-Canada Agreement (USMCA), sights could turn to CAFTA-DR. Any potential renegotiation of CAFTA-DR could include tougher restrictions on member countries’ interactions with Chinese investors while excluding Nicaragua from an updated CAFTA-DR to help prevent Chinese transshipment of goods into the United States. However, a review pathway for Nicaragua would need to be made available pending significant democratic reform. Alternatively, the Trump administration could keep the CAFTA-DR in place while presenting the opportunity for accession of other qualifying members to the USMCA agreement. In this scenario, Nicaragua would not qualify, considering its rebuke of democratic principles, centralization of power, and strong ties to China. If Nicaragua’s neighbors choose to join the USMCA, Nicaragua would become susceptible to Trump’s proposed blanket tariffs, losing favored access to US markets. However, prior to the official disruption of CAFTA-DR, Trump should continue the US Trade Representative’s Section 301 investigation into Nicaragua’s adherence to labor rights, human rights, and the rule of law, which is a pathway to increased sanctions. The United States could also consider mobilizing the Department of Labor’s Bureau of International Labor Affairs in conjunction with the CAFTA-DR oversight commission to review labor and environmental requirement adherence. Trade plays a significant role in Nicaragua’s economy, which makes these approaches a likely effective way to increase pressure on the government. Keep the end in mind Avenues exist to increase pressure on the Nicaraguan government, but it should be pressure with a point. Any new measures from Washington should be tied to specific calls for the regime to carry out democratic reforms, ensure human rights, and/or take steps to address security concerns emanating from its dealings with Russia and China. In addition, the Trump administration should be aware that new punitive economic measures would likely result in an increase of Nicaraguan emigration. More than a fifth of Nicaragua’s population has already left the country and this will likely increase if the economic situation gets worse. To confront the regime’s exploitation of migrants, existing programs such as the Department of Homeland Security’s Operation Sentinel should be bolstered to investigate migrant trafficking operations and further explore their connections to the Ortega-Murillo regime. Finally, the Trump administration will need to decide whether to continue the Biden administration’s policies toward Nicaragua, including the reallocated quota on imports of Nicaragua’s sugar, as well as existing export controls pursuant to the International Traffic in Arms Regulations and Export Administration Regulations. The incoming Trump administration has consequential choices ahead of it, but the sooner it acts the better. The Nicaraguan regime’s increasing collaboration with China and Russia is providing the economic backing to crack down at home and make Nicaragua increasingly dangerous to the region. If Trump wants to meet his foreign policy campaign goals while reaffirming hemispheric human rights, Nicaragua is a good place to start.

#### U.S. cooperation with Nicaragua props up dictatorship—sanctions are better, but Trump doesn’t seem committed either way.

**Monte 25** [Antonio Monte, Monte is a Dr. phil. in History by the Free University of Berlin, "Will Trump 2.0 Play Tougher on Nicaragua’s Dictatorship?," Americas Quarterly, 2-13-2025, https://www.americasquarterly.org/article/will-trump-2-0-play-tougher-on-nicaraguas-dictatorship/, accessed on 4-22-2025, GMU AE/Shananier]

SAN JOSÉ, Costa Rica—For years, Washington has advocated for the restoration of democratic governance in Nicaragua. However, despite its imposing numerous stringent sanctions on individuals, state-run entities, and members of Nicaragua’s National Assembly, the regime led by President Daniel Ortega and his wife, co-president Rosario Murillo, has evolved into an overt dictatorship with a tighter grip on key institutions and overwhelming control over society. Some argue that the U.S. and the international community have given insufficient attention to Nicaragua as the country’s political situation has deteriorated over the past six years. President Donald Trump’s return to the White House—with an anticipated focus on authoritarian leftist governments in Latin America aligned with Russia or China—raises the question of whether his administration will increase efforts to pressure Ortega’s regime. If the new U.S. administration is serious about pressuring Ortega to negotiate a democratic transition, Washington should consider reversing recent cuts to assistance provided to this country’s opposition—and, by extension, to the entire region—through USAID, an organization that for years has supported the democratization of the hemisphere. The White House will do well to review the financial networks that sustain Ortega’s authoritarian rule, including foreign investment, international financial aid and lending, and access to the U.S. market for exports, gold mining, and cattle farming. A revision of the Central America-Dominican Republic Free Trade Agreement, CAFTA-DR, into effect for Nicaragua since April 2006 and by which the country has preferential access to the markets of the world’s largest economy, deserves top priority as Managua’s regime is neglecting compliance with several clauses of the accord. Any disruption in these areas could undermine the regime’s stability. Ortega relies on tight financial control and stringent authoritarian measures to maintain his grip on the Nicaraguan population. But Trump’s moves so far, terminating humanitarian parole and freezing U.S. assistance to human rights organizations, seem more likely to weaken the Nicaraguan opposition. Nicaragua’s so-called exceptionalism Since 2007, Ortega and Murillo have controlled Nicaragua. She was recently named co-president thanks to a constitutional reform that extended the presidential term to 2028 and buttressed the regime’s power over the press, the Catholic Church, and civil society organizations. Before the widespread protests and repression of 2018, Nicaragua was considered an exception in a region impacted by high levels of violence. Street gangs and drug-trafficking organizations were and continue to be present in Nicaragua, but homicide levels remain low, with Nicaragua’s numbers (6.2 per 100,000 inhabitants) significantly lower than those of Guatemala (16.7), Honduras (31.1) and even Costa Rica (17.1). The only Central American country with lower levels of homicide is El Salvador (2.4), where the government has incarcerated 2% of its adult population. After the 2018 protests, the clampdown on dissent continued. Between 2007 and March 2024, authorities shuttered more than 5,000 non-governmental organizations working on human rights, healthcare, and education. Since December 2021, 28 universities, including the Jesuit-affiliated University of Central America, have been forcibly closed or confiscated. These measures, coupled with ongoing repression, have driven over 260,000 Nicaraguans to flee, primarily to Costa Rica. By mid-April 2024, 138 political prisoners remained in custody. The Ortega regime has used political prisoners as bargaining chips in its negotiation over sanctions with the U.S. Trump 2.0: will something change? During the Biden administration, the U.S. imposed multiple rounds of sanctions on Nicaraguan government officials, targeting individuals and entities associated with Ortega’s regime. From 2020 to 2024, the total number of asset-blocking sanctions reached 47 individuals and 15 entities associated with the Nicaraguan government. Visa restrictions targeted over 1,000 Nicaraguan individuals and their family members. These sanctions aimed to put pressure on the regime by tackling the government’s financial sources. During his first administration, Trump also imposed sanctions on high-level officials, but the results of these sanctions remain unclear. So far, the prospects for Nicaragua under Trump’s second term are mixed at best and negative at worst. Secretary of State Marco Rubio has referred to Nicaragua as a “democracy that has been completely annihilated” and has denounced the country’s role as a springboard for undocumented migrants planning on entering the U.S.. Rubio told reporters on February 4 that the administration “has not taken a position” on whether Nicaragua should remain in CAFTA, a free trade deal that includes Central America and the Dominican Republic. “Today we must acknowledge that Nicaragua is not a democracy,” he said, but added there would be “impacts” to removing it from the deal. Nicaragua’s ties with Russia—including Russia’s increasing military presence (from an espionage center in Managua to Russian warships in the country)—and China (in relation to trade and investment), are additional concerns for Trump’s administration. However, Trump’s first policy decision concerning Nicaragua was to terminate the humanitarian parole program, which also affects nationals from Haiti, Venezuela, and Cuba. This represents a significant setback for the hundreds of Nicaraguans who relied on this program as a legal means to enter the U.S. and escape the regime’s persecution. If the U.S. aims to pressure Ortega into negotiating with the Nicaraguan opposition in exile and facilitating a democratic transition, its strategy should target the key financial resources that support the regime. The regime’s financial muscle It’s worth keeping in mind that the U.S. remains Nicaragua’s largest trading partner and the destination of around two-thirds of its exports. In December, the U.S. Trade Representative launched an investigation into the country’s labor and human rights abuses. If the probe leads to sanctions, it could trigger a significant backlash from Nicaraguan companies against the regime. Access to international funding is vital for the regime’s finances. Evidence suggests that financial institutions such as the Central American Bank for Economic Integration (CABEI) and the World Bank have continued to lend money to the Ortega-Murillo administration despite considerable evidence that these funds are used without proper oversight—and often support government-aligned contractors. Data compiled by the Washington-based International Institute on Race, Equality, and Human Rights showed that in February of last year, several multilateral institutions funded 97 development projects in the country with almost $5.1 billion in financial assistance. The World Bank’s financing of the 2024 Nicaraguan census is particularly concerning. Some media outlets report that the census is a tool for control and repression, as the data collected is being used to track properties owned by Nicaraguans abroad and relatives of opposition members. The International Monetary Fund’s most recent country report praised the government’s macroeconomic policies and fiscal measures, and while it did not mention ongoing human rights violations, it urged authorities to improve the rule of law “in a meaningful way” and to safeguard the autonomy and transparency of the judicial system. Most experts agree that Nicaragua’s judicial system is also controlled by Ortega’s regime. Another overlooked issue is the nation’s gold mining and beef exports. Reports suggest that Ortega uses illegal gold mining operations to secure the loyalty of high-ranking military officials. Concessions for open-pit mining to Canadian, U.S., and Chinese companies have more than tripled under Ortega’s administration, at least 299 by November 2023, and an additional 14 exclusively to Chinese companies in 2024. These funds finance the military and police, enabling ongoing repression against the population. Cattle farming and the expansion of the agricultural frontier have intruded upon Indigenous lands, worsening environmental degradation and displacing local communities. While Ortega and Murillo have been weaponizing anti-narcotics and anti-terrorist policies to muzzle political dissent, the Nicaraguan military has become the force that confiscates the lowest amount of drugs per year in Central America, a fact that adds to mounting evidence regarding the use of drug-related profits to finance the regime. On January 20, Trump moved to freeze all funding for U.S.-sponsored development and human rights organizations, a decision that was swiftly enthusiastically endorsed by Nicaragua’s official media. Rather than bolstering these efforts, the new administration’s policies will likely reinforce the regime’s grip on power while further marginalizing the independent voices that challenge its partisan propaganda.

### Neg---Trump Fails

#### Engagement with Nicaragua under Trump fails—he calls Ortega an “enemy of humanity” but takes no real action, using foreign policy for headlines over strategy.

Ávila 25 [Jennifer Ávila, a Honduran journalist, documentary filmmaker and researcher, "What Rubio’s Visit to Central America Left Behind: Countries Adopting and Executing Trump’s Wishes," Divergentes, 02-11-2025, https://www.divergentes.com/what-rubios-visit-to-central-america-left-behind-countries-adopting-and-executing-trumps-wishes/, accessed on 4-22-2025, GMU AE/Shananier]

Marco Rubio’s first visit as Secretary of State was to Central America, a region that the Trump administration has promised to prioritize—especially given its primary concern regarding the isthmus: migration to the United States. It’s no coincidence that the agreements the Cuban-American official signed with the governments of El Salvador, Guatemala, and Costa Rica reinforced Washington’s rapidly accelerating deportation policies. Rubio paraded through Central America, making it clear that Trump’s allies would be rewarded while those who weren’t—such as Nicaragua and Honduras, which he skipped—would feel the weight of the United States’ heavy hand. Particularly in the case of Daniel Ortega and Rosario Murillo’s dictatorship, which Rubio threatened to remove from the DR-CAFTA free trade agreement. As for Xiomara Castro’s government, Trump’s administration has yet to clarify its stance. In Panama—a country often seen as separate from Central America—Rubio’s visit was marked by tension, as Trump seeks to regain control over the Panama Canal. “The Secretary of State’s visit fulfilled its purpose of strengthening deportation policies,” analyzes Manuel Orozco, a researcher at the Washington-based Inter-American Dialogue. “Every country Rubio visited agreed to accept deported migrants, manage a ‘safe third country’ policy, and receive individuals from other nationalities. However, discussions also included security, trade, and cooperation matters.” According to Orozco, “the overall outlook remains uncertain, as Trump’s new doctrine is not clear, yet delivers unsettling blows in each country when immediate action is taken.” He adds, “What is certain is that a new relationship dynamic has emerged, and migration is only one aspect of it. Other issues, such as regional alliances against drug trafficking and dictatorships—particularly Nicaragua—are also in play.” Contracorriente and Divergentes consulted regional experts and analysts to delve into the new Central American landscape shaped by Rubio’s visit. This could signal a shift in the region’s geopolitical strategy or merely reflect Washington’s new approach of treating each country as an individual client. “The Lackey Does Exactly What the King Wants” [Image Omitted] Rubio’s tour came just twelve days after Donald Trump’s inauguration speech, in which the former president explicitly addressed three issues directly relevant to the region: the Panama Canal, transnational crime, and irregular migration. As expected, Trump took an aggressive stance on these topics, but Rubio arrived in the region to negotiate agreements with its governments. “The lackey does exactly what the king wants, and that’s precisely what Marco Rubio did,” said John Feeley, former U.S. ambassador to Panama. He pointed out that Rubio’s visit reflects Trump’s transactional model for dealing with the region and Washington’s new policy approach. “Trump wanted something from each country, but the specifics were left intentionally vague… Anyone who thinks Trump studies Excel spreadsheets or background notes is mistaken: he measures success by headlines and social media engagement,” the former diplomat added. Feeley asserted that Rubio aimed to strengthen cooperation with El Salvador and Guatemala, particularly on deportations—something he achieved, at least in terms of promises. In Guatemala, for example, an agreement was reached to increase deportation flights by 40%. Meanwhile, in El Salvador, Bukele pledged to receive deportees from other countries and, if necessary, imprison them in exchange for rental payments for his mega-prison. “Rubio played the role of a diligent staffer, cleaning up the media mess Trump had created regarding Panama and returning with agreements and promises,” Feeley noted. He added that while some may not see these as concrete results, the photos and tweets appear to be enough for Trump—for now. What is clear is that this situation highlights which governments are considered allies and which, like Xiomara Castro’s administration in Honduras and the Ortega-Murillo regime in Nicaragua, are not. In today’s U.S. politics—where decisions often hinge more on the president’s whims and personal opinions than on structured processes—stances can shift overnight, Feeley explained. The End of the “Northern Triangle” Concept? [Image Omitted] On January 26, 2025, at 8:00 AM, Colombian President Gustavo Petro posted on X that he would not accept the military planes Donald Trump had sent carrying deported migrants, citing inhumane conditions. This provoked Trump’s fury, leading him to threaten a 25% tariff hike on Colombian products. Eager to respond quickly on X, Petro didn’t issue a threat—he outright ordered increased tariffs on U.S. imports the same day. Throughout the day, Petro posted dozens of messages about the diplomatic standoff, which left many deported migrants in limbo. By 4:37 PM, Honduran President Xiomara Castro, pro tempore leader of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC), called for an emergency meeting at Petro’s request to discuss the situation. However, the meeting was canceled the next day after Petro and Trump resolved the issue, and other CELAC members announced that Castro had not consulted them beforehand. Castro’s stance on this issue, her addition to the deportation flight narrative, and her previous threat to cancel the U.S. military base agreement in Honduras if Trump initiated mass deportations were signals of what followed: Honduras’ absence from Rubio’s regional agenda. “In the world I used to work in, Honduras was an important U.S. ally—not just for migration but due to Cold War-era ties, anti-drug efforts, and historical cooperation,” Feeley explained. “But in Trump’s world, a single tweet from your president puts you in the same category as Nicaragua. Trump sees the world in binary: you’re either with us or against us. Any dissent means you’re against us. That’s how short-sighted and simplistic Trump’s foreign policy is.” Castro and her party have maintained an anti-imperialist stance aligned with 21st-century socialism. Her government is the only one in the region that openly supports the Ortega-Murillo dictatorship. Recently, after some of its members were accused of links to organized crime, it scrapped the extradition treaty with the U.S.—a move set to take effect at the end of February, effectively ending anti-narcotics cooperation between the two countries. Although, in practice, Castro’s administration has been more submissive on migration—accepting military planes and deportees without resistance—the extradition treaty cancellation, its support for Nicaragua, and new agreements with China mark a turning point for the so-called “Northern Triangle of Central America.” This U.S.-crafted strategy had shaped the region’s geopolitical dynamics for years. “There’s a kind of client-patron relationship now,” Feeley commented regarding Central American nations. “It’s no longer part of a coherent strategy, as it once was.” Rubio Spoke About Democracy in Guatemala Rubio’s visit to Guatemala was highly anticipated by President Bernardo Arévalo’s government, as well as by the anti-democratic actors previously criticized by the Biden administration, such as Attorney General Consuelo Porras, who has been sanctioned by the United States, and a long list of judges, prosecutors, legislators, and some businesspeople. Those close to Porras hoped to gain acceptance within the MAGA (Make America Great Again) movement and that Rubio’s meeting with the government would not be productive, perhaps even placing Porras on Rubio’s agenda. After the visit by the Secretary of State, President Arévalo’s most outstanding talent became evident: his diplomatic skills. One of the key points Rubio made clear was that the United States cannot maintain strong political or economic relations with a country where a coup d’état could take place. This warning was forceful and resonated in the darkest corridors of what is known in the country as “the coup plot of the corrupt.” Rubio held three key meetings in Guatemala: one bilateral meeting with the president, another with a high-level team led by the vice president, and a third with the Minister of the Interior, Francisco Jiménez, to strengthen cooperation in the fight against organized crime. Guatemala committed to receiving deportation flights from the United States, which will increase by 40%, and to launching the “Plan Retorno al Hogar” program for the dignified reintegration of returning migrants with opportunities. Additionally, a new Border Task Force was created with the police and the army to monitor over 300 kilometers of the border with Honduras and El Salvador to curb transnational crime. This could create tensions with Honduras, as it is a key transit route for migrants heading north. In exchange, the Guatemalan government requested that the United States reinstate key programs to combat human and drug trafficking. Another agreement reached in Guatemala was the signing of a partnership for the development of priority infrastructure, including the expansion of two ports, new highways, railways, and a metro system in Guatemala City. This collaboration with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers is strategic for both the Arévalo administration, which has been unable to deliver infrastructure projects due to rampant corruption in the public works sector, and for the United States, which sees this as an opportunity to strengthen its strategic control in northern Central America. Former U.S. Ambassador to Guatemala, Stephen McFarland, stated that the visit demonstrated that “a strong and effective bilateral relationship is crucial for the Arévalo administration, considering it has adversaries who seek to destabilize it before an independent attorney general is elected in 2026.” “It is critical for the Guatemalan government to properly implement agreements on migration and the acceptance of deportees, increase cooperation against cartels (which the U.S. now considers terrorist organizations), and collaborate with the Trump administration on China-related matters. Of course, the investment and infrastructure agreements are of great interest to Guatemala. This is a very promising topic for the country. Any successful anti-corruption effort will require a much more effective Guatemalan-led anti-corruption campaign,” McFarland added. Guatemala remains the only country in Central America that continues to recognize Taiwan, maintains a pro-Israel stance, and currently has a strong relationship with the United States. Rubio’s Achievements in Panama [Image Omitted] During his second inaugural speech, Trump mentioned Panama, stating that he had terminated the agreement with the United States on the use of the canal and intended to reclaim it. This made Rubio’s visit iconic in terms of how this administration plans to negotiate with other nations. Trump claimed that China controls the canal, that the U.S. pays exorbitant tolls for its ships, and that this situation negatively affects Americans. Rubio’s accomplishments in Panama remain unclear, as despite announcing that Panama had agreed to eliminate tolls for U.S. vessels, the Panama Canal Authority denied this claim. Former Ambassador Feeley explained that the United States does not have a commercial shipping fleet because it stopped subsidizing the maritime industry in the 1960s. Most ships passing through Panama belong to the military, which has paid only $25 million in tolls over 25 years—an insignificant sum compared to the U.S. defense budget. “This is purely symbolic. The problem for Panamanians is that, according to their Constitution and the canal’s organic law, they cannot offer free transit,” said the former ambassador. Another discussion point in Panama was the alleged Chinese control over the canal, which Panamanian authorities have denied. Feeley clarified, “The mere fact that Hutchison Ports, a Hong Kong-based company, operates two of the five ports does not mean it can block or sabotage the canal. I somewhat agree with Trump on the issue of recognizing Beijing over Taiwan. The reason is simple: we know how the Chinese operate in their commercial dealings. They use strategic influence, espionage, bribery, and create poor working conditions in host countries. These are legitimate concerns I share, but the way Trump has raised this issue is problematic. In his January 20 speech, Trump mentioned China only in the context of Panama, not in relation to spying in U.S. universities or intellectual property theft. The focus was solely on Panama and Chinese control of the canal, which is a lie.” Feeley noted that even before Trump raised this issue, the Panamanian government had already begun investigating Hutchison Ports’ contract. However, it only became public knowledge after Rubio’s visit that Panama had initiated an audit of the company, a subsidiary of CK Hutchison Holdings, which operates 53 ports in 24 countries, including the U.K., Germany, and Hong Kong. The company was granted concessions to operate in the Panama Canal in 1997, which were renewed in 2021 amid long-standing public doubts. Nicaragua: “Enemy of Humanity” [Image Omitted] After Trump’s special envoy for Latin America, Mauricio Claver-Carone, stated that Washington has “no interest” in Nicaragua as a trade partner and is considering removing it from the DR-CAFTA agreement, Rubio softened the message during his visit to Costa Rica. “Regarding CAFTA, the (Trump) administration has not yet determined Nicaragua’s role in an agreement originally intended to reward democracy. Nicaragua is not a democracy. It does not function as one. However, the implications of removing a country from the agreement must be carefully analyzed, as it could also impact neighboring countries,” Rubio stated when questioned by Nicaraguan journalists. “This is a serious matter, but as of now, no official position has been established. Today marks just two weeks in my role, and this issue will take longer to resolve,” he added. Nonetheless, Rubio emphasized that the Trump administration opposes the regimes of Nicolás Maduro in Venezuela, Miguel Díaz-Canel in Cuba, and Daniel Ortega and Rosario Murillo in Nicaragua. “In my opinion,” Rubio stressed, “these three regimes are enemies of humanity. They have created a migration crisis. If not for these regimes, there would be no migration crisis in the hemisphere. These countries’ systems do not work. Nicaragua has become a family dynasty with a co-presidency, suppressing threats to its power, including the Catholic Church. We have seen thousands of Nicaraguans fleeing to Costa Rica, just as Venezuelans and Cubans have fled their countries.” According to analyst Manuel Orozco, being labeled “enemies of humanity” places Ortega and Murillo in a defendant’s seat awaiting trial. Orozco believes the U.S. will manage deportations separately from the regime’s behavior but will remain vigilant. He also predicts that Nicaragua will no longer be able to act as both a rogue state and a trade partner. “However, they will remain vigilant against any harm that may come to those individuals. Secondly, for the United States, Nicaragua cannot continue being both a commercial partner and a rogue state at the same time, and Mr. Ortega will have to show, in the short term, what he really is,” Orozco elaborated. “This is not just a matter of trade relations but of other violations, such as Nicaragua’s relationship with China to invest and undermine the local geopolitical environment, as well as remittance transfers, given that 80% of them come from the United States.” Amid this situation, there is a sanctions law imposed by the Sandinista regime that has banks under blackmail, threatened with prosecution, and at risk of having their correspondent banking relationships with American banks severed. “Additionally, the dictatorship has outstanding debts with the United States regarding the expulsion of Nicaraguans, the use of the country as a migratory corridor, and property confiscations,” Orozco pointed out. “At this moment, Ortega and Murillo know that the question is not if something will happen, but when, and that they hold the key to resolving a conflict that is not in their favor.” [Image Omitted] On the other hand, Rubio praised Costa Rica, stating that there are more North Americans living in Costa Rica than the other way around. President Chaves welcomed the Secretary of State’s compliments. “There is undoubtedly a transformation in U.S. relations with the world, but it is particularly noticeable in Latin America. And so, Costa Rica is perfectly positioned to continue being the United States’ strategic partner par excellence,” Chaves said ahead of Rubio’s visit. The Chaves administration maintained a close relationship with the U.S. government under Democrat Joe Biden (2021–2025), particularly in matters related to drug trafficking and cybersecurity. Chaves has had tensions with the Chinese embassy due to his government’s blockade of Chinese telecommunications equipment providers from participating in public bids for 5G technology, citing cybersecurity and data protection risks.

## Venezuela

### Uniqueness

#### Quick Background: Sanctions-heavy, adversarial relationship; potential for affirmatives in energy diplomacy, democracy support, migration, sanctions reform.

#### Trump’s Chevron sanctions tanked Venezuela’s oil recovery and wrecked US-Venezuela relations—escalating pressure now accelerates alignment with China, undermining US energy leverage and strategic influence in the region.

Smyth & Wilhelm 4/8 [Jamie Smyth, US Energy Editor at the \*Financial Times\*, leads coverage on oil, gas, and renewables, drawing on global reporting experience from Ireland, Australia, and the pharmaceutical sector. Benjamin Wilhelm, FT newsletter editor and former \*World Politics Review\* editor, curates daily briefings on corporate finance, U.S. politics, and Asia’s economic shifts. Together, they bring sharp insight into how energy policy, financial regulation, and global power dynamics collide in shaping today's geopolitical landscape. “What Donald Trump’s return to ‘maximum pressure’ means for Venezuelan oil” 4/8/2025, <https://www.ft.com/content/724ef0e5-6002-414e-9065-18847a35887c> ] DeGod

Welcome to Energy Source, coming to you from New York, where markets continue to melt down following Donald Trump’s “liberation day” tariff announcement last week. Brent crude is trading at four-year lows and West Texas Intermediate, the US benchmark, lost just over 15 per cent of its value over three trading sessions to settle near $61 a barrel. My FT colleague Rachel Millard captures the gloomy mood among traders in this article, where Jorge Leon, head of geopolitical analysis at Rystad Energy, forecast a “significant deceleration in the global economy”. Tariffs also pose a threat to America’s renewable energy industry by pushing up prices, disrupting supply chains and undercutting US ambitions to lead the artificial intelligence revolution. For our main item today we turn to another Trump policy that is shaking oil markets: the cancellation of companies’ licences to operate in Venezuela. Thanks for reading, Jamie Trump returns to ‘maximum pressure’ on Venezuela US President Donald Trump has stepped up his “maximum pressure” campaign on Venezuela’s leader Nicolás Maduro, in a major challenge to the South American nation’s all-important oil industry. The Trump administration in February said it would cancel Chevron’s license to pump and export oil in Venezuela, as well as the permits of other western oil companies. Last month, the president also announced 25 per cent “secondary” tariffs on imports from any country that buys oil from the South American nation, an unprecedented step unveiled ahead of his “liberation day” tariff blitz. While the oil companies have until May 27 to wind down their Venezuelan operations, secondary tariffs — which took effect on April 2 — can kick in at the discretion of secretary of state Marco Rubio. In the meantime, Energy Source looks at how the moves could impact Venezuela’s oil industry. Venezuela’s Chevron problem Chevron’s exit from Venezuela would deal a significant blow to the country’s oil production. About a quarter of the nation’s output comes from a joint venture between the US company and state-owned Petróleos de Venezuela (PDVSA), which has helped drive a recovery in Venezuela’s moribund oil sector. Despite boasting the world’s largest proven oil reserves, corruption, mismanagement and US-led sanctions caused the country’s crude production to plummet from about 2.5mn b/d in 2016 to 400,000 b/d in 2020. It rose to roughly 1mn b/d last year, in part because of Chevron’s joint venture with PDVSA. Through their joint venture, Chevron has supplied PDVSA with diluent — a substance oil producers use to thin out the type of heavy crude found in Venezuela — which is critical to the extraction and transportation of the fuel. The loss of diluent “could become extremely problematic” for Venezuela’s oil sector, said Schreiner Parker, managing director for Latin America at Rystad Energy. According to Parker, Venezuela was unable to procure diluent on the open market after the first Trump administration imposed sanctions on Venezuela in 2019. The oil sector was “relying almost exclusively on illegal crude for condensate swaps with Iran to access the diluent”, he said. The White House is also revoking the permits of western oil groups such as Italy’s Eni, Spain’s Repsol, and Global Oil Terminals — a trading company owned by Harry Sargeant III, a prominent Republican donor who has also acted as an intermediary between Caracas and Washington. If the licences are revoked, PDVSA would probably take over operations of the affected oil projects and the sector would face a lack of investment, said Francisco Monaldi, a Latin America energy expert at Rice University in Houston. He estimated the cancellation of the licences would cause Venezuela’s production to fall about 100,000 b/d. ‘Secondary tariffs’ shine a spotlight on China Analysts said European and Indian companies were unlikely to buy Venezuelan oil without US authorisation. But these countries were importing low volumes compared to China, the largest customer of Venezuelan crude. China accounts for more than half of Venezuela’s oil exports. Much of this is purchased through the black market, using obscure intermediaries and “ghost ships” to avoid detection. The Venezuelan oil is often masked as Malaysian when it arrives at the independent Chinese refiners that purchase the crude. China also receives Venezuelan oil as debt repayment so “there’s not necessarily a monetary exchange that’s taking place through” the US banking system, Parker said. The secondary tariffs could still hinder Caracas’s ability to evade US sanctions. The crucial question, according to Monaldi, is whether the Chinese and Malaysian governments order companies, whether publicly or discreetly, to stop purchasing Venezuelan oil. “So far the evidence seems to be that everyone is being super cautious,” Monaldi said. “[Secondary tariffs are] very blunt . . . this is like having a bazooka to kill a mosquito”, Monaldi said. If the “Chinese thought this was a real threat then it’s a no-brainer” for Beijing to comply with the US measure — a move that would cause a “massive decline in Venezuela’s exports and in their production”. And China may have less appetite for Venezuelan oil, with demand plateauing as electric vehicles replace cars with combustion engines. But if Beijing were to halt imports of Venezuelan oil that would be “acknowledging that the US has that power”, Monaldi added. And for its part, China has expressed its opposition to Trump’s secondary tariffs. Trump’s Venezuela policy: Rubio vs Grenell Trump’s tough measures on the Venezuelan oil sector marked an abrupt shift from the opening weeks of his second presidency, when his special envoy Richard Grenell paid a surprise visit to Maduro and secured the release of six American nationals that Caracas took prisoner. Venezuela’s opposition criticised the meeting, worrying it would legitimise Maduro’s rule after the authoritarian leader claimed victory in an election last July that was widely viewed as fraudulent. But oil companies were optimistic about the visit; it boosted hopes that Trump would not cancel their licences to operate in Venezuela. The recent resumption of the “maximum pressure” campaign that Trump pursued against Venezuela in his first term hints at a struggle within the administration over its approach towards the country — between “America first” dealmakers such as Grenell and foreign policy hawks including Rubio, who has long opposed the Maduro regime. “We have to be extremely cautious about thinking things are settled,” Monaldi said. “At some point we might see another turn in this saga either because of the rivalry between these two officials or because a change in the circumstances that make Trump move in a different direction.” (Benjamin Wilhelm)

#### But Maduro has signaled a willing to outreach to Trump which gives the aff a rare opening for U.S.-Venezuela diplomacy. The Aff leverages this olive branch to restore relations, stabilize the region, and enable cooperation on energy and migration.

Moran & Coote 24[ Mark Moran and Darryl Coote are journalists for United Press International (UPI), covering global politics, human rights, and major international events. Moran focuses on U.S. and Latin American affairs, while Coote reports from South Korea with an emphasis on geopolitical developments. Their work appears across major platforms like Yahoo News and MSN, offering timely, in-depth coverage of stories that shape the world. “In seeking to forge new relations, Venezuela's Maduro congratulates Trump on election win” 11/8.2024, <https://www.upi.com/Top_News/World-News/2024/11/08/venezuelas-maduro-extends-trump-olivebranch/6941731039732/#google_vignette> ] DeGod

Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro celebrates after partial results were announced by the electoral council, in Caracas, Venezuela in 2024. Maduro has extended an olive branch to U.S. President-elected Donald Trump following Trump's victory Tuesday, widely seen a move to improve relations between Venezuela and the U.S. in Trump's second term. File Photo by Ronald Pena R./EPA-EFE Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro celebrates after partial results were announced by the electoral council, in Caracas, Venezuela in 2024. Maduro has extended an olive branch to U.S. President-elected Donald Trump following Trump's victory Tuesday, widely seen a move to improve relations between Venezuela and the U.S. in Trump's second term. File Photo by Ronald Pena R./EPA-EFE Nov. 7 (UPI) -- The hard-line Venezuelan leader who once called Donald Trump a "racist cowboy" has congratulated the president-elect on his election win over Vice President Kamala Harris -- a gesture being seen as the extension of an olive branch. Nicolas Maduro, the authoritarian leader of the South American country, has made several comments since Trump's election victory on Tuesday night that suggest an eagerness to patch up their adversarial relationship. His foreign ministry first congratulated the American people and Trump on his election in a statement, saying Venezuela "will also be willing to establish good relations with U.S. government, framed in a spirit of dialogue, respect and common sense." Then, on his radio program Con Maduro de Repente, which translates to Suddenly with Maduro in English, Maduro commented that Trump has "a golden opportunity ... to pacify the world" and to change the relations the United States has had with Latin American countries, according to state-owned Agencia Venezolana de Noticias news agency. Related U.S., Argentina cite 'destabilization' triggered by Venezuela's Maduro Senate Democrats craft bill recognizing Maduro opponent as Venezuela election winner Venezuelan opposition leader Gonzalez says he was strong-armed into conceding election He called Trump's election an "historic return" and an opportunity to end wars, and foster relationships with other nations. During Trump's first term in office, the American president waged a "maximum pressure" campaign of sanctions and threats against Maduro in a failed attempt to oust Venezuela's authoritarian leader. Maduro acknowledged in the radio program that Trump's first term "did not go well for us" but added that "this is a new beginning where we are betting on a win-win scenario, for the United States to do well and for Venezuela to do well," AVN reported. Moisés Naím, a Venezuelan writer and former minister, told The Guardian that to Maduro, Trump represents "a lifeline." "He desperately needs international recognition and legitimacy," Naím said of Maduor. "He doesn't want to be a pariah." However, if Trump attempts to normalize relations with Maduro, Naím expects opposition from South Florida's "deeply anti-Maduro" Venezuelan immigrant community, who are members of Trump's base. Geoff Ramsey, a senior fellow at the Atlantic Council's Adrienne Arsht Latin America Center, said on X that Maduro is "clearly betting on a fully transactional approach" with Trump. "He'll likely be disappointed, but [it] highlights an early test to the new admin's balance of democracy vs. migration vs. energy interests with Caracas." On the campaign trail, Trump stayed relatively mum when it came to Venezuela, aside from focusing on migrants trying to enter the United States from the South American country. In a statement following Trump's election win, Ramsey said that while it is likely that the president-elect will adopt a more confrontational rhetoric with Venezuela, "he may see more value in containing the outward flow of migration and securing a U.S. and Western footprint in Venezuela's oil sector than in reverting to a maximum-pressure approach."

### Engagement Key---Broad

#### The U.S. should adopt a targeted engagement strategy with Venezuela that focuses on humanitarian relief, economic recovery, and political reform. This approach will: 1—Strengthen diplomatic ties and economic links to foster stability and open channels for democratic transition. 2—Ease selective sanctions in exchange for human rights improvements and political reforms, encouraging dialogue between the government and opposition. 3—Address migration flows by focusing on alleviating Venezuela’s economic crisis through aid programs and development efforts. This strategy reduces reliance on failed maximum pressure tactics, empowers local actors advocating for change, and improves living conditions for Venezuelans, while also managing migration and enhancing regional stability.

Rodríguez 24 [Francisco Rodríguez is a Venezuelan economist and policy expert, specializing in economic development and policy reform in Latin America. Known for advocating pragmatic engagement strategies, he argues that maximum pressure on Venezuela strengthens Maduro’s regime and exacerbates the country’s crisis. “The Case for Engagement With Venezuela Maximum Pressure Will Only Strengthen Maduro” 11/24/2024, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/venezuela/case-engagement-venezuela?utm_source=chatgpt.com> ] DeGod

Among the most complex foreign policy challenges facing the new U.S. administration is the situation in Venezuela. Over the past 12 years, Venezuela has transitioned from a fragile democracy to an entrenched authoritarian regime, experiencing one of the most severe economic collapses and migration crises in modern history outside wartime. And in recent years, these problems have increasingly affected the United States. During the past five years, U.S. authorities have apprehended more than 900,000 Venezuelans attempting to cross the southern border. [Lea la versión de este artículo en español aquí.] Many expect that Donald Trump’s presidency will mean the return of the maximum-pressure approach to Venezuela that defined his first term, when Washington imposed sweeping oil and financial sanctions, backed efforts at an armed uprising, and even floated the possibility of direct military action. At a rally in Florida just three days before the election, Senator Marco Rubio, Trump’s nominee for secretary of state, asserted that under the new administration, “we will have a very different position, much tougher and much clearer, not only in Venezuela, but also in Cuba and Nicaragua.” Rubio has cosponsored legislation to codify sanctions on Venezuela, conditioning any sanctions relief and diplomatic recognition on Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro relinquishing power and an opposition-led transition. But a return to the failed strategy of maximum pressure by the new administration would be a grave mistake. Sanctions are rarely effective in achieving regime change, and Venezuela is no exception. Far from destabilizing Maduro, U.S. sanctions have helped him consolidate control, increasing the asymmetry of power between the state’s apparatus and an impoverished and weakened civil society. More than seven million Venezuelans have fled the country since 2014, and doubling down on pressure could further worsen the living conditions of those remaining. Maximum pressure will, therefore, cut against Washington’s effort to reduce irregular migration and ensure a stable energy supply. Subscribe to Foreign Affairs This Week Our editors’ top picks, delivered free to your inbox every Friday. Enter your email here. Sign Up \* Note that when you provide your email address, the Foreign Affairs Privacy Policy and Terms of Use will apply to your newsletter subscription. The United States should continue to condemn Maduro’s authoritarian government for its human rights violations and dismantling of democratic institutions. But Trump and his administration should adopt a strategy of targeted engagement with Venezuela’s authorities. Such a strategy would prioritize maintaining or strengthening economic and diplomatic linkages between the United States and Venezuela—the types of connections that can empower stakeholders committed to fostering a democratic transition. The first priority of U.S. policy should be to alleviate the suffering of Venezuelans, recognizing that broad economic sanctions have exacerbated that suffering. Where possible, Washington should leverage engagement—including the gradual easing of sanctions—to encourage improvements in human rights and political freedoms. This strategy of targeted engagement offers a path to immediately improve conditions in Venezuela while enhancing the prospects for a democratic transition in the medium to long term. SANCTIONING CATASTROPHE From 2017 to 2022, the United States imposed some of the harshest sanctions on Venezuela that it has levied on any country. The Trump administration halted all trade with Venezuela’s state-owned oil, gold, and banking sectors (transactions with private banks were still allowed) and blocked the national government and the oil industry from borrowing, restructuring debt, or receiving dividends from its offshore subsidiaries (such as Citgo). In 2019, Washington handed control of Venezuela’s overseas assets over to the U.S.-recognized opposition, led by Juan Guaidó, and blocked the country’s access to international reserve holdings, including special drawing rights in the International Monetary Fund. The first Trump administration also imposed secondary sanctions, barring Venezuela from selling oil abroad by targeting foreign companies and vessels involved in its oil trade. Between 2019 and 2021, 47 vessels and 12 companies were sanctioned for assisting in Venezuelan oil exports. (In contrast, despite similar U.S. sanctions on Russian oil today, non-U.S. tankers can still sell Russian oil at $60 per barrel without being sanctioned themselves.) This pressure has compounded Venezuela’s economic crisis. The country’s contraction in per capita incomes began in 2013 because of severe macroeconomic imbalances created by years of populist policies. Yet starting in 2017, sanctions significantly worsened the economy by severing Venezuela’s access to vital oil and financial markets, which led to a sharp decline in oil production. Sanctions contributed substantially to falling oil output, imports, and productivity; without them, Venezuela’s economy would have started to recover when oil prices rose in 2017. Sanctions accounted for around 52 percent of Venezuela’s economic contraction between 2012 and 2020. Without sanctions, Venezuela would still have faced a severe crisis, with per capita incomes dropping by 34 percent. With sanctions, however, GDP per capita declined by an extraordinary 71 percent—equivalent to almost three successive Great Depressions. Venezuela’s migration crisis stems from this collapse in economic opportunities. Although the country’s human rights violations are horrific, they are not on the scale of the ethnic cleansing, genocide, or armed conflict that typically drives mass displacement. Instead, millions of Venezuelans have left to escape an economic catastrophe. If the U.S. government resumes policies that target Venezuelans’ livelihoods, it should not be surprised when many of those affected end up at its doorstep. GAINING FROM ENGAGEMENT In 2022, the Biden administration reestablished contact with the Maduro government, pursuing a dual track that gradually eased sanctions and encouraged renewed negotiations with the opposition. In November of that year, the U.S. Treasury issued a license for Chevron—the only U.S. oil company with production capacity in Venezuela—to export Venezuelan oil to the United States, coinciding with the resumption of talks between the Maduro government and its opposition. Critics claimed that the Biden administration was giving Maduro sanctions relief without gaining anything in return. Yet this critique overlooks a key achievement. In October 2023, Maduro publicly committed to holding free and fair presidential elections. Although the election ended up being minimally transparent, this concession ultimately allowed the opposition coalition to register Edmundo González as a candidate after María Corina Machado, who had won the opposition’s primary in October 2023, was barred from running. Washington also successfully encouraged the opposition to abandon its failed electoral boycotts and to engage in the election process despite facing an unlevel playing field. These decisions helped pave the way for González to defeat Maduro in the July 28 presidential election by more than a two-to-one margin. The opposition documented its victory with tally sheets from the country’s electronic voting system, reenergizing the coalition and demonstrating its broad support among Venezuelans. Although this victory did not produce immediate change, with Maduro’s electoral council blatantly altering the election’s results to declare Maduro the winner, it marked the opposition’s strongest challenge yet to Maduro’s authoritarian rule. Critics might argue that the opposition’s electoral victory was meaningless because Maduro ultimately retained power and intensified repression. But such a critique misses the broader significance of the outcome. The elections played a crucial role in revitalizing and legitimizing Venezuela’s opposition, demonstrating its broad popular support, and strengthening its internal cohesion. These developments are essential preconditions for any successful challenge to an entrenched regime. Whether these gains can translate into meaningful change will depend on how realistic the opposition’s objectives are and how well it leverages its newfound strength in future negotiations. BEYOND ISOLATION A realistic foreign policy toward Venezuela must begin with the recognition that Washington has limited influence over political dynamics in authoritarian countries. In a world where 71 percent of people live under autocratic regimes, it is not only futile but also dangerous to target select countries—such as Cuba, Iran, and Venezuela—for regime change. Singling out specific regimes risks alienating allies, undermining U.S. moral authority, and reinforcing authoritarians’ claims that Washington meddles in other countries’ domestic affairs. In Venezuela, a principled, pragmatic approach—focused on humanitarian relief and diplomatic engagement—would better serve the interests of both the United States and the Venezuelan people. Trump’s administration should thus continue easing economic sanctions. It should do so, in part, simply because the restrictions have needlessly immiserated millions. But improving the country’s living conditions also serves a political purpose. The more tolerable life becomes for Venezuelans, the less likely they are to flee to the United States. Managing migration flows from Venezuela will also require sustained communication and coordination with Caracas. Reopening the U.S. embassy in Venezuela is therefore a critical step to safeguarding American interests in the country, as well. A return to the failed strategy of maximum pressure would be a grave mistake. Easing sanctions could afford the Trump administration an opportunity to secure concessions on human rights. Licenses for new oil projects, for example, could be conditioned on revenues being allocated to international organizations that can address Venezuela’s humanitarian crisis. Likewise, the Trump administration could use sanctions relief to induce political reforms. It should work to secure the release of political prisoners. It should negotiate for institutional changes that reduce the stakes of power and create space for coexistence between Venezuela’s political factions. It should push Venezuela to appoint new electoral authorities and commit to inviting in international observers for upcoming elections. All three of these steps would provide vital space for electoral competition. They remain the best path to fostering a democratic transition. (The United States should also work with regional partners, including Brazil, Colombia, and Mexico, to forge a realistic political settlement.) Should the Trump administration embrace a policy of limited engagement, it would be bowing to reality. Punitive policies may appeal to policymakers, but they often corner regimes, making behavioral change unlikely. A government whose leaders fear U.S. prosecution will do everything to remain in power, including stealing elections. Strategic engagement, on the other hand, can incentivize positive shifts and strengthen local actors who support a negotiated resolution. The political scientists Steven Levitsky and Lucan Way have shown that countries with economic, social, and institutional ties to the West are more likely to democratize than those subjected solely to punitive measures. Likewise, Trump would be accepting that when people become poorer in an authoritarian country, the state becomes stronger, not weaker. At the height of the Venezuelan economy’s contraction, a large segment of the population depended on politically conditioned government handouts. In contrast, Venezuela’s economic recovery of the past four years, due in part to the easing of oil sanctions, has helped reduce low-income voters’ dependence on government programs, making them less susceptible to electoral blackmail. No U.S. administration can overhaul Venezuela’s political system. But by setting achievable goals that address immediate needs, promote economic recovery, and support fundamental freedoms, the United States can help the Venezuelan people. A pragmatic approach that prioritizes economic recovery and gradual political progress will be far more effective in bringing Venezuela closer to change than a strategy of suffocation.

### Engagement Key---Diplomacy

#### U.S. foreign policy toward Venezuela sets the tone for global engagement—continued pressure escalates instability and illicit economies, while pragmatic re-engagement stabilizes the region, reduces migration, and restores American diplomatic credibility

Döbbener 1/7 [Sarah Döbbener is a political analyst with expertise in conflict resolution and Latin American affairs, particularly Venezuela and Mexico. “How Trump’s Administration Could Reshape Venezuela’s Criminal Landscape” 1/7/2025, <https://insightcrime.org/news/how-trumps-administration-reshape-venezuelas-criminal-landscape/?utm_source=chatgpt.com> ] DeGod

As President-elect Donald Trump prepares for his inauguration, a critical question has emerged: what impact will the new US administration have on organized crime in Venezuela? During his first term, Trump’s approach to Venezuela was marked by a “maximum pressure” strategy of economic sanctions and attempts at regime change. Following the controversial 2018 Venezuelan elections, where Nicolás Maduro claimed victory amid widespread allegations of irregularities, Trump endorsed opposition leader Juan Guaidó as the rightful president of Venezuela. SEE ALSO: What We Know About Tren de Aragua’s US Presence Despite these efforts, the strategy failed to dislodge Maduro. Instead, as Venezuela’s economic situation worsened due to plummeting oil revenues, Maduro tightened his control. He increasingly depended on illegal economies to support his government, leading to a kind of hybrid state, where governance and criminality are indistinguishably mixed. Maduro also solidified alliances with Russia and China, which provided essential support during the pandemic, strengthening his regime’s resilience and demonstrating its capability to adapt under pressure. InSight Crime examines two scenarios, derived from expert interviews on organized crime and US policy, which could influence the trajectory of organized crime in Venezuela during Trump’s second term. Scenario 1: Increased Pressure The first scenario, dubbed “increased pressure” by analysts, is deemed the most probable by InSight Crime based on recent expert interviews. This strategy is likely to be led by figures such as Sen. Marco Rubio, a prominent critic of the Venezuelan government, who may be appointed secretary of state, and Mike Waltz, a potential national security advisor and proponent of sanctions against Maduro’s regime. Waltz met with Venezuela’s opposition leader, Edmundo González Urrutia, on January 6. The approach would involve intensifying international sanctions, with new measures aimed at high-ranking officials and critical sectors of Venezuela’s economy, especially the oil industry. Experts predict that the reinstatement of more stringent sanctions would significantly cut Venezuela’s oil revenue. In response, the Venezuelan government and its allies could deepen their involvement in illicit economies, “by selling more oil on the black market through shady intermediaries,” Geoff Ramsey, a senior fellow at the Atlantic Council, told InSight Crime. Drug trafficking stands to indirectly benefit from increased US pressure. As a crucial transit point for Colombian cocaine, Venezuela may experience heightened trafficking activities as groups seek to offset economic hardships with illicit revenue. Illegal mining, another covert and highly profitable illicit activity, is expected to expand. Still, criminal groups could encounter greater obstacles due to heightened surveillance and patrols by neighboring countries, Ramsey said. SEE ALSO: GameChangers 2024: Global Cocaine Networks and Trump 2 The growth of these illicit economies poses a significant threat to the stability of Maduro’s regime. A Venezuelan security expert, speaking under the condition of anonymity due to safety concerns, warned that the growing concentration of illicit wealth could intensify internal conflicts within the state. Struggles for control over highly profitable sectors like illegal mining could ignite violent power struggles, further destabilizing the regime. These illicit revenues could be funneled into financing arms purchases, recruiting personnel, and supporting coups or uprisings, increasing the risk of a governmental collapse. Despite these dynamics, experts consulted by InSight Crime dismiss the likelihood of a US military intervention. Such action is seen as inconsistent with Trump’s focus on domestic agendas under his “Make America Great Again” platform, which prioritizes internal issues over foreign entanglements. The high costs and potential to worsen Venezuela’s humanitarian situation and drive up migration to the United States further detract from the feasibility of military involvement, contradicting Trump’s aims to reduce immigration. Scenario 2: Pragmatic Cohabitation A less likely yet still feasible scenario suggested by experts is “pragmatic cohabitation,” potentially arising if Tulsi Gabbard, the proposed director of national intelligence who has voiced concerns over excessive sanctions, becomes a key figure in Trump’s administration. In this approach, the US might pivot from sanctions and pressure to reestablish diplomatic ties with Venezuela. “Should pragmatic cohabitation take effect, we could see economic stabilization in 2025, which would diminish Maduro’s dependence on illicit markets,” according to the Venezuelan analyst consulted by InSight Crime. During President Joe Biden’s tenure, significant sanctions on Venezuela’s state oil company were lifted, and US oil company Chevron received operational licenses, though full diplomatic relations were not reestablished. Relations further deteriorated after the controversial July 2024 elections, with Biden recognizing the opposition leader as the legitimate winner after allegations of electoral fraud against Maduro. For Trump to pursue pragmatic cohabitation, enhanced efforts to initiate dialogue between the two nations would be necessary. Given Trump’s expressed respect for authoritative figures, such as Russia’s Vladimir Putin, he might be inclined to negotiate directly with Maduro. These discussions could aim to curtail migration from Venezuela by offering concessions in oil sector negotiations. SEE ALSO: Security Forces in Venezuela Extort Detainees Amid Political Repression Renewed dialogue could lead to an easing of sanctions, revitalizing Venezuela’s oil sector. This recovery would lessen the government’s dependence on black-market oil sales and attract foreign investment, which would improve oil infrastructure and boost state revenues. The private sector, which has suffered under sanctions that restricted international trade and deterred foreign investors, also stands to gain. The absence of restrictions would help the Venezuelan economy overall, increasing the population’s income by generating more legal employment, which could lessen the dependency on illicit economies. At the same time, economic recovery would also impact human trafficking. With fewer Venezuelans forced to flee due to necessity, vulnerability to mega crime networks like the homegrown Tren de Aragua would be reduced, weakening this transnational organization. Still, even in a scenario of pragmatic cohabitation, criminal economies would continue to operate in Venezuela. Corrupt government and security officials from Maduro’s regime would have no incentive to give up the illegal revenues enriching them under the environment of impunity that the state has guaranteed to perpetuate its power. And the presence of criminal groups, such as the National Liberation Army (Ejército de Liberación Nacional – ELN), and their close relationships with state actors, ensures that criminal activities would continue to affect the security of the country and the region.

### Engagement Key---Democracy

#### Strategic engagement, not sanctions, is the key to sustainable democracy in Venezuela — a pivot from Trump-era pressure to targeted negotiation fosters reform, protects migrants, and avoids repeating past failures.

Chen 3/6 [Marcus Chen is an economist and policy analyst specializing in Latin American markets and U.S. foreign economic strategy. His work focuses on the intersection of international diplomacy and sustainable development in crisis-affected regions. “Economics Strategic Engagement: Rethinking U.S. Policy Towards Venezuela” 3/6/2025, <https://nationalcourrier.com/2025/03/06/strategic-engagement-rethinking-u-s-policy-towards-venezuela/?utm_source=chatgpt.com> ] DeGod

This article discusses President Trump’s recent revocation of oil sales licenses for Venezuelan companies, suggesting the need for a strategic pivot from maximum pressure to targeted engagement. The author argues that previous strategies have failed, and highlights the importance of fostering democracy through negotiation rather than sanctions, proposing steps to support Venezuelan migrants and promote political reform. The recent announcement by U.S. President Donald Trump to revoke licenses that authorized companies like Chevron to sell Venezuelan oil is a significant shift in strategy. This move seems to reinstate the controversial maximum pressure approach that characterized Trump’s first term, fueled by pressures from Florida congressional members supportive of hardline policies. Such actions risk repeating past failures without addressing the complexities on the ground in Venezuela. In stark contrast, Richard Grenell, Trump’s envoy for Venezuela, previously engaged with Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro and facilitated the release of U.S. prisoners and cooperation regarding migrant deportations. Grenell’s approach diverged from aggressive policies that sought regime change, bearing a more constructive outlook towards fostering dialogue and engagement conducive to transitional governance. Former National Security Advisor John Bolton’s memoir best illustrates the previous administration’s focus on sanctions, aiming to undermine the Maduro regime, with Bolton asserting, “I thought it was time to turn the screws and asked, ‘why don’t we go for a win here?'” This strategy, however, resulted in exacerbated economic decline, contributing to Venezuela’s dire humanitarian situation without succeeding in ousting Maduro from power. The relationship between U.S. sanctions and Venezuela’s economic collapse is complex and significant, revealing that the country’s challenges stem from both external pressures and internal governance failures. Chavismo, the political movement initiated by Hugo Chávez, initially gained support for its redistributive policies, yet public favor has waned in the face of crisis. The political landscape is marked by entrenched powers that hinder democratic processes and exacerbate the humanitarian plight. The crisis reached a pivotal moment during Venezuela’s last presidential election, where evidence indicated that the opposition candidate, Edmundo González, had likely outperformed Maduro. The absence of transparent electoral processes and increasing repression of dissenting voices is emblematic of the regime’s grip on power and the culmination of years of U.S. hostility compounded by internal conflict. To cultivate democratic transformations, it is essential to establish a framework for negotiated political settlements rather than imposing abrupt regime change. Successful transitions observed in historical contexts like Brazil and Poland serve as precedents for fostering stability through compromise. Such engagement efforts ought to be predicated on institutional reforms that create equitable political environments. The Trump administration has an opportunity to pivot from isolation to engagement by promoting negotiations with Venezuelan authorities, recognizing the pragmatic necessity of compromise to foster lasting peace. By emphasizing negotiation, the administration could facilitate a structure that encourages electoral participation without the risk of retaliation against political adversaries. To amplify commitment to Venezuelans, both within and outside the country, actionable steps such as supporting the Venezuelan Adjustment Act can reinforce the U.S. stance on humanitarian grounds while addressing claims of political asylum from Venezuelan migrants. By focusing efforts on engagement rather than sanctions, the United States can enhance its credibility and support the Venezuelan populace more effectively. The juxtaposition between Grenell’s targeted engagement and the hardline approach favored by some within the administration underscores the ongoing debate on how best to address the Venezuelan crisis. Opting for engagement over sanctions could yield a constructive pathway for restoring democracy and alleviating the suffering of millions in Venezuela, moving beyond ineffective and harmful foreign policy frameworks that have proliferated division and despair. In summary, for the Trump administration to navigate the complexities of the Venezuelan crisis effectively, a shift from maximum pressure to targeted engagement is essential. By fostering dialogue and supporting institutional reforms, the United States can facilitate a more sustainable transition towards democracy and alleviate the humanitarian crisis. Enacting supportive legislation for Venezuelan migrants and pursuing a diplomatic approach can reaffirm U.S. commitment to those affected by authoritarian regimes, while striving for meaningful political change in Venezuela.

#### Easing sanctions ensures effective democratic transitions in Venezuela

Canache ’24[Damarys; 2024; professor of political science at the University of Illinois and Venezuela native. University of Illinois News Bureau, “What should US policy be towards Venezuela?” 1-25-24. https://news.illinois.edu/view/6367/825321817]

The U.S. began imposing sanctions on Venezuela in 2005 during the George W. Bush administration. The sanctions targeted those involved in corrupt, criminal and anti-democratic activities. During the Trump administration, the scope of those sanctions was significantly expanded, moving beyond individually targeted sanctions to include broader financial and sectoral sanctions.  
  
In theory, the objective of this strategy has been to exert pressure on the Venezuelan government to compel them to change their behavior. Despite those sanctions, Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro has consolidated his power, and the sanctions have only worsened the economic crisis caused by his mismanagement and the corruption of Venezuelan authorities. The sanctions likely contributed to the country’s economic breakdown and to one of the most serious migration crises on the continent, with more than 7 million Venezuelans fleeing the country, according to the United Nations Refugee Agency.

The Biden administration has backed a framework for creating electoral conditions for free, fair and competitive presidential elections in Venezuela in 2024. And after extensive negotiations facilitated by Norway, the Maduro government and the group of opposition parties under the umbrella of the Unitary Platform reached a deal last October. While the U.S. wasn’t directly involved in these negotiations, the Biden administration backed the deal. Responding to this deal, the U.S. government then lifted sanctions related to the oil industry and a bond trading ban in exchange.

But the relaxation of sanctions by the U.S. government is temporary. It will end in April 2024, and is contingent on the Maduro regime fulfilling its obligations under an agreement on the presidential elections between Maduro and the Venezuelan opposition party, as well as on releasing political prisoners. In December, the Maduro government released 10 American citizens and 20 Venezuelan political prisoners. This was the relatively easy part, as Maduro was able to secure the release of a close ally, Alex Saab, as part of the prisoner exchange deal.

If the Maduro regime meets its commitments, the licenses related to the oil industry will be extended, and additional economic sanctions may be lifted. However, the sanctions will likely be reimposed if the Venezuelan government fails to comply with these commitments.

Thus, the easing of sanctions and the threat of reinstating them are being used to encourage Maduro to maintain and meet the responsibilities in conducting free and fair elections.

But fulfillment of the electoral agreement poses a more complex scenario. Autocratic leaders like Maduro are often reluctant to give up their power. Therefore, it is crucial that the U.S. government and the international community continue to exert pressure on Maduro and his allies to fulfill his end of the bargain. In my view, the U.S. and the international community should persist in pressuring Maduro and his allies to ensure they meet the commitment to minimal conditions for free and fair elections The Biden administration’s approach to Venezuela is undoubtedly influenced by the increasing number of Venezuelan migrants coming to the U.S. Hundreds of thousands of Venezuelans who fled to other Latin American countries are now risking their lives crossing the Darién Gap to reach the Mexico-U.S. border. Therefore, improving the economic and political situation in Venezuela is crucial to encouraging Venezuelans to return and stay in their homeland.

Another factor to consider is the current instability and turmoil in the Middle East, which could affect the oil markets. Although the Venezuelan oil industry declined greatly during the Chavista period, the easing of oil-related sanctions should provide some relief and is indicative of the Biden administration’s concern about the price of crude oil. Maduro has been in power for more than a decade, and he is squarely to blame for the collapse of the Venezuelan economy along with massive corruption and political repression, all of which led to the exodus of millions of Venezuelans. Maduro’s approval level is quite low, and according to a July 2023 poll, 85% of Venezuelan citizens want a political change. It’s difficult to see why Venezuelan citizens would vote for Maduro again. Yet, Maduro and his party will control the state apparatus and resources and will likely use them to their electoral advantage, much like during previous elections in the Chavista era. Assuming a fair election, the chances of the political opposition winning will depend on their ability to unite and present a strong front to voters. But these uncertain times in Venezuela make it difficult to make any solid predictions about the next election.

### Engagement Key---Guyana

#### There’s fantastic Aff and Neg U/Q for a scenario about an emerging territorial dispute on the Venezuela-Guyana border!

Gunson 25 [Phil Gunson is a Senior Analyst for the International Crisis Group focusing on the Andes region. “Venezuela Presses Territorial Claims as Dispute with Guyana Heats Up.” 4-8-25. https://www.crisisgroup.org/latin-america-caribbean/andes/venezuela-guyana/venezuela-presses-territorial-claims-dispute-guyana-heats GMU NR]

**What does the immediate future hold**?

The Maduro government **appears determined to press ahead with its plan** to elect a governor and eight National Assembly deputies to represent the newly created state of Guayana Esequiba, **despite the fact that almost all of its territory and population is controlled by Guyana**. Venezuela’s National Electoral Council has yet to clarify who will vote and how. There is no electoral register for the new state and some experts have suggested that Venezuelan voters as a whole might be invited to cast votes on behalf of the new state.

Meanwhile, **efforts to head off a future confrontation are gathering steam**, but so far to no avail. In response to the 1 March incident, Prime Minister Ralph Gonsalves of St. Vincent, who hosted the Argyle meeting and is one of its three key guarantors (along with Caricom and Brazil), immediately held a round of meetings to discuss the latest escalation. President Maduro, however, is demanding a meeting with Guyana’s Ali, accusing him of designing “warlike plans”. On 15 March, Ali reiterated that the matter was with the ICJ and there would be no bilateral meeting while Venezuela continued “blatantly disregarding the Argyle Declaration”. Caricom had already declared in April 2024 that by enshrining the new state’s defence in law, Venezuela was violating the Argyle Agreement, subverting international law and signalling possible aggression against its neighbour. Underlining the sensitivities around Venezuela’s election plans, the government in Georgetown has stated that any Guyanese citizen voting on 25 May will be committing treason.

As it stands, the trajectory of the conflict **depends largely on the Maduro government’s strategic intentions** toward Essequibo, which remain **hard to determine**. Caracas may believe that concerted pressure and bellicose rhetoric will force the government in Georgetown to cede a share in its oil bonanza in order to placate Venezuela and ensure a less turbulent business environment, even if it seems unlikely that the ICJ will force Guyana to make actual territorial concessions. Though it is **possible** that Maduro is considering whether **military escalation** could redound to his government’s **benefit**, there are no signs as yet that the Venezuelan armed forces are preparing for a full-scale intervention.

The timing of the ExxonMobil incident and the accompanying rhetoric nevertheless suggest that Maduro may be **testing the Trump administration’s resolve with regard to the defence of its ally Guyana**. Caracas has taken to calling Ali the “Caribbean Zelenskyy” following Ukrainian leader Volodymyr Zelenskyy’s White House meeting with Trump and U.S. Vice President JD Vance, in which he was belittled by his U.S. counterparts – a soubriquet that may be intended to ridicule Guyana’s complaints about Venezuelan “aggression”. The **Maduro government is obliged to tread warily**, however, as it observes the **unresolved debate** in Washington between advocates of **more sanctions aimed at regime change in Caracas,** and those who prefer a deal over **energy and migration policy**. Thus far, the U.S. **has not threatened Venezuela with further sanctions as a response to the Essequibo issue.**

**For now, no cracks are visible in the U.S. policy of support for Guyana**. On 13 March, the U.S. ambassador to Georgetown, Nicole Theriot, said Washington would “always stand shoulder to shoulder” with Guyana and supported the Guyanese position “100 per cent against this aggression”. As Rubio was visiting Guyana and warning Venezuela of the consequences of any attack, a U.S. navy cruiser conducted exercises with Guyanese vessels offshore. If an interstate conflict were to begin, Russia presumably would side with Caracas, but China, which will soon see substantial earnings from its participation in the Stabroek block, would likely use diplomatic pressure to avert open hostilities.

In this unsettled environment, **the search for a diplomatic resolution is becoming more pressing**. The ICJ is not expected to rule on the dispute until at least mid-2026, and given Venezuela’s announced intention to ignore the outcome of its deliberations, that verdict is unlikely to be the end of the matter. Indeed, some observers warn that the period between Guyana’s elections later in 2025 and the ICJ ruling could be particularly tense. If the elections lead to a weaker government coalition in Georgetown, Caracas might see an opportunity to change conditions on the ground ahead of the court verdict. As noted above, St. Vincent Prime Minister Gonsalves has been attempting to overcome the impasse with shuttle diplomacy; Brazil had also hoped to mediate in the crisis, though tensions between Caracas and Brasília in the aftermath of the 2024 presidential election in Venezuela have hampered those efforts.

With few pathways toward an agreement in sight, the Maduro government may believe there are political and economic benefits to be gained by ratcheting up the tension – and few costs. But with Guyana on edge, and with non-state armed groups operating freely across Essequibo’s borders, a violent incident in the disputed territory could turn the mistrust prevailing between the states into an armed confrontation. While placing U.S. or British naval assets in the disputed waters could be a deterrent, it also raises the stakes of any flare-up between the South American neighbours. It is indispensable that the region, led by Brazil and Caricom, caution Caracas as to the consequences of any armed aggression. In principle, the ICJ’s eventual ruling should represent the final word on the dispute. Pressing Venezuela to recognise the court’s jurisdiction, but also preparing to handle the consequences of Caracas’ continual refusal to do so through diplomatic engagement and warnings as to the risks of intransigence, will be essential to avert conflict.

### Sanction Removal---Oil

#### Sanctions impact oil trade

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Since 2006, the United States has imposed a wide variety of sanctions. The most **significant** are preventing the Venezuelan government from accessing the U.S. financial system; freezing the bank accounts and other assets of the Nicolás Maduro administration; blocking oil imports from the state oil and gas company, PDVSA; and imposing penalties on individuals who the U.S. government determines have undermined democratic processes or committed human rights abuses. Among those targeted are Maduro himself, eight supreme court judges, and the director of the central bank. Other measures include: terrorism-related sanctions, which prohibit all commercial arms sales to Venezuela and target individuals found to financially support terrorist organizations; drug trafficking–related sanctions, which target individuals and companies labeled as Specially Designated Narcotics Traffickers; and, broader sectoral sanctions, which block the assets and transactions of companies that benefit from the Maduro administration’s corrupt practices The governments of Canada, the European Union, Mexico, Panama, and Switzerland have also sanctioned the Maduro administration, including by freezing assets, embargoing arms sales, and banning travel. President George W. Bush’s 2006 ban on all U.S. commercial arms sales was in response to the Venezuelan government’s lack of cooperation on counterterrorism and anti-narcotics efforts. (Hugo Chávez was in power at the time.) In 2014, following widespread political protests and subsequent [reports of abuse](https://www.hrw.org/report/2014/05/05/punished-protesting/rights-violations-venezuelas-streets-detention-centers-and) by Venezuelan police forces, the U.S. Congress authorized President Barack Obama to [impose sanctions](https://www.congress.gov/bill/113th-congress/senate-bill/2142) on individuals involved in human rights violations. The next year, Obama [declared](https://home.treasury.gov/system/files/126/13692.pdf) Venezuela a national security threat and applied sanctions on several high-ranking officials.  In 2017, President Donald Trump began aggressively tightening sanctions with the aim of ousting Maduro in favor of an interim opposition government led by Juan Guaidó. The Trump administration cut off the Maduro regime’s access to the U.S. financial system; barred U.S. companies and citizens from purchasing Venezuelan debt; and blocked PDVSA from exporting to the United States, its primary destination. By the end of his term, Trump had issued [seven executive orders](https://www.cnas.org/publications/reports/sanctions-by-the-numbers-3) targeting state-owned or -affiliated companies, government agencies, and the central bank. With a few exceptions, President Joe Biden has kept these measures in place. Yet, he has opted to start direct talks with the Maduro government and has floated the idea of easing oil sanctions in exchange for democratic reforms.  
  
This is a matter of debate. Critics of sanctions, particularly Trump’s aggressive measures, say they have increased Venezuela’s disease and mortality rates, worsened widespread hunger, [accelerated the migration crisis](https://www.nytimes.com/2022/10/07/world/americas/venezuelan-migrants-us-border.html), and exacerbated the country’s [economic troubles](https://cepr.net/images/stories/reports/venezuela-sanctions-2019-04.pdf)[PDF]. Other researchers argue that sanctions [are not primarily responsible](https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/impact-of-the-2017-sanctions-on-venezuela_final.pdf) for Venezuela’s rapid decline. Instead, they say that economic mismanagement, and the resulting hyperinflation and collapse in living standards, long preceded most sanctions. However, analysts generally agree that oil sanctions have hurt. The U.S. Government Accountability Office found that sanctions placed on PDVSA in 2019 likely contributed to the collapse of Venezuela’s economy, which saw a 35 percent contraction in gross domestic product (GDP) that year. Oil production had long been falling, from a height of 3.2 million barrels per day in the 1990s to less than 1.4 million in 2018; in the wake of oil sanctions, output fell further, to 558,000 barrels per day in 2021. The country also faces fuel shortages due to failing refineries, leading its ally Iran to send shipments in defiance of U.S. sanctions. The effect of sanctions on the Maduro administration in particular is less clear. The barrage of sanctions has cut the regime off from many financing sources, making it harder to access foreign currency needed to import basic goods. But the recent elections of left-wing leaders in Chile, Colombia, and Peru have lessened Venezuela’s political isolation in the region, and the economy is growing again. Meanwhile, support for Guaidó, recognized by most of the region since 2018 as Venezuela’s rightful president, has sharply eroded. Biden is reportedly considering [easing sanctions](https://www.wsj.com/articles/u-s-plans-to-ease-venezuela-sanctions-enabling-chevron-to-pump-oil-11665005719) to allow U.S. oil giant Chevron to resume operations in Venezuela. In exchange, Maduro would continue negotiations with the U.S.-backed opposition, led by Guaidó, over the terms of presidential elections scheduled for 2024. This is the fifth attempt at mediation after Maduro suspended the last round of talks in October 2021.  
  
Some policymakers hope that giving Venezuela the green light on exports could help curb global energy prices, given that the country boasts the world’s largest proven oil reserves. However, many economists say that it will take time and billions of dollars in foreign investment to [rebuild the oil industry](https://www.forbes.com/sites/mariaabreu/2022/03/08/venezuelas-devastated-oil-industry-is-in-no-condition-to-replace-russian-production/?sh=5542c412601e) after years of mismanagement. U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken has said that relaxing sanctions could be a way to [stabilize Venezuela’s economy](https://www.nbcnews.com/news/latino/are-no-plans-change-sanctions-venezuela-blinken-says-pressure-mounts-rcna51753) and alleviate the country’s humanitarian crisis, which has led tens of thousands of Venezuelan migrants to head toward the U.S. southern border

#### Oil production increases if sanctions are lifted.

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According to recent reports, the Biden administration may be making some changes to U.S. Venezuela policy, including the possible easing of oil sanctions and the creation of a limited humanitarian program to assist Venezuelan migrants. While there have been no changes yet, the Biden administration may be starting to recognize that it cannot continue with the status quo inherited from Trump if it wants to bring more oil on the market and provide some relief to the people of Venezuela. Venezuela policy has been crying out for a major overhaul for years, and President Biden should seize this opportunity to break with one of the most harmful legacies of his predecessor. To make the most of this opportunity, the president will need to go beyond such small tentative steps and dismantle the broad sanctions that the U.S. has been imposing on Venezuela in pursuit of regime change.

If it happens, the proposed easing of sanctions would be modest and would take the form of permitting Chevron to resume oil exports from Venezuela. This would not produce a huge amount of oil, but it would help to offset the OPEC+ production cut that has roiled U.S. relations with its clients in the Persian Gulf. Any sanctions relief would help to stabilize Venezuela’s battered economy, and that might reduce the pressure on Venezuelans to leave their country in such large numbers. Scaling back the economic war on Venezuela would benefit ordinary Venezuelans, and it would also help the U.S. manage the surge of migrants seeking entry into the U.S. and provide some assistance in reducing energy prices. If that relief can facilitate a resumption of political negotiations between Maduro and Venezuelan opposition leaders, it might offer the beginning of a path out of the political and humanitarian crisis that has wrecked Venezuela over the last decade.

It is still not certain that any of these changes will take place. Secretary of State Antony Blinken made a point of downplaying the latest reports, saying, “We will review our sanctions policies in response to constructive steps from the regime.” Making the review of U.S. sanctions conditional on what the targeted government does is typical, and it is why sanctions policies remain in force long after they have been proven to be useless. Instead of waiting on a targeted government to take “constructive steps” that may never come, broad U.S. sanctions need to be [reviewed regularly](https://www.crisisgroup.org/united-states/peacemaking-and-us-sanctions) and removed if they are failing to achieve their stated purpose.

It may seem counterintuitive, but the leaders of heavily sanctioned states usually become more entrenched in their positions because worsening economic conditions weaken their domestic opposition and make the population more dependent on the government. Insofar as the opposition has been identified with the “maximum pressure” campaign, it has damaged their political standing. While supporters of the policy present broad sanctions as a means to weaken Maduro, the reality is that the sanctions have created conditions in which Maduro is now more firmly in control than before.

There is growing recognition in Washington that the “maximum pressure” campaign against Venezuela has run into a dead end. Last week, Sen. Chris Murphy (D-CT) acknowledged that sanctions have not achieved anything: “Just in case you haven’t noticed, our policy of sanctioning and isolating Maduro hasn’t worked. At some point when your policy isn’t getting results, it’s malpractice to not try something else.”

#### Oil Embargo Ineffective

Neumann ’22 [William; 2022, New York Times journalist; author of “Things Are Never So Bad That They Can’t Get Worse: Inside Venezuela’s Collapse.” The Guardian, “Venezuela sanctions aren’t working: Don’t repeat the same mistakes as the Cuba embargo.” 1-6-22.] https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2022/jun/06/venezuela-sanctions-arent-working-dont-repeat-the-mistakes-of-the-cuba-embargo

With the war in Ukraine and a ban on Russian oil sales, the Biden administration has been seeking alternative sources of crude to try to ease prices at the gas pump. But a recent overture to oil-rich Venezuela  was met with an immediate backlash from both Republicans and Democrats, who condemned the White House for negotiating with the country’s authoritarian president, Nicolás Maduro. And last month, when the White House said that it would let Chevron begin talks with the Maduro government that could possibly lead to an expansion of its very limited activities in the country, there was a similar outraged response.

For all the noise generated by the outreach to Caracas, there has been virtually no discussion of why the US has an oil embargo against Venezuela in the first place or why, in the face of the failure of economic sanctions to alter political realities in the country, US politicians are so intent on keeping them in place.

The [sanction against Venezuelan oil sales](https://www.reuters.com/article/us-venezuela-politics-usa-sanctions/u-s-sanctions-venezuela-state-oil-firm-escalating-pressure-on-maduro-idUSKCN1PM2DP) was enacted three years ago at the insistence of President Donald Trump’s national security adviser, John Bolton, who prevailed over fierce objections by the state and treasury departments.  
  
In my recent book on Venezuela, I show how the national security council, under Bolton’s predecessor, HR McMaster, had laid out a roadmap of escalating sanctions designed to gradually increase pressure on Maduro. At the end of the roadmap they placed the ultimate sanction, that would strike at the heart of Venezuela’s economy: an oil embargo. McMaster’s team believed that the embargo was to be used only if it was clear that Maduro was about to fall and needed one last push. The embargo would be enacted, Maduro would go away, and then the US would lift the embargo. They feared that maintaining the embargo over the long term would devastate Venezuela’s already crippled economy and multiply the suffering of ordinary Venezuelans.

But Bolton favored a maximum pressure approach. In January 2019, in a long-shot bid to evict Maduro, the **US** (followed by dozens of other countries) [recognized](https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/jan/23/enezuela-trump-president-juan-guaido-maduro-recognition-news-latest) the opposition legislator Juan Guaidó as the legitimate president of Venezuela. Bolton immediately called for enacting the oil embargo, saying, “Why don’t we go for a win here?”

Kimberly Breier, at the time the assistant secretary of state for western hemisphere affairs, told me that the measure was pushed through without any serious evaluation of the consequences. That included how likely it was to work and what effect it would have on living conditions in Venezuela. (Another question was where the US would get the oil to replace Venezuela’s crude – a portion of it would come from Russia.)

“There was absolutely no evidence,” Breier told me, that the oil sanction would bring about Maduro’s removal and yet Bolton “set the expectation that somehow this was magically going to occur”.

And of course, it did not. With help from Iran and Russia, Venezuela has continued to sell its oil, to refineries in China. Maduro is more secure in power today than he was three years ago when the sanction was enacted and the Venezuelan opposition is weaker and in greater disarray.

And yet now the sanction’s mere existence is its justification. Even suggesting that it be altered is politically toxic. And that is on purpose. Trump saw that he could weaponize Venezuela policy in the 2020 election in Florida, with its large bloc of Hispanic voters, including Cuban Americans, attuned to Venezuela’s fall into authoritarianism. In effect, he made Venezuela the new Cuba – threatening to invade, and piling on sanctions.

As foreign policy, Trump’s approach was a failure: it did not remove Maduro or improve conditions in Venezuela. But as an election strategy it was a great success; Trump easily won Florida in 2020 and Republicans gained two congressional seats there.

When Biden became president, he inherited a trap. Any change toward Venezuela could be cast as being soft on Maduro and might cost Democrats even more votes in Florida in the midterms and in 2024.

But circumstances have changed, and not only because of Russia’s invasion of Ukraine. In Venezuela, after eight years of brutal economic contraction (caused by Maduro’s policy mistakes and corruption and exacerbated by sanctions), the economy has started growing again. And that’s a good thing – it means more work and more money for poor people to put food on the table. While Guaidó’s effort went nowhere, his failure may have opened space for new opposition voices to emerge.

The ugly, mostly unspoken, logic behind the sanctions is that, by making conditions in the country intolerable, either people would rise up against Maduro or the military would remove him in a coup. That hasn’t happened and there is no reason to think that it will. Chuo Torrealba, a prominent opposition activist in Caracas, refers to this as “the politics of pain”.

The oil embargo and other general sanctions targeting the economy are deeply unpopular in Venezuela. Many opposition politicians have come out against them, although Guaidó and some others still call for continued or even stronger sanctions. But advocating more suffering is not a winning message to send to voters in Venezuela. “To make politics with people’s pain,” Torrealba told me, “is a mistake.”

So what should Biden do? First, he must acknowledge that US policy toward Venezuela is broken and the sanctions-heavy approach, carried out on the fly and distorted by political aims, has failed. Any change carries political risks so tweaking the margins doesn’t make much sense.

Here’s a novel thought. The humanitarian crisis in Venezuela was caused, most directly, by the country’s economic collapse. The way to solve the crisis is through economic growth. Easing sanctions may be the best way to quickly improve the lives of ordinary Venezuelans. That will encourage the return of some of the [6 million refugees](https://www.unhcr.org/en-us/venezuela-emergency.html)– who would then be on hand to vote in a presidential election due to take place in 2024. Those people voted against Maduro with their feet when they fled the country. Why not create the conditions for them to return and vote for real change? That could do far more to end Venezuela’s authoritarian nightmare than the sanctions have.

#### Sanctions aid Russian oil dominance.

Fonseca ’22 [Brian and Eduardo Gamarra; 2024, Director, of the Jack D. Gordon Institute for public policy; Lead for Latino Public Opinion Forum, Professor Jack D. Gordon Institute for Public Policy. Stephen J. Green School of International and Public Affairs, Florida State University, “U.S. Sanctions hurt our national interests---and the Venezuelan People.” 3-9-22] https://sipa.fiu.edu/news-events/news/2022/u-s-sanctions-hurt-our-national-interests-and-the-venezuelan-people-opinion.html

Now that President Biden has announced a ban on imports of Russian oil, the United States should reevaluate sanctions against Venezuela, double down on targeted sanctions against individuals and reverse broader sanctions that hurt our national interests and the interests of the Venezuelan people and aid Russia's energy dominance.

Lifting broad sanctions against Venezuela's oil sector could create space for the United States to apply more direct sanctions against Russian oil and gas exports. Such a move could aid Venezuelans suffering from the ongoing humanitarian crisis.

Sanctions have been in place since 2006 with each U.S. administration intensifying its reach against Nicolas Maduro and the vast web of corrupt officials who make up his government. To date, these sanctions have neither changed the regime nor modified Maduro's behavior. In addition to extreme corruption, well-documented and widespread human-rights violations continue. Meanwhile, almost 8 million Venezuelans have poured out of the country, mainly owing to the Maduro government's economic mismanagement and the humanitarian crisis spurred by this authoritarian regime. For the 22 million Venezuelans who remain, each day brings greater scarcity, repression and famine.

U.S. sectoral sanctions toward Venezuela (and Iran) removed significant heavy crude oil supply from the global energy market and allowed Russian oil and gas companies to step in to service the demand.

In 2020, Russia's oil exports to the United States hit a 16-year high. Russian energy exports to Europe are even more expansive. Russia exports more than 40% of its oil and almost 70% of its gas to Europe. Russia exports roughly 3 million to 4 million barrels of heavy crude oil a day, so a five-dollar increase in price per barrel generates an additional $15 million to $20 million a day for Russian exporters. In short, Russian energy sales are vital to Moscow achieving its strategic objectives.

Paradoxically, Russia is content with U.S. sanctions because it keeps Venezuelan oil in the ground, reduces the global supply and, most important, keeps American companies sidelined. This results in Russia fetching a higher price for its own heavy crude on the global market. Sanctions also keep Venezuela and U.S. companies that could be operating in Venezuela from competing against Russia energy companies in the global market. Russia owns significant energy assets in Venezuela, including nearly 81 billion barrels of proven reserves via its joint venture with Petróleos de Venezuela, S.A. (PDVSA), but has chosen to leave it in the ground.

Experts say that Venezuela may have up to tens of millions of barrels in storage that could quickly find its way to the global market. Its energy sector has a long way to go to get its production capacity back up to its high of around 3 million barrels per day; it sits at just under 1 million today. That said, “lifting” costs in Venezuela are among the lowest in the world. That means that it is cheaper to lift Venezuelan oil than it is U.S. oil. That is where the U.S. private sector comes in. Several major oil and gas firms are lobbying Washington to eliminate sanctions so that they can participate in Venezuela's oil sector, and many experts have pressed Washington to reevaluate its sanction policies toward Venezuela. Of course, the United States could always ask Gulf states to increase production and tap into their spares, but that moves us back to dependence on the Middle East.

As gas prices surge past $5 per gallon on the heels of Russia's invasion of Ukraine, U.S. policy towards Venezuela is now a nationwide issue that extends beyond the large Venezuelan communities residing in Florida, New York, Texas, and California. Results from a recent survey conducted by Florida International University's Latino Public Opinion Forum illustrate that Venezuelans are disappointed with the impact of the sanctions and favor providing more humanitarian assistance to Venezuela, whether or not Nicolás Maduro remains in office. A majority also agrees with an adjustment of economic sanctions on Venezuela's oil sector to allow this revenue to be used solely for humanitarian assistance, but only if the Maduro government is prohibited from managing or accessing oil revenue.

Russia's invasion of Ukraine provides the moment to reevaluate sanctions against Venezuela, to continue targeting corruption and authoritarianism and simultaneously reverse broader sanctions that hurt our national interests, the interests of the Venezuelan people, and aid Russia's energy dominance.

### Sanction Removal---Economy

#### Sanctions cause economic crisis

Ramsey ’24 [Geoff and Caleb McCarry; 2024, senior fellow at the Atlantic Council’s Adrienne Arsht Latin America Center; former Cuba transition coordinator under U.S. President George W. Bush. Foreign Policy.com, “U.S. policy on Venezuela is converging,” 4-11-24 https://foreignpolicy.com/2024/04/11/us-venezuela-democrats-republicans-sanctions-negotiations-democracy-maduro/

These days, political consensus in Washington is hard to come by. But there is a rare degree of alignment in both Democratic and Republican foreign-policy circles on the need for a more realist approach toward Venezuela—one that balances U.S. interests with the need for a democratic solution to Caracas’s political crisis. Like the United States, Venezuela also holds presidential elections later this year. Though the concurrent votes—and their varied potential outcomes—will have significant ramifications for U.S.-Venezuela relations, Washington’s policy toward Caracas is unlikely to change dramatically based on who wins the White House.

Those who have followed the recent ups and downs of U.S. Venezuela policy know this story: After a so-called “maximum pressure” campaign failed to topple Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro, the White House changed tactics, pivoting to support negotiations with Maduro’s government—and even sending officials to Caracas to engage in back-channel conversations to further U.S. interests.

This shift is often described as taking place under U.S. President Joe Biden, who last year lifted some sanctions on Venezuela and its vast oil sector in exchange for concessions in long-running—yet often stalled—talks between Maduro and the opposition. Sanctions relief was meant to incentivize Maduro to ensure that Venezuela’s July 28 vote is more competitive than previous elections, and to facilitate the release of American prisoners held in the country. Biden officials have also worked with their Venezuelan counterparts to move these issues forward.

In practice, however, this shift was already in motion under former President Donald Trump. Though their rhetoric was different, both administrations paired pressure with strategic engagement in their relations with Caracas. The parallels between Biden’s and Trump’s Venezuela policies suggest that, regardless of who wins the U.S. election in November—Biden and Trump are their respective parties’ presumptive presidential nominees—Washington is unlikely to revert to the failed maximum pressure strategy of the past. Trump’s maximum pressure campaign involved imposing crippling sanctions on Venezuela and issuing criminal indictments of key government figures. According to former National Security Advisor John Bolton, the sanctions were projected to cause Venezuela to lose $11 billion annually in revenue from oil exports, the primary motor of Venezuela’s economy. In 2019, the White House embraced an opposition interim government led by then-National Assembly President Juan Guaidó. While Guaidó lacked control of the military or other national institutions, he sought to encourage defections from the Maduro government to spark a transition of power in Venezuela. Bolton would later characterize this as an attempt at U.S.-backed regime change.

But Trump also showed a pragmatic streak. After Bolton left office, the administration laid out a path to elections in exchange for the gradual lifting of sanctions, known as the 2020 “[Democratic Transition Framework](https://2017-2021.state.gov/democratic-transition-framework-for-venezuela/)” for Venezuela. The plan was hamstrung by its call for Maduro to cede executive power as a condition for new elections, but it nevertheless emphasized carrots rather than sticks—evidence of a paradigm shift in Washington’s approach to Caracas. The plan also called for an amnesty law for Maduro officials and emphasized a proposal for a power-sharing agreement between Maduro’s ruling United Socialist Party and the opposition.

This Trump-era pragmatism was spearheaded by figures such as Elliott Abrams, then the special representative for Venezuela, who held [quiet conversations](https://apnews.com/article/21b641f6def1400894125e3a8117f66c) with Maduro’s foreign minister in New York in 2019, according to The Associated Press. These talks did not appear to yield results, but they demonstrated Trump’s interest in communication with Maduro even as his administration [technically](https://ec.usembassy.gov/statement-from-president-donald-j-trump-recognizing-venezuelan-national-assembly-president-juan-guaido-as-the-interim-president-of-venezuela/#:~:text=President%20Donald%20J.-,Trump%20Recognizing%20Venezuelan%20National%20Assembly%20President%20Juan,the%20Interim%20President%20of%20Venezuela&text=Today%2C%20I%20am%20officially%20recognizing,the%20Interim%20President%20of%20Venezuela.) recognized Guaidó as Venezuela’s president.

This pragmatism was echoed in September 2020, when Trump [sent](https://www.nytimes.com/2020/10/21/us/politics/richard-grenell-venezuela-maduro.html) Richard Grenell, the former acting U.S. director of national intelligence, to Mexico City to meet with Jorge Rodríguez, a former Venezuelan vice president and close confidant of Maduro’s. By this point, Trump reportedly voiced doubts about the failure of his own maximum pressure strategy and [regarded](https://jp.reuters.com/article/usa-trump-bolton-book-countries-factbox-idINKBN23P0JU/) Guaidó as weak, according to Bolton.That both Biden and Trump have sought to engage with a government they previously treated as a pariah means that they recognize the constraints of U.S. influence over decisions made in Caracas. It’s also emblematic of shifting dynamics in global energy and geopolitics.

Years of U.S. economic sanctions failed to dislodge Maduro. The first financial penalties on Caracas were [imposed](https://www.cbsnews.com/news/trump-administration-imposes-sanctions-on-venezuela/) in August 2017, exacerbating a preexisting economic crisis by blocking state oil company PDVSA and its partners from accessing credit. Then came individual sanctions on more than 150 political and military allies in Maduro’s coalition, and criminal indictments against nearly every major minister in the country. These were followed by direct sanctions on the oil sector, described in some U.S. policy corners as the “nuclear option” to pressure Maduro. These sanctions contributed to a nearly fivefold decrease in oil production from the pre-sanctions period. Repeated U.S.-backed efforts to spark a military coup in Venezuela and an attempt at a mercenary-led invasion in partnership with a U.S. private security firm failed to oust Maduro, too.

Faced with the reality that Maduro’s coalition is unlikely to collapse under its own weight, the United States now recognizes that the best hope for stability and democratic change in Venezuela is from some form of a negotiated transition and elections. Venezuela’s ruling coalition is not going to disappear into thin air; if Caracas is to restore its institutions and economy, the United Socialist Party must see a political future for itself. As Biden’s and Trump’s approaches demonstrate, many in both the Democratic and Republican parties now realize this.Great-power competition is also shaping U.S. policy toward Venezuela. U.S. financial sanctions have created an opportunity for rivals such as Russia and China to deepen their influence in Caracas. Since Russia’s 2022 full-scale invasion of Ukraine—which prompted U.S. and European allies to seek oil and gas alternatives to Moscow—there has been a growing recognition that it is not in Washington’s interest to cede space to geopolitical rivals in the Western hemisphere. Since Venezuela is home to the world’s largest oil reserves, it will continue to be important for the United States and other Western countries to maintain a footprint there.

With U.S. and European energy companies once again investing in Venezuela, the West has a chance to stabilize the country’s economy while also pushing for transparency in the private sector. Western companies have their own strict compliance and oversight standards, and their greater investment in Venezuela will leave less room for corruption. An improved economy may also help stem the outward flow of Venezuelan migrants, who are arriving at the southern border of the United States in large numbers. Venezuelans are fleeing both their country’s political crisis as well as a lack of opportunity, but a stabilized economy combined with broad political agreements could see fewer migrants deciding to risk the perilous journey north.

U.S. policy on Venezuela has produced some significant recent wins. The sanctions relief that the Biden administration negotiated last year was part of a deal that secured the release of all U.S. detainees in Venezuela, in addition to two dozen Venezuelan political prisoners. It also led opposition and Maduro government representatives to sign an electoral road map agreement in Barbados. This agreement has not resulted in a free or balanced electoral environment ahead of July’s vote; opposition front-runner Maria Corina Machado remains barred from running, as well as backup candidate Corina Yoris. But the opposition coalition has declared that it is committed to electoral participation and remaining engaged in dialogue with Maduro nonetheless. There may be room for the wider coalition to endorse another candidate who has been permitted to register, such as Zulia state Gov. Manuel Rosales and former diplomat Edmundo González.

The White House recognizes that the United States can achieve more to advance a democratic opening in Venezuela—and pursue U.S. geostrategic interests—by pairing targeted engagement with support for negotiations rather than resorting solely to sanctions. The United States should instead empower committed opposition and [Chavista voices](https://foreignpolicy.com/2024/03/11/venezuela-elections-maduro-chavism-left-socialism-communist-party/) who are [working](https://www.regjeringen.no/en/topics/foreign-affairs/peace-and-reconciliation-efforts/norways_engagement/venezuela_negotiations/id2674295/) on a realistic path to democratic reconciliation. Venezuelans should not be encouraged to sit back and place their future entirely in the hands of a foreign government—even the U.S. government. In the past, this magical thinking led the opposition to tremendous blunders, ranging from repeatedly dividing over unpopular electoral boycotts to openly calling for foreign military intervention. Unless it is accompanied by some form of engagement and negotiation, pressure alone will not lead to change in Caracas. As Carlos Trujillo, the former ambassador to the Organization of American States under Trump, [said](https://podcasts.apple.com/us/podcast/the-americas-quarterly-podcast/id1099672310?i=1000644690678) in a recent interview: “I don’t think sanctions in and of themselves will drive a unique outcome. I think they are part of a solution, just like negotiations have to be part of the solution.”

### Sanction Removal---Human Rights

#### Leads to humanitarian crisis

Douhan ‘21 [Alena 2021; United Nations Special Rapporteur. “Preliminary findings on the visit to the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela by the Special Rapporteur on the negative impact of unilateral coercive measures on the enjoyment of human rights.” 2-12-21. https://www.ohchr.org/en/statements/2021/02/preliminary-findings-visit-bolivarian-republic-venezuela-special-rapporteur?LangID=E&NewsID=26747

The United States has imposed sanctions against Venezuela since 2015, when it introduced targeted sanctions against individuals and entities allegedly involved in drug trafficking. It imposed an arms embargo in 2016 on grounds that the Government was failing to cooperate sufficiently in anti-terrorism efforts. A 2014 U.S. law led to sanctions against Venezuelan officials blamed for, *inter alia*, violently repressing protests, persecuting political opponents, curtailing press freedoms and corruption. In 2015, the United States declared Venezuela’s situation a national emergency threatening U.S. security and foreign policy.

In 2017, the United States denounced the election of a Constituent Assembly in Venezuela as illegitimate and imposed sanctions against the government and its entities, including PDVSA, blocking their transactions and access to U.S. financial markets. In 2018, after Venezuelan presidential elections, the United States tightened its sanctions against the government, citing economic mismanagement, corruption, repression of political opponents and efforts to undermine democracy.

In January 2019, after recognizing the newly elected President of the National Assembly as Venezuela’s interim president, the United States imposed further sanctions against PDVSA, the Venezuelan Central Bank and key government officials, and it imposed a total economic embargo in August 2019. The United States also gave the self-proclaimed interim presidency the control of the Venezuelan Government’s assets and property in U.S. bank accounts, including money going to PDVSA from its U.S. unit, Citgo. Other U.S. sanctions in 2018 and 2019 targeted the gold and other mining, food, crypto-currency and banking sectors. In September 2020, U.S. sanctions were imposed on five legislators from the opposition for allegedly acting “as part of a broader scheme to manipulate parliamentary elections taking place in December 2020”. Since 2020, the United States has tried to block Venezuela from getting fuel from Iran by listing captains of oil tankers, prohibiting the use of Venezuelan air and sea ports, and blocking assets of Rosneft. U.S. officials are reported to have made unofficial threats to prevent transactions by third-state companies with Venezuela.

The Special Rapporteur takes note of the U.S. Government decision of 21 January 2020 to revise U.S. sanctions to minimize the humanitarian impact of the pandemic and the U.S. Government action on 2 February 2021 to ease sanctions affecting the functioning of ordinary operations at Venezuelan ports and airports.

The European Union imposed sanctions against Venezuela in 2017, including an arms embargo, a ban on exports of other goods that might be used for internal repression, a ban on exports of technology and material made for telecommunications monitoring or interception, and travel bans and asset freezes on individuals whose actions were deemed by the EU to undermine democracy, the rule of law and respect for human rights, which have been contested by Venezuela before the European Court of Justice. It was also reported that $1.2 billion in Venezuela Government funds have been frozen by a Portuguese bank in 2019. Nearly $2 billion in gold owned by the Central Bank of Venezuela and held in the Bank of England is also frozen as a case proceeds in British courts.

In 2017 and 2018, Canada froze assets and banned dealings in the property of Venezuelan officials accused of repression, gross human rights violations, corruption, censorship, extrajudicial killings and other acts. In 2018, Mexico froze assets and imposed travel bans on 13 senior Venezuelan officials. In 2018 and 2019, Switzerland imposed an arms embargo on Venezuela and froze assets and imposed travel bans against Venezuelan officials. In 2019, Colombia banned the entry of around 200 Venezuelans with government ties. Panama imposed targeted sanctions against Venezuelan individuals and entities in 2018 considered to be at high risk of engaging in money laundering, terrorist financing and proliferation of weapons of mass destruction.

In 2019, 13 of the 14 Lima Group countries agreed to ban the entry of Venezuelan officials and deny them access to their financial systems. Also in 2019, a majority of parties to the Rio Treaty approved a resolution allowing targeted sanctions, including asset freezes, against Venezuelan officials alleged to participate in drug trafficking, terrorist activities, organized crime and/or human rights violations.

On 13 February 2020 Venezuela submitted a referral to the International Criminal Court pursuant to Article 14of the Rome Statute with respect to unilateral coercive measures.

Venezuela has one of the largest reserves of oil on the planet. Oil has been the main export of the country and the main source of revenue and foreign exchange. Since 2000, the Government has announced the implementation of a broad scope of social projects in the spheres of housing, education, literacy, food, electricity and water supplies, health care, family planning, computer literacy and commune development, many of which were implemented at no cost to the people or were substantially subsidised by the state. The mono-oriented economy has been highly dependent on oil sales; most products, from machinery and spare parts to food and medicine, have been imported primarily from the United States and Europe. Internal production has remained at a rather low level and could not meet the needs of internal consumption. The economy’s decline started in 2014 with the downturn in oil prices. Among other factors reported to affect the economy of Venezuela, mismanagement, corruption and state price controls have been cited.

Unilateral sanctions increasingly imposed by the United States, the European Union and other countries have exacerbated the abovementioned challenges. The Government’s revenue was reported to shrink by 99% with the country currently living on 1% of its pre-sanctions income. Remittances from abroad have decreased due to the blocking of state assets and the complexity of – and impediments to – bank transfers. Four years of hyperinflation have resulted in the total devaluation of the national currency (1 USD = 1.8–1.9 million bolivars). This has resulted in the decrease of public sector salaries from 150–500 USD in 2015 to 1–10 USD in 2020, and a growing poverty level. In 2018–2019, the Government introduced new economic policies: price controls was lifted and the private sector was allowed to re-enter the economy.

However, the hardening of sanctions faced by the country since 2015 undermines the potential positive impact of the current reforms as well as the state’s capacity to maintain infrastructure and implement social projects. Today, Venezuela faces a lack of necessary machinery, spare parts, electricity, water, fuel, gas, food and medicine. Venezuelan assets frozen in United States, United Kingdom and Portuguese banks amount to US $6 bln. The purchase of goods and payments by public companies are reportedly blocked or frozen. The private sector, non-governmental organizations, universities, sport clubs and citizens of Venezuela are reporting the rejection or reluctance of foreign banks to open or keep their bank accounts, including those with correspondent banks in the United States and Europe; difficulties with getting visas and buying tickets; the need to act via third-country agents; and the need to pay extra insurance costs. The strengthening of economic sanctions and growing over-compliance resulted in the adoption of the Anti-Blockade Constitutional Law in October 2020.

It has been reported that electricity lines are able to work at less than 20 per cent of their capacity today. The number of Venezuelans who have left the country in search of a better life since 2015 is estimated to range between 1 and 5 million, with the population decreasing to approximately 27 million by 2021. Most public services have been depleted of 30 to 50 per cent of their personnel, including their most qualified ones (doctors, nurses, engineers, teachers, professors, judges, police officers, etc.), resulting in internal disorganisation, increased workloads for remaining personnel, reduced services and a decline in their quality.

An estimated 90% of households are connected to the national water distribution system. Numerous households, however, report frequent cuts because of electricity outages affecting water pumps and the maintenance of infrastructure, and because of the shortage of qualified maintenance staff. The distribution of water can only be made “in rotation” to ensure its delivery to the entire population, and the majority of households can only get access to water once or twice per week for several hours. Due to the trade impediments, the use of chemical agents to treat and purify the water to make it potable has been reduced by 30%.

Impediments to food imports, constituting more than 50 per cent of food consumption, have resulted in the steadily growth of malnourishment in the past 6 years with more than 2.5 million people being severely food insecure. Coping mechanisms include a decrease of the number of meals per day (1 or 2 instead of 3); reduced quantity and quality of food; de-capitalisation/selling of household assets to eat; and reduced health, clothing and education expenses; with correlated increases in family crises, tensions, violence and separations; child labour; involvement in the grey economy; criminal activity, including drug and human trafficking; forced labour; and migration. The CLAP food boxes program, started as a governmental initiative in 2017 and covering 6 mln. households around the country, decreases the diversity of items.

Venezuela has been almost entirely dependent upon medicine imported from abroad, while the majority of public medical services were provided by the state free of charge before 2016. Impediments to health care include a lack or severe insufficiency of medicines and vaccines; price growth; electricity shortages to supply equipment; water shortages and sanitation problems that affect hygiene; decaying infrastructure because of a lack of maintenance, the absence of spare parts, the unavailability of new equipment due to the lack of resources or refusals to sell or deliver; degraded working conditions and a lack of protective equipment against infectious diseases; a loss of staff in all medical areas because of low salaries; and the termination of construction of hospitals and primary health care centers.

In particular, the Children’s Cardiology Hospital in Caracas faces 5 times decrease of the number of surgeries (from an average of 1,000 interventions annually in the period 2010–2014 to 162 in 2020). Medical staff positions in public hospitals are 50–70% vacant. Only around 20 per cent of medical equipment is currently functional. The country faced severe shortages of vaccines against measles, yellow fever, and malaria in 2017–2018. The lack of tests and treatment for HIV in 2017–2018 reportedly resulted in the severe rise of the death rate. The diversion of assets of PDVSA’s United States subsidiary, CITGO, has prevented transplants of liver and bone marrow to 53 Venezuelan children; such transplants were reportedly done in Italy and Argentina before 2016 at the expense of the state. The Special Rapporteur also notes the reported growth of neonatal and maternal mortality since 2013, with a slight improvement in 2019, when humanitarian cooperation with UNICEF, PAHO, church and other humanitarian organizations was activated.

Other deleterious effects of the crisis are the growing issue of teenage pregnancy, which is rising to a crisis level with girls of 12-13 years getting pregnant amid a lack of access to information about, and use of, contraception; and an increase of HIV/AIDS because of unprotected relations.

School and university education has faced a serious decrease in governmental support since 2016, including the termination or reduction of the supply of school uniforms, shoes, backpacks and office supplies; and a reduction of the number of daily meals at school (from 2 to 1), the diminution of their quantity and food diversity or their total cancellation. The unavailability of financial resources and reluctance of foreign companies to trade with Venezuelan public and often private institutions has resulted in the suspension of the Canaima Programme, started in 2015 to assemble compact portable computers for educational purposes, 6.5 million of which have reportedly been distributed through the school system at no charge. Technical incidents in 2019 incapacitated the public Venezuela satellite, substantially shrinking Internet coverage in the country and making distant learning in the course of the pandemic hardly possible.

In the face of the economic and humanitarian crises, the Venezuelan government activated cooperation with UNDP, UNICEF, UNAIDS, PAHO, other international agencies, as well as church, private sector and humanitarian NGOs providing humanitarian aid, facilitating some reconstruction of water systems and supplies of vaccines, medicines, tests, reagents, school supplies and food. Attempts to release funds frozen in the Bank of England for buying medicine, vaccines, protective kits and medical equipment via the UNDP and PAHO in 2020 have failed however. Funds have not been released for the purchase of COVAX via PAHO in 2020 – 2021. Despite the intensification of work with humanitarian actors, some cases of surveillance and prosecution of the staffs of national NGOs involved in humanitarian work have been reported.

The Special Rapporteur considers that the state of national emergency announced by the U.S. Government on 8 March 2015 as the ground for introducing sanctions against Venezuela, and repeatedly extended, does not correspond to the requirements of art. 4 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, such as the existence of a threat to the life of the nation, the limiting of measures to the exigencies of the situation, a limited duration, the absence of discrimination, the prohibition to derogate from the right to life and the prohibition of punishment of activity that does not constitute a criminal offence, as referred to in the communication of human rights experts of 29 January 2021.

The Special Rapporteur underlines that unilateral sanctions against the oil, gold, mining and other economic sectors, the state-owned airline and the TV industry constitute a violation of international law, and their wrongfulness is not excluded with reference to countermeasures. The announced purpose of the “maximum pressure” campaign – to change the Government of Venezuela – violates the principle of sovereign equality of states and constitutes an intervention in the domestic affairs of

The Special Rapporteur is concerned that the lack of doctors and nurses and of sufficient medicines, medical equipment, spare parts, relevant software updates, vaccines, tests, reagents and contraceptives initially covered mostly by the Government results in the violation of the right to the highest attainable state of health; rising rates of maternal, neo-natal and infant mortality, and mortality from severe diseases (oncology, HIV, hemophilia, Guillain-Barré syndrome, cardiologic problems and many others); the deterioration of living conditions for people with special needs and chronic diseases; and more adolescent pregnancies. The unavailability of resources, including the frozen assets, for buying vaccines and supporting family planning programs has resulted in outbreaks of malaria, measles and yellow fever and opportunistic infections.

The Special Rapporteur concludes that sanctions imposed against Venezuela, its citizens and companies affect people in Venezuela and beyond its territory in both the public and private sectors; third-country nationals and employees of third-country companies affected by secondary sanctions or the fear of them; donors and international humanitarian NGOs; beneficiaries of assistance from international organizations traditionally financed by Venezuela; while low-income people, women, children and people with special needs or chronic or severe diseases are affected most with regard to the whole scope of human rights, including civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights and the right to development.

The Special Rapporteur welcomes reports of the Venezuela Government’s greater engagement with UNDP, UNICEF, UNAIDS, PAHO, other international agencies and church, private sector and humanitarian NGOs in providing humanitarian aid, facilitating some reconstruction of water systems and supplies of vaccines, medicines, tests, reagents, school supplies and food,  thus helping around 4 mln people. The Special Rapporteur is, however, concerned about reports of mismanagement in the distribution of humanitarian aid, surveillance and prosecution of the staffs of national NGOs involved in humanitarian work, and the absence of provisional regulations for the work of international NGOs.

The Special Rapporteur reminds all parties of their obligation under the UN Charter to observe principles and norms of international law, including principles of sovereign equality, political independence, non-intervention in the domestic affairs of states, and peaceful settlement of international disputes. She urges them to settle any disputes via competent judicial and other international institutions.

The Special Rapporteur stresses that humanitarian concerns shall always prevail over political ones and that unilateral measures may only be taken with due account of the rule of law, human rights law, refugee law and humanitarian law; must comply with states’ international legal obligations; and may only be applied in the course of internationally lawful countermeasures. The Special Rapporteur reminds that preliminary and continuous assessments of the humanitarian impact shall be done in the course of any unilateral activity as no good intention justifies the violation of fundamental human rights as “collateral damage”.

The Special Rapporteur underlines the inadmissibility of applying sanctions extraterritorially and urges the U.S. Government to end the national emergency regarding Venezuela, revise and lift sectoral sanctions against Venezuela’s public sector, review and lift secondary sanctions against third-state parties, and refrain of imposing sanctions on diesel supplies that would provoke a humanitarian crisis of unprecedented proportion.

The Special Rapporteur urges all interlocutors (including states, international organizations, banks, private companies and civil society) to avoid coercion, written or oral threats or any other act which may cause or result in over-compliance, and to interpret all limitations in the narrowest possible way in the interim period before the lifting of unilateral sanctions, with due account of the Guidance issued by the Special Rapporteur in December 2020.

The Special Rapporteur calls on all States to review and lift targeted sanctions in accordance with principles of international law, the rule of law, human rights and refugee law, to guarantee the possibility of state officials of Venezuela to represent the state on the basis of the principle of sovereign equality of states, and to guarantee rights of targeted individuals to the presumption of innocence, procedural guarantees, access to justice and other fundamental rights.

The Special Rapporteur urges the Governments of the United Kingdom, Portugal and the United States and corresponding banks to unfreeze assets of the Venezuela Central Bank to purchase medicine, vaccines, food, medical and other equipment, spare parts and other essential goods to guarantee humanitarian needs of the people of Venezuela and the restoration of public services in collaboration with, and through mutually agreed mechanisms monitored by UNDP and other UN agencies.

While recognizing a devastating effect of unilateral sanctions on the broad scope of human rights, especially the right to food, right to health, right to life, right to education and right to development, the Special Rapporteur calls the Government of Venezuela and the Office of High Commissioner for Human Rights to implement fully cooperation agreement signed between them, to strengthen the OHCHR presence on the grounds to monitor inter alia the impact of unilateral sanctions and to organize visits of relevant Special procedures to the country.

The Special Rapporteur calls on the Government of Venezuela, the UNDP, other UN agencies and OHCHR in Venezuela negotiate an agreement to guarantee the transparent, fair and non-discriminatory distribution of essential goods and humanitarian aid under the control of international institutions regardless of race, gender, nationality, age, religious belief or political views with due account of groups with special needs.

The Special Rapporteur calls on the Venezuela Government, working with the UN Resident Coordinator and OHCHR in Venezuela, to finish drafting clear and non-discriminatory legislation enabling and facilitating humanitarian work by international and national NGOs in Venezuela, and to guarantee security and integrity of their personnel. At the same time, she refers to the obligation of humanitarian NGOs to abide by standards of purely humanitarian activity.

### Foreign Aid Key---Queer/Indigenous Protections

#### Aid key to protecting queer and indigenous people

**USAID 11/23** (USAID, 11-6-2023, accessed 4-30-2024, U.S. Agency for International Development, "United States Provides Nearly $485 Million in Additional Humanitarian Assistance for the Western Hemisphere", <https://www.usaid.gov/news-information/press-releases/nov-06-2023-united-states-provides-nearly-485-million-additional-humanitarian-assistance-western-hemisphere>

During the [inaugural Americas Partnership for Economic Prosperity Leaders’ Summit](https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2023/11/03/fact-sheet-president-biden-hosts-inaugural-americas-partnership-for-economic-prosperity-leaders-summit/), President Joseph R. Biden announced nearly $485 million in additional humanitarian assistance in FY 2023 funding for the Western Hemisphere, of which nearly $451 million is to support those affected by the Venezuela regional crisis. This assistance includes $174 million through USAID and more than $310 million through the Department of State. More than 7.7 million people in Venezuela are in need of immediate humanitarian assistance, and another 7.7 million Venezuelans have been forced to flee the country or left in search of better opportunities, 6.5 million of whom are currently residing in Latin America and the Caribbean. This new assistance from the United States will provide direct relief to vulnerable Venezuelans who remain in the country, including food assistance, healthcare, nutrition, water and sanitation, and protection services. In addition, this assistance supports Venezuelan refugees, migrants and their host communities in fourteen countries in the region with emergency shelter; access to health care; water, sanitation, and hygiene supplies; increased access to education; support for livelihoods; and protection for those in situations of vulnerability, including women, children and youth, LGBTQI+ individuals, persons with disabilities, and indigenous people. USAID  will continue to provide hot meals, food vouchers, and direct cash transfers to Venezuelan refugees and migrants and host communities in Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, and Peru so they can purchase food and urgent necessities from local markets. The United States is the largest humanitarian donor to the Venezuela regional crisis. Since FY 2017, the United States has provided more than $2.9 billion in humanitarian assistance for the response to the crisis. We will continue to work to support Venezuelans during their time of need.

### Foreign Aid Key---Poverty

#### Millions face starvation and death in Venezuela if aid isn’t given soon

**Dupras-Dobias 9/23** (Paula Dupraz-Dobias is an award-winning journalist with global experience in all media forms. She has worked for outlets in Switzerland, the United Kingdom, the United States and Peru, 9-17-2023, accessed 4-22-2024, Geneva Solutions, "Venezuela-UN aid deal in limbo as humanitarian crisis drags on", <https://genevasolutions.news/peace-humanitarian/venezuela-un-aid-deal-in-limbo-as-humanitarian-crisis-drags-on>

An agreement signed last November between the Venezuelan government and its opposition to deliver aid using frozen assets with the assistance of the United Nations is on pause, as the country’s crisis endures. Like many other Venezuelans, Miguel\* spent years throughout South America in search of a better life after fleeing his country in 2015. As a police officer in the capital, Caracas, he barely scraped by to provide for his family, including his three daughters, and was increasingly at odds with the policies of President Nicolás Maduro’s government. By July of this year, as he sat near a shelter, under an elevated highway in an industrial neighborhood in Brooklyn, he pondered how his journey brought him to New York and the challenges he would continue to face. “I don’t know where to turn (for assistance) and don’t know what to do,” Miguel\* said. Having applied for asylum leaves him unable to work, and with the city’s mayor recently imposed 60-day limit for single adults to stay at shelters, he didn’t know where to go once his time ran out. “Most people here are racist and disparaging towards us. I really need assistance and don’t know where to go. The situation is really tough.” After leaving Venezuela, the 32-year-old said he lived in every Andean-range country from Colombia to Argentina, but that growing xenophobia and increasingly restrictive policies toward migrants made life “very complicated”. He said he arrived in the United States in early 2022, after travelling through the Darién Gap, a dangerous, gang-controlled jungle region bridging South America and Central America, where a record number of crossings – over a quarter million – have been reported during the first six months of this year. ‘Like a small Yemen’ With over 7.3 million Venezuelans having left their country since 2015, experts do not expect the human tide to reverse any time soon. Hum Venezuela, an independent data platform that monitors the humanitarian situation, reported that 19.1 million people out of a population of 28.7 million are in need of humanitarian aid with a similar number having lost their means of livelihood. Nearly 11 million experience chronic hunger, while a collapsed health system that 90 per cent of the population relies on and the widespread lack of access to water has made life a struggle for most of them. “It is frustrating to see the extent of the needs and the gaps that exist regarding the provision of services, care and access to various humanitarian programs, and then to see how underfunded the Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP) is,” Feliciano Reyna, president of Acción Solidaria, a local Venezuelan NGO working with more than 100 partner groups to provide health services and supplies to people with HIV Aids, told Geneva Solutions. HRPs are strategies drawn up by the UN and its partner organizations to deliver emergency assistance to populations affected by humanitarian crises. According to UN data from July, only 14 per cent of the country’s HRP requirements have been funded, making it one of the most underfunded crises globally.

### Foreign Aid Key---Health Crisis

#### Health Crisis in Venezuela is extending beyond borders and international help is needed

**Public Health, 19** -- Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health

[JHBCPH, “Venezuelan Humanitarian Crisis Is Now a Regional Emergency, New Analysis Finds,” Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health, 12-1-2018, https://publichealth.jhu.edu/0219/venezuelan-humanitarian-crisis-is-now-a-regional-emergency-new-analysis-finds, accessed 4-24-2024]

New analysis reveals the widespread public health consequences of the Venezuelan economic crisis and the erosion of the country’s health-care infrastructure. In a new review of evidence, researchers document the steep and steady increases in infant and maternal morality and infectious diseases rates over the past decade. And they call on the Venezuelan government to coordinate a humanitarian response to a crisis that is spreading beyond the country’s borders.

Refugees

The article was published by The Lancet on March 11. The research team was led by faculty at the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health and the Johns Hopkins School of Medicine, and includes collaborators from Acción Solidaria and the of School of Medicine, Caracas, Universidad Central de Venezuela.

The government of Venezuela stopped publishing national health statistics in 2016, making assessment of the country’s health situation difficult. The research team, therefore, collected and synthesized available data from 2002 through December 1, 2018, to create a comprehensive and more up-to-date picture of the humanitarian health crisis in the country.

In recent years, Venezuela’s health care system has been plagued by widespread shortages of medicines, lack of water, and basic health products. Significant emigration of health care personnel and deterioration of infrastructure have further weakened the ability to address the population’s health needs.

“Our analysis exposes the widespread collapse of the public health infrastructure in Venezuela, which has been occurring for the past 7 to 8 years,” explains Shannon Doocy, PhD, one of the article’s lead authors and an associate professor in the Department of International Health at the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health. “With few medical supplies or health care providers left in the country, patients can’t find adequate care. To make matters worse, preventive public health efforts, such as vaccinations and mosquito control have dramatically declined, leading to a rapid rise in infectious diseases.”

Key findings from the researchers’ analysis include

Infant mortality rose by 63 percent and maternal mortality more than doubled from 2012 to 2016.

Since 2016, outbreaks of measles and diphtheria have spread throughout the country and into neighboring countries.

From 2016 to 2017, the country had the largest rate of increase of malaria in the world, with the number of cases growing to 414,527.

Tuberculosis cases increased by 68 percent between 2014 and 2017.

Only about 10 percent of HIV patients are receiving their prescribed antiretroviral treatment.

There are widespread outages of birth control. Shortages have led to a black market where birth control bills cost 14 times the minimum monthly income.

Ninety-eight percent of physicians in Venezuela believe the health-care crisis was the worst in 30 years and nearly three quarters believe that working conditions in public hospitals violate physician ethics and human rights.

Researchers also traveled to Colombia’s and Brazil’s borders with Venezuela to interview health administrators and practitioners. What they found were severely strained health systems nearly buckling under the demands of growing migrant populations. In Colombia, which had already received over 1 million Venezuelan migrants by the middle of 2018, demand for services was causing unprecedented strain on the health system in border areas where migrants are concentrated. Emergency medical care for Venezuelan migrants is provided for free and Colombian public hospitals are incurring large amounts of debt as they struggled to meet demand for services. Treatment for non-life-threatening illnesses and chronic medical conditions, which is not provided for free at government health facilities, remains out of reach for many Venezuelans residing there.

In Colombia, care for Venezuelan migrants has been limited to emergency care. Treatment for chronic and non-life-threatening illnesses remains out of reach for most Venezuelans residing there.

Brazil’s border area is remote and lacks economic resources. The health system and providers were already stretched thin. Venezuelan migrants were presenting with serious illnesses, such as advanced cancer and HIV, that had been left untreated in Venezuela. In the first 6 months of 2018 alone, there were more TB cases among Venezuelans in the region than all of 2013 to 2017 combined. A measles outbreak that could also be traced to Venezuela had infected over 10,000 people in Brazil in 2018; whereas there had been no infections for at least 2 years. The number of Venezuelans being treated for HIV in Brazil also tripled from 2013 to 2018. The article presents a stark picture for Venezuela, and its closest neighbors, that could take decades to repair. To reduce the health toll of the crisis and prevent further decline the authors urge immediate action on the part of the Venezuelan government and international agencies. Specifically:

The Venezuelan Government must facilitate a coordinated humanitarian response with international workers

The Venezuelan Government must accept assistance from international donors

Immunization efforts must be improved within the country and bordering areas

The international donor community should expand efforts to support prevention, treatment and health care efforts for Venezuelan people living in the country and in host countries.

“The dire health situation revealed by our analysis likely underestimates its true extent. The Venezuelan government has suppressed the release of public health data since 2016 and the economic and political crisis has worsened since then,” says Kathleen Page, MD, the other lead author of the paper and an associate professor at the Johns Hopkins School of Medicine. “The Venezuelan government should immediately acknowledge the public health crisis in the country and engage with the international community to facilitate an appropriately scaled response without delay.”

### Foreign Aid Key---Maduro Regime

#### US aid to Venezuela is key to getting Maduro out

Al Jazeera, 21 [“US aid to Venezuela driven by more than just need: report.” *Al Jazeera*, April 29, 2021. https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/4/29/us-aid-to-venezuela-driven-by-more-than-just-need-report]

It was billed as the beginning of the end for Nicolas Maduro. With foreign leaders in tow and the world watching, anti-Maduro activists gathered in Colombia in February 2019 with the aim of pushing entire warehouses worth of aid – flown in on US military cargo planes – across the border into Venezuela.

Instead, the humanitarian convoy was violently blocked by security forces loyal to Maduro – the first in a series of miscalculations in the Trump administration’s policy towards Venezuela.

More than two years later, the risky gambit is being questioned by a US government watchdog. A new report (PDF) by the inspector general at the US Agency for International Development raises doubts about whether the deployment of aid was driven more by the US pursuit of regime change than by technical analysis of needs and the best ways to help struggling Venezuelans.

The findings were published April 16 but have not been previously reported.

The report focuses on the frenzied few months after opposition leader Juan Guaido rose up to challenge Maduro’s rule, quickly winning recognition as Venezuela’s rightful leader by the US and dozens of allies.

As part of that effort, USAID between January and April 2019 spent $2m to position 368 tonnes of emergency supplies on the Caribbean island of Curacao and on the Colombia-Venezuela border.

Under Guaido’s orders, the aid was supposed to be delivered into Venezuela in defiance of Maduro, who condemned the effort as a veiled coup attempt. But when an opposition-organised caravan that tried to enter Venezuela was blocked at the border, at least one truck caught fire, destroying $34,000 worth of US-supplied aid.

As media attention turned away and Guaido’s fight to unseat Maduro unraveled in the months that followed, the US assistance was quietly repurposed. In the end, only eight tonnes ever reached Venezuela, with the remaining 360 tonnes distributed inside Colombia or shipped to Somalia, the report found.

The 34-page report said the US deployment of aid responded in part to the Trump administration’s campaign to pressure Maduro rather than just coming to the aid of struggling Venezuelans.

For example, the assistance was needlessly delivered in giant Air Force C-17 cargo planes instead of cheaper commercial options that were available, the report said. Ready-to-use meals to fight child malnutrition were also sent even though USAID’s own experts had decided the nutritional status of Venezuelan children did not warrant their use at the time, investigators said.

To bolster Guaido, USAID – believing UN agencies had been co-opted by Maduro – minimised funding to the United Nations even though some UN agencies had infrastructure inside Venezuela to distribute the aid.

The “directive to pre-position humanitarian commodities was not driven by technical expertise or fully aligned with the humanitarian principles of neutrality, independence and being based on needs assessments,” the report says.

#### Support for regime change is high now but the US is unwilling to act

Filipetti, 24 [Carrie Filipetti is the Executive Director of The Vandenberg Coalition and the former Deputy Assistant Secretary and Deputy Special Representative for Venezuela. “Joe Biden Should Not Abandon Maria Corina Machado.” *The National Interest*, March 20, 2024. <https://nationalinterest.org/feature/joe-biden-should-not-abandon-maria-corina-machado-210131>]

Every March, in celebration of National Women’s History Month, the Department of State issues its “Women of Courage” award. This award is given to women around the world who have advanced the cause of peace, justice, and human rights—often at great personal cost. This year, one name was glaringly absent from the list: Venezuela’s Maria Corina Machado. Machado is not only leading the charge against Nicolás Maduro’s dictatorship in Venezuela but also facing down the Biden administration’s push to yet again appease the dictatorship at the expense of our democratic allies.

Despite heavy-handed repression and the regime’s control over electoral institutions, the Venezuelan opposition organized a decisive primary election in October 2023. Machado received an overwhelming mandate with 93 percent of the vote. Poll after poll in Venezuela shows widespread dissatisfaction with Maduro—upwards of 80 percent. Such figures indicate that even the most egregious attempts to steal the election likely won’t turn the tide.

Maduro knows he does not stand a chance against her and is rightfully afraid of an open and competitive process. Despite her overwhelming victory in the primaries—or likely because of it—the regime-controlled Venezuelan Supreme Court has upheld an unconstitutional ban on Machado’s ability to hold office. The regime has also imprisoned her allies and staff. However, the state is not targeting her alone. In the last few months, we’ve seen extraordinary escalations in Venezuela, including the arrest and detention of human rights activist Rocio San Miguel, the legislative attempt to criminalize civil society, the murder of a Venezuelan dissident by Maduro-led gangs in Chile, the threat of a military invasion of Guyana, and the expulsion of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights and her team. Over the years, the commissioner has diligently documented the extent of torture, arbitrary detention, extrajudicial killings, and other human rights abuses that have forced over 7.7 million Venezuelans out of their country—over 240,000 of whom illegally entered the United States last year alone.

Yet instead of holding the regime accountable for these actions, the White House has bizarrely relieved sanctions, providing the regime with additional resources for their human rights violations. They’ve politely asked for the regime to “define a process” to reinstate Machado and other ineligible candidates but have exerted minimal pressure as Venezuela slides further and further into totalitarianism. With the regime announcing a 2024 Presidential election on July 28, there are whispers that the White House will lean on Machado to step down from her candidacy in favor of an opposition leader more palatable to Maduro and his cronies. This translates to a candidate that the regime can defeat.

Let’s call this what it is: Yankee imperialism. It’s a term the left loves to throw around but rarely admits its practices. What other phrase describes a global power telling a small, persecuted opposition movement that their attempts at democracy are cute but that Washington would prefer to call the shots there? Even worse than that, it is imperialism in favor of dictatorship—a capitulation to Maduro, a man whose greatest success prior to stealing the presidency of Venezuela was driving a bus—and letting him decide who he runs against. Those are not the actions of a country that won two world wars against global tyranny. We would never allow a candidate to determine his presidential opponent in the United States—we should not accept it in Venezuela, either.

### Foreign Aid Key---Oil Transition

#### Venezuelan oil spills wreak havoc on the environment only aid is able to resolve the economic conditions that force Venezeual to rely on oil

Nemitz 7/23 (Ellen Nemitz is a Brazilian journalist based in Curitiba. She has been writing about human rights since 2014, 7-18-2023, accessed 4-29-2024, FairPlanet, "Clean energy, not oil, will help Venezuela recover", <https://www.fairplanet.org/editors-pick/clean-energy-not-fossil-fuels-will-lay-the-path-for-venezuelas-recovery/>

Venezuela is suffering one of the worst modern global economic and humanitarian crises. Extreme poverty, hunger, hyperinflation, unemployment, violence and low incomes have driven at least 7 million people away from the country over the past decade, according to data from the United Nations Agency for Refugees (UNHCR). Although political instability, international sanctions and macroeconomic decisions contributed to the nation's decline, Venezuela's heavy dependence on oil exports dealt the most significant blow. Venezuela has long relied on its vast oil reserves to develop its economy, neglecting other sources of income. According to the BBC, Venezuela made $750 billion from oil exports between 2004 and 2015. However, oversupply in the global oil market caused prices to drop, leading to the country's downfall. Now, as reported by El Pais, Venezuela is slowly rising from the ashes. With inflation no longer as high, the increase in the value of the Venezuelan Bolivar has created some breathing room. This is in part owing to oil production boosting the economy after the lifting of sanctions. Moreover, natural gas exports to Europe have been negotiated to add an extra source of income for this regrowing economy. But these activities come at a high environmental cost, and a reliance on oil is unsustainable. According to a report released by the Observatory of Political Ecology of Venezuela, 2022 saw 86 oil spills in the Latin American nation - thirteen more than the year before - a result of a lack of maintenance investments in ageing structures and proper regulation policies, according to News agency Mongabay. "Oil spills in Venezuela constitute a serious socio-environmental problem that affects both marine and land ecosystems," reads the Observatory's document, adding that the leaks can impact even agribusiness. "Likewise, fisher people and coastal communities suffer the consequences of oil spills daily, with no response from state bodies to this common environmental tragedy." Venezuela has been failing to protect its environment in other ways, too. Mongabay lists the rise of gold mining in rainforests, expansion of cattle ranching at the cost of deforestation, poor waste management and wealthy people exploring and destroying protected areas for their leisure as contributing factors to Venezuela's worsening environment. Water scarcity and other environmental problems typically aggravated by climate change, in turn, profoundly affect the population. The world must immediately halt new oil and gas development and transition rapidly to renewable energy to stop climate change, conclude many reputable bodies, including Nature, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change and the UK House of Commons. In addition, fossil fuels are only profitable for a tiny percentage of the rich in the country: according to Transparencia Venezuela, at least 65 percent of Venezuelans still need some assistance for basic needs. Therefore, any economic recovery should include a clean energy transition, prioritizing the environment to build a development strategy that can last and be suitable for all.

#### Aid to Venezuela lets them mine natural gas leads to less reliance on Russia and helps the climate

**Borrell 4/23** (Josep Borrell, High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy / Vice-President of the European Commission, 4-28-2023, accessed 4-30-2024, EEAS, "A window of opportunity to solve the Venezuelan crisis", https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/window-opportunity-solve-venezuelan-crisis\_en

The humanitarian situation remains dire in Venezuela, despite some improvement in 2022 due in particular to an increase in oil revenues. According to the latest figures shared by EU partners, around 20 million people are in need of humanitarian assistance out of a population of 29 million. And more than 7.2 million Venezuelans have had to flee their country, most of them living in the Latin America and Caribbean countries, which have shown exceptional solidarity despite the difficulties caused by the COVID-19 pandemic and inflation. Since 2018, the EU has provided €540 million to alleviate this migration crisis, principally in Ecuador, Peru and Colombia. Last March, the Solidarity Conference with Venezuelan Refugees and Migrants and their host countries, organised jointly by the EU and Canada in Brussels, raised a total of €815 million. However, the needs are much bigger and the Venezuelan refugees deserve to be able to go back to their homeland. Venezuela is potentially one of the richest countries in the world, given its oil and gas resources. Venezuelan oil production reached almost 3 million barrels per day in 2002. Currently, Venezuela produces four time less oil and would need $12 billion in investment a year to upgrade its infrastructure. Venezuela also has 197 trillion cubic feet of proven reserves of natural gas, a figure that ranks it in eighth place worldwide. However, it has not resulted in major gas production yet. On the contrary, Venezuela is the world's largest emitter of methane in the atmosphere and burns 1.5 billion cubic feet of gas per day, equivalent to the consumption of medium-sized countries, which is catastrophic from both an economic and environmental point of view. The world must radically reduce the use of fossil fuels in coming years and the EU is doing its homework on this track. However, in the short term, it would obviously make sense to use this Venezuelan gas to replace Russian gas in Europe.

#### Venezuela using aid to fix their oil industry is good for the environment, key to grow other climate friendly industries that outweigh the harm from the oil

**Cheatham & Roy 12/23** (Amelia Cheatham is a writer for the Council on Foreign Relations and Diana Roy covers Latin America and Immigration and is a writer for the Council on Foreign Relations, 12-22-2023, accessed 4-30-2024, Council on Foreign Relations, "Venezuela: The Rise and Fall of a Petrostate", <https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/venezuela-crisis>

A country that discovers a resource after it has formed robust democratic institutions is usually better able to avoid the resource curse, analysts say. For example, strong institutions in Norway have helped the country enjoy steady economic growth since the 1960s, when vast oil reserves were discovered in the North Sea, Karl writes in her book. In 2024, officials project that the petroleum sector will account for just 24 percent of Norway’s GDP. Strong democracies with an independent press and judiciary help curtail classic petrostate problems by holding government and energy companies to account. If a country strikes oil or another resource before it develops its state infrastructure, the curse is much harder to avoid. However, there are remedial measures that low-income and developing countries can try, provided they are willing. For instance, a government’s overarching objective should be to use the oil earnings in a responsible manner “to finance outlays on public goods that serve as the platform for private investment and long-term growth,” says Columbia University’s Jeffrey Sachs, an expert on economic development. This can be done financially, with broad-based investing in international assets, or physically, by building infrastructure and educating workers. Transparency is essential in all of this, Sachs says. Many countries with vast resource wealth, such as Norway and Saudi Arabia, have established sovereign wealth funds (SWF) to manage their investments. SWFs manage more than $9 trillion worth of assets, and some analysts predict that figure will grow to nearly $13 trillion by 2025. Analysts anticipate that a global shift from fossil fuel energy to renewables such as solar and wind will force petrostates to diversify their economies. Nearly two hundred countries, including Venezuela, have joined the Paris Agreement, a binding treaty that requires states to make specific commitments to mitigate climate change. Economic diversification will be an especially difficult climb for Venezuela given the scale of its economic and political collapse over the last decade. The country would likely need to revitalize its oil sector before it could cultivate and develop other important industries. But this would take enormous investment, which analysts say would be hard to come by given Venezuela’s unstable political environment, trends in oil demand, and rising concerns about climate change.

### Engagement Key---China

#### Crisis is eroding democracy and creating ties that threaten US power

**Berg et al 24** [Ryan C. Berg, Christopher S. Chivvis, Carolina JiméNez Sandoval, “U.S. Policy Toward Venezuela Is a Mix of Hope and Realism,” Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 4-16-2024, https://carnegieendowment.org/2024/04/16/u.s.-policy-toward-venezuela-is-mix-of-hope-and-realism-pub-92219, accessed 4-25-2024]

Christopher S. Chivvis: What are America’s core interests when it comes to Venezuela?

Ryan C. Berg: It’s largely similar to what it is in Latin America, writ large: democracy. We have an interest in ensuring that strong democratic principles are upheld in Venezuela. Of course, those are what we’re here to talk about today because they’re most lacking.

Interest number two is ensuring that the present government in Venezuela doesn’t serve as a beachhead for some of our greatest strategic adversaries. We have seen it pivot to Russia, to China, to an extent to Iran. Part of our strategic interest there is making sure that [these powers] don’t have too cozy of a home in Venezuela to be able to present some kind of tangible security challenge to the United States and the Western Hemisphere.

We have an interest in ensuring that the regime does not serve as an incubator or nurture transnational criminal organizations, which it’s done in the past, especially in the border areas between Colombia and Venezuela. You may say that we have an interest as well in some of the economic factors in Venezuela, particularly the oil that Venezuela might be able to offer to international markets.

Carolina Jiménez Sandoval: I cannot agree more with Ryan when it comes to democracy. I think it is in U.S. interest to have a democratic Venezuela. A democratic Venezuela could be a reliable partner. Right now, the partnership that once existed does no longer exist.

#### Venezuela and China’s relations are ramping up

**Orr, Lee & Cao 23** – Reporters from Rueters [Reuters, “China, Venezuela sign agreements on economy, trade, tourism,” 9-13-2023, https://www.reuters.com/world/china-venezuela-sign-agreements-economy-trade-tourism-2023-09-13/, accessed 4-22-2024]

BEIJING, Sept 13 (Reuters) - Chinese President Xi Jinping and Venezuelan counterpart Nicolas Maduro have signed bilateral cooperation agreements in areas such as economy, trade and tourism, state broadcaster China Central Television (CCTV) reported.

The two nations also signed deals on science and technology, civil aviation and aerospace, CCTV reported on Wednesday.

The pair met during Maduro's first visit to Beijing in five years against a backdrop of China's testy relations with the West and energy and debt repayment talks. China is the world's largest oil importer and oil-rich Venezuela's largest creditor.

China and Venezuela have long-standing warm ties seen in China's regular oil purchases despite U.S. sanctions and financial support it bestows upon the cash-strapped Latin American country via loan-for-oil deals and investment.

China on Wednesday upgraded relations with Venezuela to an "all-weather strategic partnership", typically reserved for a select few nations. The world's second-largest economy is owed over $10 billion by Venezuela, independent data showed.

Xi said the two countries are "good friends with mutual trust" and common development, state media reported.

He also noted that next year will be the 50th anniversary of the establishment of the pair's diplomatic relations.

Maduro said Venezuela supports China's Belt and Road Initiative to boost trade infrastructure, Chinese media said, referring to a related conference in China next month. China has said it has Belt and Road cooperation agreements with more than 150 countries and over 30 international organisations.

He also said Venezuela is willing to closely communicate and cooperate with China within multilateral frameworks such as with the BRICS group and United Nations.

Venezuela is courting membership of BRICS - a group of major emerging economies Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa - which recently favoured expansion.

A joint statement issued by China's foreign ministry on Thursday stated that Venezuela is willing to join financial institutions and financing cooperation initiatives such as the New Development Bank set up by BRICS, and will continue to support the internationalisation of the yuan.

Venezuela in the statement said, as a reliable supplier with the world's largest oil and fourth-largest natural gas reserves, it can make important contributions to BRICS' energy agenda.

China said it is willing to support construction of special economic zones in Venezuela and both countries agreed to further develop bilateral trade and "enrich the variety of trade goods".

In the statement they also said agreements on aviation and aerospace include future flights between the countries and cooperation in spaceflight.

The countries also agreed to deepen cooperation between legislative bodies to strengthen exchanges on legislation and governance.

#### Venezuela and China ties are growing through energy, infrastructure, space and trade.

**Roy, 23** – Diana Roy is a writer and editor for the Council on Foreign Relations [Diana Roy, “China’s Growing Influence in Latin America,” Council on Foreign Relations, 6-15-2023, https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/china-influence-latin-america-argentina-brazil-venezuela-security-energy-bri, accessed 4-30-2024]

China’s role in Latin America has grown rapidly since the turn of the century, promising economic opportunity while also raising concerns over Beijing’s influence. China’s state firms are major investors in the region’s energy, infrastructure, and space industries, and the country has surpassed the United States as South America’s largest trading partner. Beijing has also expanded its diplomatic, cultural, and military presence throughout the region. Most recently, it leveraged its support amid the COVID-19 pandemic, supplying the region with medical equipment, loans, and hundreds of millions of vaccine doses.

But the United States and its allies fear that Beijing is using these relationships to pursue its geopolitical goals, including the further isolation of Taiwan, and to bolster authoritarian regimes such as those in Cuba and Venezuela. U.S. President Joe Biden, who sees China as a “strategic competitor” in the region, has pledged greater economic cooperation with Latin America, but some analysts argue the United States should be doing more.

What is China’s history with Latin America?

China’s ties to the region date to the sixteenth century, when the Manila Galleon trade route facilitated the exchange of porcelain, silk, and spices between China and Mexico. By the 1840s, hundreds of thousands of Chinese immigrants were being sent to work as “coolies,” or indentured servants, in Cuba and Peru, often on sugar plantations or in silver mines. Over the next century, China’s ties to the region were largely migration-related [PDF] as Beijing remained preoccupied with its own domestic upheaval.

Most Latin American countries recognized Mao Zedong’s communist government following U.S. President Richard Nixon’s trip to China in 1972, but it was not until after China’s entry into the World Trade Organization in 2001 that they began to form robust cultural, economic, and political ties. Today, Brazil, Cuba, Paraguay, Peru, and Venezuela are among the Latin American countries with the largest Chinese diaspora communities.

How have economic relations developed?

In 2000, the Chinese market accounted for less than 2 percent of Latin America’s exports, but China’s rapid growth and resulting demand drove the region’s subsequent commodities boom. Over the next eight years, trade grew at an average annual rate of 31 percent [PDF], reaching a value of $180 billion in 2010. By 2021, trade totaled a record $450 billion, a figure that remained largely unchanged in 2022, and some economists predict that it could exceed $700 billion by 2035. China now ranks as South America’s top trading partner and the second-largest for Latin America as a whole, after the United States.

Latin American exports to China are mainly soybeans, copper, petroleum, oil, and other raw materials that the country needs to drive its industrial development. In return, the region mostly imports higher-value-added manufactured products, a trade some experts say has undercut local industries with cheaper Chinese goods. As of 2023, Beijing has free trade agreements in place with Chile, Costa Rica, Ecuador, and Peru, and twenty-one Latin American countries have so far signed on to China’s Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). (Talks on a free trade agreement with Uruguay are ongoing.)

Chinese overseas foreign direct investment (OFDI) and loans also play a major role in strengthening ties with the region. In 2022, China’s OFDI in Latin America and the Caribbean amounted to roughly $12 billion [PDF], or about 9 percent of the region’s total OFDI. Meanwhile, the state-owned China Development Bank and the Export-Import Bank of China are among the region’s leading lenders; between 2005 and 2020, they together loaned some $137 billion to Latin American governments, often in exchange for oil and used to fund energy and infrastructure projects. In 2022 alone, loans totaled $813 million [PDF]. Venezuela is by far the biggest borrower; it currently has $60 billion worth of Chinese state loans, mostly relating to energy and infrastructure. That is nearly double the amount for the second-largest borrower, Brazil. Additionally, China is a voting member of the Inter-American Development Bank and the Caribbean Development Bank.

Dive Deeper

China’s Belt and Road: Implications for the U.S.

However, these ties have raised some concerns, particularly among regional governments. While Chinese loans often have fewer conditions attached, dependence on them can push economically unstable countries such as Venezuela into what critics call “debt traps” that can result in default. Indeed, several Latin American countries are seeking to renegotiate the terms of their debt. Critics also say that Chinese companies bring lower environmental and labor standards, and they warn that China’s growing control over critical infrastructure such as ports and energy grids poses national security risks. There are also fears of growing economic dependency in countries such as Chile, which sent more than $36 billion worth of exports, or about 38 percent of its total, to China in 2021.

What are China’s political interests in the region?

At the forefront is China’s desire to expand its sphere of influence through what it calls “South-South cooperation” [PDF], a development framework focused on aid, investment, and trade. China’s focus on soft power—including strengthening cultural and educational ties—has helped Beijing build political goodwill with local governments and present itself as a viable alternative partner to the United States and Europe.

Since former Chinese President Jiang Zemin’s landmark thirteen-day tour of Latin America in 2001, there have been dozens of high-level political exchanges. President Xi Jinping has visited the region at least eleven times since he took office in 2013. In addition to several bilateral agreements with countries in the region, China has signed comprehensive strategic partnerships—the highest classification it awards to its diplomatic allies—with Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Ecuador, Mexico, Peru, and Venezuela.

China’s push to isolate Taiwan is another major factor. With Beijing refusing diplomatic relations with countries that recognize Taiwan’s sovereignty, Latin America’s support for the island has dwindled in recent years; only seven countries in the region still recognize it. In 2023, Honduras became the latest to switch diplomatic allegiance to Beijing after Taipei denied the country’s request for billions of dollars of aid. Other recent flips include the Dominican Republic and Nicaragua. Experts say the remaining holdouts, such as Haiti, are facing increased pressure.

Meanwhile, some observers say growing China-Latin America ties are bolstering authoritarian governments, including those in Cuba, Nicaragua, and Venezuela. China’s role in such countries is that of “an incubator of populism,” says Evan Ellis, a research professor of Latin American Studies at the U.S. Army War College Strategic Studies Institute. “It’s not that China’s trying to produce antidemocratic regimes, but that antidemocratic regimes find a willing partner in the Chinese.”

What security ties do they have?

Chinese government strategy on Latin America, as defined in its 2016 Defense Strategy White Paper and others, has underscored the importance of security and defense cooperation. China’s efforts to forge stronger military ties with its Latin American counterparts include arms sales, military exchanges, and training programs.

Venezuela remains the region’s top purchaser of Chinese military hardware after the U.S. government prohibited all commercial arms sales to the country beginning in 2006. Between 2006 and 2022, Beijing reportedly exported some $629 million worth of arms to Venezuela. Argentina, Bolivia, Ecuador, and Peru have also purchased millions of dollars worth of Chinese military aircraft, ground vehicles, air defense radars, and assault rifles [PDF]. Likewise, Cuba has sought to strengthen military ties with China, hosting the Chinese People’s Liberation Army for several port visits. U.S. intelligence officials have also raised alarm bells over evidence that China is strengthening its intelligence cooperation with Cuba.

China also participated in the UN peacekeeping mission in Haiti that began in 2004, including by deploying more than one hundred riot police to the country. After less than a decade, China withdrew from Haiti, but it still leads military training exercises across the region and provides supplies to local law enforcement. For example, China has provided Bolivian police departments with anti-riot gear and military vehicles during the Evo Morales Ayma administration, donated transportation equipment and motorcycles to police forces in Guyana and Trinidad and Tobago, and provided Ecuador with tens of thousands of automatic weapons [link in Spanish].

How did China help the region respond to the COVID-19 pandemic?

Many analysts say China’s “COVID-19 diplomacy” in Latin America was an effort to improve its image and curry favor with regional governments. This has included distributing medical equipment such as ventilators, diagnostic test kits, and masks; offering billions of dollars in loans for countries to purchase Chinese vaccines; and investing in local vaccine production facilities.

As of June 2022, China had delivered more than four hundred million vaccine doses to Latin America. Additionally, at least a dozen countries in the region signed vaccine contracts with Beijing, some of which included technology transfers and research cooperation with Chinese vaccine developer Sinovac. Chile was among the top recipients, with almost 70 percent of its COVID-19 vaccination coverage coming from Chinese vaccines; Argentina, Brazil, Mexico, and Peru also purchased tens of millions of doses.

Some countries, however, raised concern over Beijing’s vaccine diplomacy. Honduras and Paraguay, for instance, alleged that they faced pressure to renounce their recognition of Taiwan in exchange for doses. Some analysts suspected that China was also using its vaccine leverage to push for the expansion of Huawei, the controversial Chinese telecommunications giant. In Brazil, regulators reversed an earlier decision to bar Huawei from developing the country’s 5G networks weeks after China provided Brasília with millions of vaccine doses.

What are other major areas of bilateral cooperation?

Energy. Between 2000 and 2018, China invested $73 billion in Latin America’s raw materials sector, including by building refineries and processing plants in countries with significant amounts of coal, copper, natural gas, oil, and uranium. More recently, Beijing has focused on investing in lithium production in the so-called Lithium Triangle countries of Argentina, Bolivia, and Chile; together, the triad contains roughly half of the world’s known lithium, a metal necessary for the production of batteries.

Chinese state-owned firms are heavily involved in energy development; PowerChina, for example, has more than fifty ongoing projects across fifteen Latin American countries as of late 2022. But the scale and scope of these efforts are stoking environmental and health worries. China has also taken an interest in the region’s renewable energy sector. The China Development Bank has funded major solar and wind projects, such as Latin America’s largest solar plant in Jujuy, Argentina, and the Punta Sierra wind farm in Coquimbo, Chile.

Infrastructure. Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Ecuador, Peru, and Uruguay are members of the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank, where they have some voting power. Beijing has also financed construction projects [PDF] across the region, focusing on ports, airports, highways, and railways. However, a 2023 report [PDF in Spanish] by the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights analyzed the impacts of more than a dozen large-scale, Chinese-led infrastructure projects across the region and found that they have had negative effects on the environment and local Indigenous communities.

Meanwhile, China remains concentrated on building and developing “new infrastructure,” such as artificial intelligence (AI), cloud computing, smart cities, and 5G technology from telecom firms such as Huawei. Despite U.S. warnings against using Huawei equipment, which policymakers say leaves countries vulnerable to cyber threats from China, countries in the region are increasingly employing it: Huawei launched a two-year “5G city” pilot project in Curitiba, Brazil, in 2022.

Space. Beijing has also sought to strengthen space cooperation with Latin America, beginning with joint China-Brazil satellite research and production in 1988. China’s largest non-domestic space facility is located in Argentina’s Patagonian Desert, and it has satellite ground stations in Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, and Venezuela. Their proximity to the United States has heightened fears that they could be used to spy on U.S. assets.

How has the United States responded?

U.S. policymakers and military officials have raised concerns about China’s growing presence in Latin America even as Washington remains focused elsewhere, especially on the fallout of Russia’s war in Ukraine. “We are losing our positional advantage in this Hemisphere and immediate action is needed to reverse this trend,” argued Admiral Craig S. Faller [PDF], the former head of U.S. Southern Command, in 2021. President Donald Trump took a more hard-line approach than his predecessors by imposing sanctions on several countries and reducing funding to regional organizations; some analysts say this drove certain governments closer to Beijing. Trump also stepped back from trade relations with the region, withdrawing from the Trans-Pacific Partnership and renegotiating the North American Free Trade Agreement.

President Biden, who took the lead on Latin America policy during his tenure as vice president to Barack Obama, has long argued that the United States should renew its leadership role in the region to counter a rising China. Calling China a “strategic competitor” [PDF] and pledging to strengthen U.S. partnerships in the Western Hemisphere, Biden launched Build Back Better World (B3W) with his Group of Seven (G7) counterparts. The initiative aimed to counter China’s BRI by developing infrastructure in low- and middle-income countries, including in Latin America. However, the Biden administration committed only $6 million to B3W in its first year, and it was later renamed the Partnership for Global Infrastructure and Investment. At the 2022 Summit of the Americas, Biden promised a range of new economic initiatives.

Additionally, the Biden administration has sought to shore up support for Taiwan; rapidly increased its vaccine donations to the region, which totaled some sixty-five million doses by early 2022; and continued to raise concerns about Huawei. Still, some experts say Biden is not focusing enough on the region, particularly on trade. The latest report [PDF] by the U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission, an independent agency of the U.S. government, underscored the challenges that Beijing’s growing influence in Latin America poses to Washington.

Meanwhile, bipartisan legislation introduced by Senators Bob Menendez (D-NJ) and Marco Rubio (R-FL) seeks to counter China’s “malign influence” in the region by strengthening multilateral security cooperation and counternarcotics efforts. Other legislative proposals include calls for the United States to create permanent trade partnerships with countries in the Western Hemisphere to encourage the “reshoring” of supply chains from China to countries closer to home.

### Neg---Solvency

#### US involvement isn’t enough, only revitalizing the private sector in Venezuela solves

**Berg 21** (Ryan C. Berg is director of the Americas Program and head of the Future of Venezuela Initiative at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, 10-12-2021, accessed 4-30-2024, CSIS, "The Role of the Oil Sector in Venezuela’s Environmental Degradation and Economic Rebuilding", <https://www.csis.org/analysis/role-oil-sector-venezuelas-environmental-degradation-and-economic-rebuilding>

Encourage greater private investment in Venezuela and incentivize PDVSA talent to return, especially in a political-transition scenario. The United States should recognize that, in a political transition, Venezuela’s economic recovery will not be accomplished through the removal of sanctions alone. Instead, Washington would need to actively encourage private enterprises to lend their expertise and resources to building a stronger, healthier Venezuelan economy, especially in the hydrocarbons industry. Former PDVSA employees are scattered throughout the world, and incentives should be given for them to return to work in Venezuela—even if for a limited time only. Although confidence in PDVSA’s ability to abide by contracts remains low, major oil companies’ interest in Venezuela has not vanished. For instance, Chevron remains committed to its operations in Venezuela, while CITGO stands to gain significantly from reopening trade with PDVSA. In CITGO’s case, the United States could encourage the company to make targeted investments to update pipeline infrastructure in Venezuela. If the United States does not back private-sector investment in PDVSA, state-owned oil companies in China and Russia are all too eager to pick up the slack, without guaranteeing any concern over the industry’s environmental impact. Thus, under a scenario wherein the sanctions regime is relaxed, the critical question is not whether Venezuela’s oil sector will receive outside investment, but who the dominant partners with the new PDVSA will be. Furthermore, the United States should not limit itself to investment in the oil sector but engage with companies involved in ecotourism or sustainable mining practices to help diversify Venezuela’s economy. These steps are contingent on the political situation within Venezuela and may take years to begin to bear fruit. However, it is because of this gradual nature that work on supporting private-sector investment needs to begin sooner rather than later.

#### Giving more aid does nothing when Venezuela refuses to regulate the oil industry, means giving aid only fuels them to do more harm to the environment

**Berg 21** (Ryan C. Berg is director of the Americas Program and head of the Future of Venezuela Initiative at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, 10-12-2021, accessed 4-20-2024, CSIS, "The Role of the Oil Sector in Venezuela’s Environmental Degradation and Economic Rebuilding", <https://www.csis.org/analysis/role-oil-sector-venezuelas-environmental-degradation-and-economic-rebuilding>

Inland, Venezuela also relies on an aging network of pipelines to move oil and liquified natural gas from wells to refineries—a challenge that is exacerbated by Venezuela’s extra-heavy type of crude. In March 2021, an explosion along a key natural-gas pipeline ground oil production in 85 wells to a halt. PDVSA itself estimates that around $8 billion in investment would be necessary for updates to the pipeline infrastructure alone in order to return oil production to late 1990s levels. In all likelihood, this is an underestimate, yet it reflects the undeniable fact that the Venezuelan government simply cannot afford, and chooses not to invest in, updating aging pipelines. And although PDVSA is no longer reporting spills, the head of Venezuela’s Unitary Federation of Petroleum and Gas Workers estimates that oil spills are an almost daily occurrence in some states, painting a troubling picture as pipelines continue to degrade. At the oil wells themselves, a poisonous combination of poor infrastructure, lack of capital, and a drought of technical expertise has exacerbated the equally toxic problem of flaring. Flaring is a means to relieve pressure that builds up in the form of flammable natural gas during pumping. While a necessary safety measure in some cases to reduce the risk of explosions at oil wells, flaring is also a major source of greenhouse-gas emissions. As previously mentioned, Venezuela was the sixth largest flaring country in 2020, with the volume of flared gas rising despite dramatic losses in oil production. This is driven by the fact that Venezuela’s energy sector has lost much of its capacity to collect and utilize natural gas, choosing to simply burn it off instead. The carbon dioxide and methane released from unrestricted flaring have global implications, contributing to ocean warming and accelerating climate change.

### Neg---Aid Corruption (Diversion)

#### Engagement with Venezuela presents limited returns due to the Maduro regime’s lack of political legitimacy and economic infrastructure. Efforts to rebuild relations or create economic ties risk misallocating U.S. resources into an unsustainable partnership. Any engagement, particularly under Trump, remains focused on short-term, transactional objectives, such as deportation, rather than fostering a long-term, strategic partnership.

Caputo 1/18 [Marc Caputo is a seasoned political journalist known for his in-depth reporting on U.S. politics and campaigns. He has contributed to various national publications, providing analysis on political strategies and developments. “Trump's team wants Maduro to leave Venezuela” 1/18/2025, <https://www.axios.com/2025/01/18/trump-venezuela-immigrants-maduro> ] DeGod

The incoming Trump administration wants regime change in Venezuela, where dictator Nicolás Maduro stole his election, jailed a rival and this month even threatened to invade the U.S. territory of Puerto Rico. Why it matters: Venezuela under Maduro has been a massive problem for Latin America and the U.S. It's accounted for the largest modern-day migration in the Western Hemisphere — nearly 8 million people have fled Maduro's regime in the past decade. Trump's team says it wants Maduro to go the way of recently toppled Syrian dictator Bashar al-Assad. But regime change doesn't necessarily mean military action, Trump advisers say. "We wouldn't mind one bit seeing Maduro being neighbors with Assad in Moscow," a Trump adviser involved with foreign policy discussions told Axios. Zoom in: During his campaign, Trump accused Maduro of intentionally sending criminal gangs such as Tren de Aragua to the U.S. Oil-rich, cash-poor Venezuela is "governed by a narco-trafficking organization that has empowered itself as a nation-state," Florida Sen. Marco Rubio — who once was targeted by a Venezuelan assassination plot — said Wednesday in his confirmation hearing to be Trump's secretary of state. Venezuela's closest ally is Cuba, America's oldest Latin American foe. Maduro's regime also is aligned with China, Russia and Iran, which is building drones in Venezuela, Rubio testified. What's next: Trump sanctioned Venezuela during his first term, but it's unclear what the president-elect wants to do to push Maduro out of office. Trump's interest in regime change in Venezuela has been heightened by President Biden's last-minute decision Tuesday to loosen U.S. restrictions on Cuba, whose socialist regime Trump sees as the hub of Latin America's problems. "It's not sustainable," the Trump adviser involved with foreign policy talks said of the situation in Venezuela. Maduro is "literally ruining the country ... massive refugee issues, sending criminals to the United States, oil production is down, and there are Chinese, Russians and Cubans in there." The big picture: Trump's interest in Venezuela is part of a broader, emerging national security policy that's anything but the isolationist model his "America First" theme often has seemed to project — especially when it comes to the Western Hemisphere. Since the November election, Trump has renewed his interest in acquiring Greenland or expanding the U.S. presence there for strategic reasons. He's also threatened to take back control of the Panama Canal out of concern about China's presence there. Trump's tactics — dubbed the "Donroe Doctrine" — also have included speculation about annexing Canada and potentially invading Mexico — to the annoyance of those U.S. allies. Between the lines: Oil interests and investors mounted a pressure campaign late last year to try to smooth relations between the U.S. and Venezuela. In November, they proposed what amounted to an oil-for-migrants deal in which the U.S. would ease sanctions and get more oil products like asphalt from Venezuela. In turn, Venezuela would agree to slow emigration or maybe take back millions of migrants deported from the U.S. But Trump hasn't sounded enthusiastic about striking a deal with Maduro. "We don't have to buy energy from Venezuela when we have 50 times more than they do," he told reporters last month. He predicted Venezuela would take back deported Tren de Aragua gang members. On Jan. 9, after Venezuelan opposition leader María Corina Machado was briefly arrested, Trump took to Truth Social, mentioned her by name and warned that "freedom fighters should not be harmed, and MUST stay SAFE and ALIVE!" After Maduro threatened to invade Puerto Rico, the island's governor, Jenniffer González-Colón, asked Trump to respond. So far, Trump has held his tongue. When the Trump adviser was asked about the Trump team's reaction to Maduro's threat, he replied with a laugh: "He's going to invade Puerto Rico? With what?"

### Neg---Trump Fails

#### Trump admin lacks a unified Venezuela policy – undermines bilateral leverage. Internal division between hardliners and pragmatists prevents consistent engagement, weakening U.S. credibility and limiting effective diplomatic outcomes.

Naím 2/4 [Moisés Naím is a Venezuelan journalist and former Minister of Trade and Industry, known for his work on global political economy. He is a distinguished fellow at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace and a best-selling author. “What Does Trump 2.0 Mean for Venezuela?” 2/4/2025, <https://www.moisesnaim.com/my-columns/2025/2/4/what-does-trump-20-mean-for-venezuela-r7lrb> ]DeGod

Venezuela’s future will be largely shaped by US policymakers and lobbyists over the next year. Although Donald Trump’s administration has yet to formulate a unified position on the country, it will probably do so sooner rather than later, given the many important US interests at stake. These include Venezuela’s vast oil reserves and high prevalence of drug trafficking and organized crime; its government’s assault on democracy and human rights (which has resulted in heavy US sanctions); the historic exodus of millions of Venezuelans; and China’s growing influence in the region. In Trump’s White House and broader orbit, there are three differing views on how to engage with Venezuela. One group, led by Secretary of State Marco Rubio, views the restoration of democracy as the main US policy objective. By contrast, pragmatism defines the approach of Richard Grenell, whom Trump recently appointed as his presidential envoy for special missions, a new position focused on some of the world’s “hottest spots,” including Venezuela and North Korea. A more hawkish view, espoused by a variety of informal groups and individuals, supports military action against Venezuela. Two former presidents of Colombia, Álvaro Uribe Vélez and Iván Duque Márquez, have recently espoused this view. Rubio, a former presidential hopeful who ran against Trump in the 2016 Republican primary, has ample foreign-policy experience, having been a longtime member of the Senate Intelligence and Foreign Relations Committees. Perhaps most important, Rubio, the son of Cuban immigrants and a staunch anti-communist, has devoted considerable attention to Latin American affairs, thus bringing a deep knowledge of the region, its problems, and its leaders to his post as the top US diplomat. As Rubio explained during his confirmation hearing, the United States must rethink its approach to Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro’s regime, which he views not as a government, but as “a narco-trafficking organization that has empowered itself [as] a nation-state.” Rubio lambasted Trump’s predecessor, Joe Biden: “I was in strong disagreement with the Biden administration because they got played the way that I knew they would get played.” Maduro reneged on the promises he made during negotiations with the US, including by holding a sham election last July and cracking down on opposition leaders and protesters after they disputed the result. Moreover, Rubio added, the US granted special licenses to Chevron and other oil firms to operate in Venezuela, which are “providing billions of dollars” for “the regime’s coffers.” But Grenell, who served as US ambassador to Germany during Trump’s first term and was briefly acting director of national intelligence in 2020, doesn’t see the harm in maintaining open lines of communication. On the day Trump was sworn in, Grenell wrote on X: “[D]iplomacy is back. I’ve spoken to multiple officials in Venezuela today and will begin meetings early tomorrow morning. Talking is a tactic.” Recently, he flew to Caracas where he met with Maduro and secured the release of six American detainees. Meanwhile, Mauricio Claver-Carone, Trump’s designated envoy for Latin America, insisted that there was no “quid pro quo … it’s not a negotiation in exchange for anything.” The third and more aggressive option is US military intervention. While none of the top officials in Trump’s cabinet publicly supports this idea, it is still bandied about in policy circles. Since all peaceful means have been exhausted, the thinking goes, the only alternative is to unseat Maduro and his cronies by force. But proponents of military action in Venezuela have offered no realistic proposals, leaving more questions than answers about how this would work in practice. Most fundamentally, it seems unlikely that the Trump administration will act militarily against the Maduro regime. On the campaign trail and now as president, Trump has repeatedly pledged “no new wars.” As he put it in his inaugural address: “We will measure our success not only by the battles we win but also by the wars that we end – and perhaps most importantly, the wars we never get into. My proudest legacy will be that of a peacemaker and unifier.” But Trump’s promises and statements leave the door open for the US to make full use of the cyber, commercial, financial, diplomatic, and, yes, military tools at its disposal. But officials should learn from the Biden administration’s abject failures. For example, the sanctions imposed on Venezuela during Biden’s presidency were poorly designed and executed by bureaucrats who had limited access to the centers of power. Other countries played a diminished, and mostly symbolic, role in these efforts. As for which view will prevail, I suspect the answer is probably a mix of all three. There will inevitably be tension between those who advocate leaving Maduro in power while negotiating aggressively with him, and those who regard his ouster as non-negotiable. Regardless, it seems reasonable to expect a flurry of diplomatic activity, the use of well-worn tools, lobbying by business interests, and – given Trump’s capriciousness – some unprecedented measures.

#### U.S. Trump's evolving Venezuela strategy—a mix of diplomacy and deportation—raises questions about U.S. leverage. While some argue it maximizes diplomatic flexibility, others see it as a fractured policy that sacrifices democratic goals for transactional gains, undermining the pursuit of long-term stability and humanitarian priorities.

Villasmil 3/8 [Juan P. Villasmil is a Venezuelan-American journalist and political analyst. He serves as a staff writer at The Spectator World and a research fellow at the Center for a Secure Free Society, contributing to discussions on U.S. foreign policy and Latin American affairs. “Some Republicans Balk at Trump’s Venezuela Approach” 3/8/2025, <https://www.theamericanconservative.com/some-republicans-balk-at-trumps-venezuela-approach/> ] DeGod

Arift over how to proceed with Venezuela policy in Washington, with an America First faction pushing for the prioritization of deportations and concrete trade interests, is calling into question Republican orthodoxies and visibly frustrating Florida Republicans. In the first 15 days of President Donald Trump’s administration, he launched a very distinctive Venezuela policy by revoking the extension of temporary protected status (TPS) for around 600,000 Venezuelans and sending his special missions envoy Ric Grenell to Caracas on a visit that led to the release of six American hostages. As opposed to the maximum pressure approach that characterized the first administration, catalyzed in part by a focus on immigration, the two moves signify a stark departure from tradition. The rationale for the policy shift is clear. With the Nicolás Maduro regime firmly entrenched in power and Venezuela strengthening its ties with American adversaries, merely pushing for regime change appears unproductive to the most ardent America First proponents. A particular faction within MAGA argues that pressure vis-à-vis Venezuela, especially through sectoral sanctions, proves inefficient in catalyzing behavioral change while allowing adversaries to capitalize on the nation’s ample resources. While the Trump administration has not signaled a departure from these particular instruments, there is a sway-centric argument making the rounds. The argument is as follows: Absent significant U.S.-backed offensive actions, for which there is little political will, the purported aim of the sanctions (democratization) is not only difficult to achieve, but it will become increasingly so, as the Venezuelan regime continues to effectively decouple from the U.S. market. As opposed to left-wing humanitarian-based arguments, those in this camp believe that sanctions can work when there is a clear incentive structure. When there is little means of advancing concrete national interests, however, it makes sense to introduce other goals to the negotiating table—without necessarily abandoning concerns over democratization. The worry is that in reaching a point in which there is nothing to squeeze, especially now that Turkey and China trade almost three times more with Venezuela than with the U.S., the U.S. could end up with a limited ability to push for any of its national security interests. By introducing immigration and preferential trade to the table, the goal would be to satisfy some of the most salient American security interests while retaining, if not gaining, some sway. The traditional approach, critics suggest, leads to no democracy, no trade, and no deportations. Some wins are better than no wins, right? Whatever the fascinating conversation to be had about how to qualify and pursue national interests effectively, down in South Florida, this departure from orthodoxy stresses Republican politicians. While conservatives nationwide might be pleased when they see Ric Grenell’s meeting with Maduro translate into released hostages and cooperation in deportation enforcement, some of the anticommunists in the Sunshine State see a Biden-like rapprochement. When Trump’s promises to crack down on immigration programs translated into ending the extension of TPS for Venezuelans, thousands of Venezuelan-born Americans who supported him felt betrayed. While the reactions to these moves worry Republicans in DC little, since the TPS measure in particular is generally popular, it puts Florida’s Republicans in a tight spot. Take the city of Doral in South Florida. It has the largest Venezuelan-born population in the country. In 2020, it saw a 41 percent swing toward Donald Trump—a four percent advantage over Joe Biden. Last year, Trump won there by 23 points. When some celebrate Governor Ron DeSantis’s policies as responsible for the transformation of Florida into a red state, political strategists know that most of it has to do with the demographics of South Florida—and not just the Cubans. While TPS recipients don’t vote, thousands of Venezuelan-Americans, as well as those with ties to other Latin American countries, do. The idea of Democrats weaponizing Trump’s recent moves makes Republicans there lose sleep. Earlier last month, Senator Rick Scott and a Cuban-American congressional trio—Representatives Mario Díaz-Balart, Carlos Giménez and Maria Elvira Salazar—took to the airwaves to emphasize their opposition to the Nicolás Maduro regime, even going as far as to caution President Trump or outright disagree with his policy. “I was not in favor of this decision by the president, it’s much better to do it case by case,” Giménez told Univision’s Al Punto. Distinguishing the Venezuelan migrants that came under Biden and under Trump, Scott told popular Venezuelan host Carla Angola: “What President Trump is doing is creating a process to where we can protect Venezuelans that should be protected, but also we can clearly send back the people that should be sent back.” “We will continue to do everything possible to ensure that those seeking freedom from persecution and oppression are protected,” a January 29 statement from the three House representatives read. Subscribe Today Get daily emails in your inbox Email Address: Your Email This week, Axios reported that that same Cuban trio suggested that unless there was a change in approach, they would withhold votes the president needed for last week’s Republican budget deal that barely made it through the House. They succeeded, with Donald Trump Jr. hosting opposition leader Maria Corina Machado in his podcast and the president cancelling the oil deal Biden had secured. Additionally, showcasing that foreign policy is more complex than a friends versus enemies dichotomy, following Grenell’s visit, Secretary of State Marco Rubio formally seized a second plane belonging to the Venezuelan government in the Dominican Republic. In January 22, Rubio also phoned Venezuelan opposition leaders Maria Corina Machado and Edmundo González Urrutia, and in his recent Panama visit, he congratulated the country’s president for “his regional leadership in support of a democratic, free Venezuela.” As of now, the Jacksonian approach, defined by economic nationalism and favored by America First proponents, has not taken over—though its influence has grown. On the other hand, the ardent anti-communists who fear normalization with the Venezuelan government still have reasons for optimism, especially with Rubio at the helm. As Republicans reconcile competing ideologies and imperatives, with electoral and geopolitical concerns alike, what will result from it all remains uncertain. The true foreign policy toward Venezuela pursued by the Trump administration, as evidenced elsewhere, will not be one that the academics at Georgetown can easily classify. The uncertainty and elasticity might frustrate some, but for the author of The Art of the Deal, that combination, and an added dash of vigor, are the key ingredients in his revolutionary diplomacy.

### Neg---AT: Reform/Alignment Advantages

#### There is ample negative ground to “norms shaping” or “political reform” advantages

Stuenkel 24 [Oliver Stuenkel is a Visiting Scholar at the Carnegie Endowment focusing on Democracy, Conflict, and Governance. “Maduro’s Resilience Reflects the West’s Limited Influence in Venezuela.” 8-20-24. https://carnegieendowment.org/emissary/2024/08/maduro-venezuela-election-west-limited-influence?lang=en GMU NR]

Global leaders have reacted in three different ways to the overtly fraudulent elections that Venezuela’s authoritarian president, Nicolás Maduro, claims to have won on July 28, despite ample evidence to the contrary. Based on vote tallies provided by the opposition and viewed as legitimate by independent observers, Maduro won 30.4 percent of the vote, against 67.2 percent for the opposition. But according to the “official” results, Maduro—in power for more than a decade—won 51 percent of the vote.

Numerous European and Latin American countries, alongside the United States, announced that they would not recognize the official results. Chilean President Gabriel Boric said he did not recognize Maduro’s “self-proclaimed” victory. Argentina, Costa Rica, Panama, Peru, and Uruguay, among others, made similar statements or signed declarations to that effect, which led the Venezuelan regime to expel their diplomats from Caracas. The administration of U.S. President Joe Biden has recognized Edmundo González, the opposition candidate, as the winner of the election, but it has not called him president-elect.

**This group’s limited influence leaves it with few options**. The appetite for a **renewed pressure campaign i**nvolving sanctions against Venezuela is **slim**, largely because a similar attempt after the 2018 sham elections may have deepened the country’s economic misery while failing to destabilize the Maduro regime. In April, the United States **reimposed** some sanctions, as well as a **raft** of **individual sanctions**. In addition, many in this group, particularly the United States, are concerned that broader sanctions could increase emigration. More than 7.7 million Venezuelans have left their home country because of political instability and economic hardship, and many are now in neighboring countries and the United States. The **migrant crisis** has become a **fraught topic** in several countries in the region, such as Chile and Colombia, among others.

A second group of mostly nondemocratic regimes has **quickly recognized Maduro’s proclaimed victory**. Many of these countries are his long-standing allies, including Cuba, China, Iran, Nicaragua, and Russia. Bolivia, Honduras, and two Caribbean island states are also part of this group.

A third group consisting of Brazil, Colombia, and Mexico has opted for a wait-and-see approach. These countries requested the voting tally sheets from Venezuela’s National Electoral Council in order to make a decision. The three also sought to facilitate a mediation between Maduro and the opposition, though chances for a meaningful dialogue are slim, as all such attempts over the past decade have failed. On August 14, Mexico removed itself from the mediation initiative, announcing that it would limit itself to awaiting the voting tally sheets.

The position of this third group explains why a July 31 resolution by the Organization of American States (OAS) urging transparency and full vote counts in the presence of international observation organizations failed to pass: although seventeen countries voted in favor, eleven—including Brazil and Colombia—abstained, and five were absent. OAS resolutions require eighteen votes (of a total of thirty-four) to pass. On August 16, a resolution that urges Venezuela’s electoral authorities to publish the election records but does not mention international observation organizations was approved by consensus.

Brazil and Colombia, which share long borders with Venezuela, have argued that severing diplomatic ties with the Maduro government—as they did in 2019, when they recognized opposition leader Juan Guaidó as the country’s legitimate president—has had little effect on the situation on the ground. It also would complicate their ability to deal with day-to-day challenges in the border region, including migration, deforestation, and illegal mining. All of these problems have grown in the context of Venezuela’s economic collapse. More recently, Brazil suggested repeating the elections with better international oversight, an idea vehemently rejected by both Maduro and the Venezuelan opposition.

The **most likely scenario** is that Maduro—in power since his predecessor, Hugo Chávez, died in 2013—will **successfully dig in and possibly use largely symbolic negotiations with opposition figures to buy time** until the international community moves on to the next crisis. The evidence that this shift is already happening is strong, given the current conflicts in Ukraine and the Middle East. The Venezuelan president’s stalling tactics over the past decade have been extraordinarily successful. **Maduro has continuously moved goal posts, delayed negotiations, and convinced observers that he is willing to hold to power at all costs,** even if that involves prolonging his country’s economic decline and large-scale emigration. Paradoxically, his government benefits from emigration, as it reduces the opposition’s capacity to mobilize and continuously draw crowds. After all, the majority of those who have the means to leave the country have already done so.

In addition, **Maduro retains control over the armed forces, the military police force, paramilitaries, and different intelligence services**. The generals in particular control important parts of the country’s economy—namely oil, which Venezuela depends on—and have **little incentive** to facilitate a transition of power. Solid ties to China, Russia, and a number of other allies help guarantee the regime’s survival. Although authoritarian regimes are notoriously opaque, making it difficult to identify cracks early on, **there are currently no signs that Maduro won’t be able to weather yet another period of domestic pushback—and relatively tame international rebuke.**

### Neg---AT: Regime Stability Advantage

#### There is rich data and empirical analysis on the effectiveness of sanctions on regime and human security for the negative and affirmative!

Bahar & Hausmann 25 [Dany Bahar is the director and senior fellow for the migration, displacement, and humanitarian policy program. His research sits at the intersection of international economics and economic development. Ricardo Hausmann is the founder and Director of Harvard’s Growth Lab and the Rafik Hariri Professor of the Practice of International Political Economy at Harvard Kennedy School. “Sanctions on Venezuela Are Not Driving Migration to the US Southwest Border: An Empirical Assessment.” 4-14-25. https://www.cgdev.org/publication/sanctions-venezuela-not-driving-migration-southwest-border-empirical-assessment GMU NR]

The **empirical evidence presented in this paper** suggests that higher oil income in Venezuela is associated with higher—not lower—crossings at the US southwest border. **This finding has important implications for the ongoing policy debate about sanctions on the Venezuelan regime**. Our results **contradict** the notion that economic sanctions would **increase migration flows to the United States**. In fact, the data shows the opposite relationship: when Venezuela's oil income decreases (as would be expected under stricter sanctions), migration flows also tend to decrease.

This pattern can be explained by two complementary mechanisms. First, migration is a **costly investment that requires financial resources**. When economic conditions deteriorate significantly, **many Venezuelans may lack the necessary resources to finance their journey to the United States**, even if they desire to leave. This aligns with the migration hump theory described by Clemens (2014), where development and higher incomes enable more people to migrate rather than keeping them at home.

Second, and perhaps more importantly, **our findings support the hypothesis that what drives Venezuelans to leave their country is not merely economic hardship but the political hopelessness that comes with seeing an entrenched authoritarian regime become more stable**. When oil prices and revenues increase, the Maduro regime gains additional resources to fund its repression system and to compensate those who remain loyal to maintaining the dictatorship against the will of the Venezuelan people. This strengthens the ruling coalition as described by de Mesquita and Smith (2011), making democratic transition less likely and fueling the desire to emigrate among those outside this coalition.

**Our findings contrast with Rodriguez (2024), who argues that migration from Venezuela is a result of economic contractions** which in turn can be largely explained by sanctions rather than policy failures. Rodriguez uses a two-step methodology—examining the effect of sanctions on GDP and then GDP’s effect on migration.[3] This approach fails to account for confounding variables that could influence both economic performance and migration simultaneously, such as political repression and institutional deterioration. Our direct analysis provides a more straightforward assessment of how sanctions might affect migration patterns, avoiding these methodological limitations. In our approach, even in the most conservative interpretation of our results, **we find no evidence of migration being explained by sanctions through fluctuations in oil income or production in Venezuela.**

# Potential Alternatives

### Note

#### The countries in this pocket header could potentially be alternative options from the above recommended countries pocket header. Each has at least one factor that would require more investigation before putting these countries in a list resolution

## Bolivia

### Background

#### Quick Background: Low engagement post-2019 political crisis; affs could focus on indigenous rights, environmental diplomacy, lithium cooperation.

#### Why is this in the potential section and not the recommended: the debaters assigned to this section struggled with finding updated evidence advocating for increased bilateral engagement.

#### Now is a key time for a relationship reset

Wilson Center 25 ["Amid Crisis in La Paz, Could 2025 See a Thaw in US-Bolivia Relations?" January 2025. <https://www.wilsoncenter.org/blog-post/amid-crisis-la-paz-could-2025-see-thaw-us-bolivia-relations?utm_source=chatgpt.com>, AA]

This year offers an unprecedented opportunity to **reshape** the **troubled US relationship with Bolivia**. The new US administration has promised to shake things up in domestic and foreign policy. In Bolivia, meanwhile, a deep economic crisis under President Luis Arce will likely lead to political change following the August elections. Better ties would bring rewards to both countries. Bolivia is rich in natural resources, but poor and politically unstable. Its vast lithium resources–the largest in the world, at 23 million metric tons–are in high global demand for batteries for renewable energy storage and electric vehicles. It also holds significant amounts of tin, aluminum, antimony, silver, zinc, and lead. But it has struggled to attract significant foreign investment, even as its natural gas industry, an economic lifeline, sputters. For the United States, Bolivia is important not only as a potential source of minerals, but as a **battleground** in US competition with **China** and **Russia**. There are already signals that the new administration will prioritize Latin America in efforts to recover lost ground. The president-elect’s choice of secretary of state, Senator Marco Rubio, is a prominent expert on Latin America, and his choice for deputy secretary of state, Christopher Landau, is a former ambassador to Mexico. Those personnel choices, however, do not guarantee closer ties between the United States and Bolivia. After all, there are indications that the new administration might adopt hawkish policies toward leftist governments in the region.

That might be a stumbling block for at least the first six months of the year. Arce’s Movimiento al Socialismo (MAS) party, as the name suggests, is socialist, inspired by Che Guevara, and has roots in indigenous left-wing ideologies. It was led from 2006 to 2019 by Evo Morales, a critic of the United States and admirer of China and Russia. In 2008, Morales expelled the US ambassador, and the two countries have repeatedly clashed over Bolivia’s role in the global cocaine trade. That said, Morales and Arce are political rivals. Arce’s wing of the MAS is mostly interested in maintaining power and managing a range of crises, including the rapid decline of natural gas production that had paid for generous subsidies and social-welfare programs. Today, Bolivia is dangerously **low on dollars**, leading to fuel shortages and higher consumer prices that are worsening poverty in cities like La Paz and rural areas such as Potosí and Uyuni. Bolivia’s deep economic troubles could **provide a window** for better relations with the United States, even before Bolivia’s election. Even under Morales, Bolivia welcomed significant Spanish and French investment, especially in natural gas. Earlier in his term, Arce promised to open the **lithium sector to Western companies,** though he later showed a preference for Russian and Chinese firms, including the Chinese battery manufacturer CATL, the Chinese conglomerate CITIC, and Russia’s Uranium One. Following Bolivia’s election, a significant foreign policy realignment is possible. Bolivia’s economic problems, and the fracturing of the indigenous movement, have increased the possibility of an opposition victory. Manfred Reyes, the mayor of Cochabamba, stands to benefit the most from the MAS implosion. Like other opposition candidates, including several entrepreneurs, he would **likely adopt pro-market reforms** and take steps to welcome Western investment, including in lithium. An opposition victory is not guaranteed, of course. More than half of Bolivians are indigenous and generally critical of free-market principles. These are the inhabitants of the highlands, the valleys, and even parts of conservative Santa Cruz, due to high migration levels from the Altiplano. Win or lose in August, indigenous Bolivians, largely ignored for 150 years until Morales’s rise to power, will remain politically active.

For that reason, the new US authorities might need to coexist with yet another MAS government. Admittedly, they would be odd bedfellows. Tesla CEO Elon Musk, for example, is a key supporter of the US president-elect and has an especially complicated relationship with the MAS, after a controversial Twitter post in 2020 that celebrated Morales’s ouster following a disputed election and public uprising. But Musk also **represents the promise of closer US-Bolivia ties**. Tesla, after all, is emblematic of the global scramble for lithium and other critical minerals that are abundant in Latin America. For his part, President-elect Trump is famously pragmatic in his foreign policy and could be eager to start a new chapter in US-Bolivia relations, should it offer benefits to US businesses and help elbow China out of the Andes. More realistically, the new US president would have to coexist with Russian and Chinese interests in Bolivia. If he were willing to do so, even left-leaning Bolivians would likely favor a more normal relationship with the United States, with both sides downplaying ideology in favor of economic cooperation. That formula could lead Bolivia, regardless of who wins its August elections, to move past its decades-long wariness towards Washington.

#### Bolivia is aligning with BRICS now

TASS 25 [TASS, "President expects Bolivia to obtain new opportunities as BRICS partner state,". January 2, 2025, <https://tass.com/world/1895889>, AA]

According to Luis Arce, it will make possible for the country to expand and diversify trade relations with growing markets. Bolivia will obtain new trade and **economic opportunities** as a BRICS partner state, the country’s President Luis Arce said. "Integration into BRICS gives us the opportunity to promote key sectors such as **energy, trade, technology, production and sustainable finances**. In a world full of uncertainty due to the transition to a new global order, being a part of this bloc will allow us to **diversify and protect our heritage,"** he wrote on the X social media platform. According to Arce, "**new doors**" will open to Bolivia as a BRICS partner state, making it possible for the country to **expand** and **diversify trade relations** with **growing markets**. Brazil took over the BRICS chairmanship on January 1, 2025. New partner states joined the group on the same day. According to the Russian Foreign Ministry, the list includes Belarus, Bolivia, Cuba, Indonesia, Kazakhstan, Malaysia, Thailand, Uganda and Uzbekistan. The partner state category is part of a new BRICS development formula that was agreed at the group’s summit in the Russian city of Kazan on October 22-24, 2024.

### Engagement Key---Lithium

#### The US should increase cooperation with Bolivia over lithium extraction – essential to check Chinese and Russian alignment, ecological devastation, & regional wars

Chan & Devia-Valbuena, 12-12-2023 (Luke Chan & Nicolás Devia-Valbuena, Chan was a summer 2023 visiting scholar with USIP’s Latin America Program., Devia-Valbuena is a regional program specialist with USIP’s Latin America program. Devia-Valbuena joined USIP after previous experiences with the Washington Office on Latin America, ProMexico, and the Organization of American States. Devia-Valbuena specializes in conflict resolution and stabilization in Latin America, focusing on the countries of Northern Central America (Guatemala, Honduras and El Salvador), Haiti, Colombia, Bolivia and Venezuela. His work involves analyzing the relationship between fragile institutions, violence and conflict. His research interests include negotiations, citizen participation in peace processes, strategic studies, culture of lawfulness, and citizen security. Devia-Valbuena has a master’s degree in security policy studies with concentrations in conflict resolution and transnational security from the George Washington University’s Elliott School of International Affairs. He also holds a bachelor’s degree in international relations from Universidad del Rosario in Bogotá, Colombia., "In The Global Rush For Lithium, Bolivia Is At A Crossroads The United States Has An Opportunity To Strengthen Democratic Stability And Prosperity In Latin America.," United States Institute of Peace, https://www.usip.org/publications/2023/12/global-rush-lithium-bolivia-crossroads, accessed on 4-23-2024)

Since 2010, the global demand for lithium has surged due to its unique properties ideal for battery production in electric vehicles and electronic devices. Bolivia, home to the world’s largest lithium deposits, views this resource as a transformative opportunity for industrialization and modernization, but if mismanaged, it could also be a source of internal conflict. The United States has an opportunity to use its hemispheric position and technical advantage to help Bolivia develop its lithium reserves in a productive and economically viable way, edging out other actors such as China whose transactional approach leaves much to be desired.

Building on Competitive Advantages: Creating a Hemispheric Production Chain

Often referred to as “white gold,” the largest untapped lithium deposits are in the “lithium triangle,” between Bolivia, Argentina and Chile, constituting 60% of global reserves. Bolivian President Luis Arce aims to position his country as a global leader not only in lithium production but also in developing new lithium batteries and related products, catering to the increasing demand amid the shift to cleaner energy and transportation. The Bolivian government’s partnerships with China and Russia to establish lithium extraction and processing facilities in the southeast have sparked concerns in the United States. U.S. officials worry about the perceived aggressiveness of Chinese companies in negotiations and the potential reinforcement of an extractive model with limited local development. The Bolivian government dismisses these concerns as “American imperialism” and an “attempt to weaponize lithium to undermine democracies.”

Although the Bolivian government has invested significant time, effort and resources in developing its lithium industry with mainly Chinese and Russian capital, it seems that the window of opportunity to capitalize on the surging demand for lithium is closing, with China, the European Union and the United States rapidly dominating the market. For instance, China already produces 79% of the world’s lithium batteries and controls approximately 60% of the global extraction market. In essence, China has established a robust supply chain and production infrastructure that would be extremely challenging for Bolivia to compete with on its own.

If Latin American countries establish their own local lithium-based industries with limited foreign capital, there is a risk of a vulnerable state-owned company becoming overly reliant on just a few buyers. This scenario may result in a lightly industrialized base, primarily centered on mineral extraction and transportation, which contrasts with the preferences of many Latin Americans, as it involves minimal participation in highly value-added labor. Alternatively, the “lithium triangle” countries could collaborate as a bloc to collectively extract, process and manufacture lithium-based products in a coordinated effort, enabling them to effectively compete in the international market. The Americas Partnership for Economic Prosperity could prove to be a platform or a blueprint on how such objective could be achieved.

U.S. companies are already involved in significant lithium-extraction operations in Chile and Argentina, with established manufacturing and logistics networks in Mexico, Brazil, Argentina and Colombia. Developing regional clusters of economic development is an objective that both the United States and other countries in the region have in common, a unique opportunity where national interests (industrialization for Latin America and de-risking for the United States) and the tools (nearshoring) come together. Bolivian lithium could serve as the initial phase of a production chain, with factories in Argentina and Chile producing batteries, while Andean and Central American countries contribute to the lithium platforms, ultimately delivering a high-quality product to the U.S. market.

Building Bridges: Strengthening the Resilience of Local Institutions and Communities

Extractive economic institutions, such as the ones that could potentially develop in Bolivia with the advent of lithium, could have the opposite effect of what the Bolivian government and its people expect, strengthening socioeconomic exclusion in an already historically unequal country. Extractive industries also have a proven record in some cases that has resulted in significantly negative effects for the environment, biodiversity and even violent conflict. In the specific case of lithium processing, the current extraction methods require substantial amounts of water: approximately 500,000 gallons per ton of lithium. Consider such a stress on a local water supply for a country with a history of social instability due to water scarcity.

The United States can work with local institutions to equip them with tools and capacities to overcome the potential challenges of lithium extraction. Specifically, the Department of Energy can partner with its Bolivian counterparts, mainly state-owned company Yacimientos de Litio Boliviano, for academic exchanges and joint research as well as development projects for more efficient batteries and lithium production methods. Such technical programs could begin to build some trust between the United States and Bolivia, as well as prevent potential socioeconomic conflicts related to water access and environmental degradation, contributing to the national industrialization process.

Local leaders often find it nearly impossible to confront state-owned companies and foreign powers. The United States and international civil society can play a crucial role in assisting local communities by enabling them to voice their concerns and ensuring accountability from both governments and companies in the face of these challenging situations. By leveraging existing relationships and local networks, civil society organizations can provide a platform to highlight future conflicts and connect leaders with partners and institutional avenues to address them. Such organizations can even serve as a bridge between local leaders and the Bolivian government, positioning themselves not as a confrontational actor but rather a constructive partner.

A New U.S. Approach to Bolivia

Instances such as this one, where the United States directly competes with strategic adversaries in Latin America, present a valuable opportunity to reevaluate the current U.S. strategic approach and explore fresh perspectives for engaging with the region. Given the significant Chinese economic influence in the Bolivian lithium market and the challenging diplomatic relations with Bolivia’s ruling party, Movimiento al Socialismo, an approach that centers on attempting to outspend and surpass China in the local lithium market, coupled with securitized responses to energy infrastructure developments, would not only prove highly unproductive but also contribute to reinforcing local biases against U.S. foreign policy. This, in turn, could steer Latin American governments toward closer alignment with China and Russia.

What would an efficient foreign policy that both appropriately competes with China and Russia, builds bridges with local governments and satisfies the U.S. mineral needs looks like? In the first place, it would leverage the U.S. network of commercial allies in the southern cone to shape a regional production chain that both fosters domestic sustainable development and satisfies the world’s mineral needs. Additionally, regarding Bolivia, the United States could explore potential areas for technical cooperation in research and development, facilitating the transfer of capacities for more efficient and environmentally responsible lithium-extraction techniques as a trust-building measure. Lastly, the United States could enhance and continue supporting its people-to-people relationships, providing platforms for local and vulnerable communities to channel their human rights, democratic and environmental concerns surrounding energy and mining developments.

Bolivia and the other countries of the “lithium triangle” are on the cusp of a global transformation that could either leave them in a condition of deep dependency, or sustainable development and economic buoyancy. While it is up to the region to find its own avenues for progress, cooperation and reaffirmation of sovereignty, the United States is in an unparalleled position to accompany these countries in such a process by providing them the tools and capacities to navigate these turbulent waters. As such, the competition with China is not just a zero-sum game revolving around access to key materials and markets but could be an opportunity to strengthen democratic stability and prosperity in the region.

### Engagement Key---China

#### Trump's protectionist policies are driving Latin American countries, including Bolivia, closer to China, undermining U.S. influence in the region.​

Linthicum and Yang 25 [Kate and Stephanie, LA Times Contributors, Los Angeles Times, "Trump's tariffs give China opening in Latin America."  5 Feb. 2025 <https://www.latimes.com/world-nation/story/2025-02-05/trumps-tariffs-give-china-opening-in-latin-america>, AA]

During a nine-day trip through Latin America in the fall, Chinese President **Xi Jinping** met with the leaders of **Mexico, Brazil, Bolivia, Chile, and Argentina** and inaugurated a **$3-billion Chinese-funded port** in Peru. Over and over, Xi stressed his interest in **strengthening** **economic ties** with the region 10,000 miles from Beijing. “True friends always feel close to each other,” he told China’s official news agency. “No matter the distance between them.” Over the last two decades, China has begun to challenge longtime U.S. hegemony in Latin America. In at least six countries — Panama, Peru, Chile, Uruguay, Brazil and Bolivia — it has surged ahead of the United States as the biggest trading partner. Now experts say China has been handed another opportunity in its quest to **dominate the region**: the presidency of Donald Trump. In his first two weeks in office, Trump has strong-armed American allies, using the threat of tariffs to extract concessions from Colombia and then Mexico. At the same time, he has halted — and **threatened to eliminate** — many **U.S. foreign assistance** programs that have been a lifeline for developing nations. Suddenly, China may seem like a more stable partner for many countries. “The U.S. is now more unpredictable and bizarre than ever,” said Carol Wise, a political science professor at USC and expert on the relationship between China and Latin America. “The Trump administration has been very hostile to the region, and China has never shown that kind of hostility, ever.” Of all the places where Trump’s foreign policy has created a newfound opening for China, none is more significant than Mexico. North American free-trade agreements dating back three decades [inextricably bind](https://www.latimes.com/world/mexico-americas/la-fg-mexico-us-factories-20170217-htmlstory.html) Mexico’s economy to the United States, and for a long time China was left largely out of the equation. But that began to change during Trump’s first presidency. To skirt U.S. tariffs imposed on some of their goods, many Chinese companies moved parts of their supply chains to Mexico. Chinese investment in the country surged to $570 million in 2022 from $5.5 million in 2013, according to Mexican [government figures](https://www.economia.gob.mx/datamexico/en/profile/country/china-chn). Chinese firms now occupy twice as much industrial space in Mexico as they did three years ago, according to property analytics firm SiiLA. They are building sprawling factories in industrial parks such as Hofusan, in the border state of Nuevo León, in order to send their products duty-free to Texas, 125 miles away. “In one day, they can have your imports in the U.S.,” said Cesar Santos Cantú, a Mexican attorney who built the park on his family’s land with the help of two Chinese investors. Mexican leaders have been courting more investment from China and other overseas companies in light of Trump’s push for more protectionist policies. “Mexico will have to look for other paths,” then-Foreign Secretary Alicia Bárcena said last year, praising China as a “country that is constantly looking out for Mexico.” Urging Mexico to diversify its trade relationships, Juan Carlos Moreno-Brid, an economics professor at the National Autonomous University of Mexico, likened the United States to “an abusive partner.” “You can’t live four years with a gun to your head,” he said. Mexico’s trade with the U.S. is still eight times that of its trade with China. But Washington is watching China’s encroachments south of the border closely. “You have all these elements that from an economic standpoint push Mexico towards China,” said Evan Ellis, a research professor of Latin American studies at the U.S. Army War College’s Strategic Studies Institute. “But that complicates Mexico’s relationship with President Trump.” China first ramped up trade with Latin America in the early 2000s to satisfy its voracious appetite for commodities during an economic boom. It bought soybeans from Brazil, copper from Chile and lithium from Bolivia while flooding Latin American markets with Chinese products and telecommunications networks. Trade between China and Latin America grew to $315 billion in 2020 from $12 billion in 2000, according to the World Economic Forum. In a decade, that number is expected to top $700 billion. For comparison, trade between the U.S. and Latin America in 2020 totaled $767 billion. Ellis said that at first the United States was slow to react to rising Chinese influence in Latin America. “As China was advancing in South America and to some degree in the Caribbean, I think there was a sort of a false sense of security in the United States,” Ellis said. China’s inroads in the region are not an accident, but the result of strategic diplomacy. More than 20 countries in Latin America and the Caribbean are a part of **Beijing’s Belt and Road Initiative**, its effort to expand its global influence by funding major infrastructure projects. And in 2023, eight Latin American presidents made official to visits to China — the most ever in a year, according to the Boston University Global Development Policy Center. That soft power helps pave the way for Chinese investment. It also builds support for one of China’s main geopolitical goals: getting more of the world to recognize its **territorial claim to Taiwan**. At least five countries in Latin America have cut ties with Taiwan over the last eight years as a condition of establishing diplomatic relations with China. The latest was Honduras in 2023, a year after China surpassed the U.S. there as an investor, according to AidData, a research center at William & Mary that tracks Chinese financing. Bryan Burgess, senior policy specialist there, predicted that China will move to fill the gaps left by reductions in U.S. aid to the region. “The U.S. stepping back from its role in traditional development finance and aid projects is really opening a door for China to flood the zone,” Burgess said. “One of the advantages for Latin American countries now is the ability to play the U.S. and China off each other, do some bargain hunting and try to get more favorable terms.” One perceived benefit for many Latin American countries is that, apart from the Taiwan issue, China isn’t meddlesome in politics. Its trade — and aid — is not conditioned on a country adhering to certain tenets of democracy, for example, as the U.S. once demanded, or on cooperating on issues such as immigration, which Trump requires. Henry Huiyao Wang, founder of the nongovernmental Center for China and Globalization in Beijing, said China’s emphasis on economic cooperation — rather than political coercion — has bolstered its appeal for Latin American countries that have tired of U.S. meddling. “Latin America still is influenced by the U.S.,” Wang said, “but China can provide them with economic benefit and also more political independence.” But turning to China comes with its own risks. Debt defaults and failings in some China-backed projects — including a $2-billion hydroelectric dam in Ecuador that experienced thousands of cracks after its completion — have also raised doubts among Latin American countries about relying too heavily on China. And China’s current economic troubles could portend less trade and less generosity for faraway governments. “I don’t think Latin America sees China as a reliable partner, but certainly a handy partner, especially for regimes that are populist and left-wing,” said Alicia Garcia-Herrero, chief economist for Asia Pacific at Natixis, a French investment bank. With China and the United States announcing new tariffs against each other this week, it seems a new Cold War is brewing. Latin America will be one theater of the conflict. “What we’re witnessing is a profound confrontation between the biggest economies of the world: China and the United States,” said Enrique Dussel Peters, director of the Center for Chinese-Mexican Studies at the National Autonomous University of Mexico. “This new triangular relationship is going on in all of Latin America.”

### Neg---Sovereignty

#### U.S. Engagement Risks Undermining Bolivia’s Sovereignty

Prensa Latina 24 ["US escalates hybrid warfare against Bolivia," April 25, 2024.​ <https://www.plenglish.com/news/2024/04/25/us-escalates-hybrid-warfare-against-bolivia/>, AA]

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs, issued a statement this Wednesday, expressing its rejection of the US State Department’s report **on human rights** situation in Bolivia, as it is unilateral and “an act of interference and interference in domestic politics.” It also denounced that the report makes “predominant use of imprecise sources, or has a lack thereof, compromises the veracity of the content and fails to consider a broader range of views within the social and political spectrum of the country.”

According to the State Department’s report on Human Rights, “there were no important changes in Bolivia” in 2023. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs stressed to these regards that the report “is an attempt to affect the country’s credibility by distorting Bolivian reality and omitting to mention the significant progress in terms of human rights which the government has carried out in favor of children, adolescents and the elderly”.

Alleged human rights violations served as a pretext for the White House to justify economic reprisals against Cuba, Venezuela, and Nicaragua for acting with self-determination in their internal and foreign policy.

The State Department report came to light when leaked information from the United States embassy in La Paz confirmed a plan to split the Movement towards Socialism given the 2025 general elections. According to the Center for Multidisciplinary Geopolitical Studies, this project is aimed at the recolonization of Latin America, and regarding Bolivia, to appropriate its natural resources such as lithium, iron, rare earths, and aquifers. Based on the El Radar website, this hybrid war initiative is dubbed “Simón Bolívar” and was designed to counteract the advances in the region of United States adversaries such as Russia and China through the BRICS group. As stated by El Radar, one of the operators of the Simón Bolívar plan in Bolivia is Debra Hevia, charge d’affaires of the United States embassy in La Paz since September 2023, whom it defines as a technocrat who runs leadership training programs with politicians throughout the country.

## El Salvador

### Background

#### Quick Background: Controversial partnership centered on deportations; affs could explore human rights safeguards, judicial reforms, or democratic institution strengthening.

#### Why is this in the potential section and not the recommended: highly dependent on the mechanism chosen---expanded Trump collaboration over deportations is potentially topical. The mechanism would have to be the opposite direction of that type of cooperation, which may be difficult to force, making link uniqueness tough.

### Engagement Key---Laundry List

#### US bilateral coop with El Salvador key to promote democracy, resolve migration crises, and check Bukele’s failed governance

Zinsmeister, 2-2-2024 (Jeffrey Zinsmeister, Jeffrey Zinsmeister is a Global Americans Fellow specializing in rule of law, cybersecurity, data privacy, and organized crime, with over 20 years’ experience in law and international affairs. A former U.S. diplomat and Organization of American States official, he has worked extensively throughout Latin America and the Caribbean, with particular experience in Mexico and Brazil. He is also currently Of Counsel at the law firm Holcomb & Ward LLP, and co-author of the book Lost (and Found) in Translation: How to Find, Hire, and Work with the Right Professional Translator for Your Business, published in 2022., "Finding A New Way Forward For U.S.-El Salvador Relations," Global Americans, https://globalamericans.org/finding-a-new-way-forward-for-u-s-el-salvador-relations/, accessed on 4-23-2024)

Nayib Bukele’s imminent reelection represents an opportunity for the United States to find new—and politically viable—approaches to public security in the region.

It appears almost certain that the president of El Salvador, Nayib Bukele, will be reelected this February 4.

Bukele is polling at over 80 percent and has approval ratings hovering around an astonishing 90 percent. The only real barrier to victory was El Salvador’s constitutional prohibition against re-election, which he overcame when the country’s (politically friendly) supreme court carved out a controversial and legally questionable exception.

It is easy to see why Bukele is so popular among Salvadorans. Through a frontal assault on organized crime, he has brought at least a semblance of order to the chaos that the country has endured for so long.

Organized crime has practically run parts of El Salvador since the end of its civil war in 1992. Demobilized soldiers and weak state institutions created a deadly parallel power that transformed the country into one of the most dangerous in the world and triggered huge migrant outflows towards the United States.

In contrast, by the end of 2023 the government was reporting a precipitous reduction in homicides, supposedly making El Salvador the safest country in the region save Canada. Even if these numbers were significantly exaggerated, it would still represent a large reduction in serious crime—one even Bukele’s political opponents have been forced to recognize. Pizza Hut knows, too: in January 2023, it resumed pizza delivery to a number of lower-income neighborhoods previously too dangerous to operate in.

The policies behind this change, however, have relied on a very heavy hand. Bukele declared a state of emergency in March 2022 that remains in place, suspending key constitutional guarantees, including freedom of association; the right of detainees to be informed of the charges against them; and the right to a defense attorney. This has been accompanied by other legal measures such as the suspension of certain government contracting rules and oversight of public spending, and mass trials of those accused of participating in organized crime.

Bukele has used this new authority ruthlessly. Almost two percent of the country’s adult population is now incarcerated in a prison system rife with abuse, many in a new mega-penitentiary, the largest in the Americas. Given the limitations on due process, this prison population likely includes many innocent people. Evidence has also swiftly and predictably emerged that people have taken advantage of the situation to attack political dissidents, engage in corrupt behavior, or settle scores through false accusations of gang affiliation.

Beyond the anti-crime emergency measures, the government has attacked democratic institutions more broadly, by eliminating the joint Salvadoran-OAS anti-corruption effort, packing the supreme court, and sending troops into the legislature to pressure lawmakers. The overall impression is one of rapidly advancing one-man rule, charismatic as that man may be.

But to the average Salvadoran, how Bukele has gotten things done pales in importance to the fact that things have been done at all—hence his polling numbers.

The Biden administration has struggled, however, to maintain a positive bilateral relationship given the democratic costs of Bukele’s policies. While it understands the importance of El Salvador’s security in ensuring regional stability and controlling migrant flows, it has also correctly viewed these political developments as eroding democratic institutions in a historical moment characterized by weakening support for democracies.

The honeymoon period with the Bukele administration was brief, ending when U.S. criticism, suspension of certain foreign assistance, and sanctions on Salvadoran officials suspected of corruption elicited an angry, public response and diplomatic row.

At some point, however, recognition of Bukele’s popularity and inevitable reelection forced an accommodation in Washington. The White House has largely been silent on the matter in the run-up to February 4—a tacit acknowledgement that it needs to bring another vision to the table if it wants to have any chance of cooperating with Bukele on foreign policy priorities.

But what should that new vision be? How can the United States be realistic about the essential need for societal order in El Salvador, and the thirst that Salvadorans have for something resembling normalcy, while still upholding democratic values? In other words, if not Bukele, then what, exactly?

To pretend to have the whole answer to this problem would be both presumptuous and naïve. Nonetheless, three starting points come to mind.

First, any new approach must start with a recognition that El Salvador, like much of Latin America, needs strong—but lawful—responses to criminal activity. No government, regardless of political alignment, can last for long (or be taken particularly seriously) when it permits non-state actors to challenge the state’s essential functions. This is especially true in a region with an average homicide rate 10 times that of other emerging markets.

Citizens are tired of this persistent problem. Polling, and election results, reflect that. Most people just want to be able to order Pizza Hut on a Friday night.

This acknowledgement is hardly limited to the political right. No less a progressive political eminence than former Canadian Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau recognized this when he declared a state of emergency in 1970, during the October Crisis:

“I think the society must take every means at its disposal to defend itself against the emergence of a parallel power which defies the elected power in this country, and I think that goes to any distance. So long as there is a power in here which is challenging the elected representative of the people, I think that power must be stopped.”

A power vacuum does not advance human rights and democratic institutions, something Article 27 of the American Convention on Human Rights acknowledges. After all, can one really say that the rule of law exists when a parallel power can make a claim to governance? Is a government whose power is effectively contested able, for example, to enforce decisions by the Inter-American human rights system?

Consequently, focusing on the rule of law and democratic institutions without acknowledging the fundamental need the Salvadoran electorate has for public safety will (1) appear naïve to the public and (2) provide an easy pretext for the second Bukele administration to push back on U.S. criticism. Recognizing this need for basic societal order is also likely the only effective pathway to sustain bilateral cooperation concerning migration flows from the country.

Second, that recognition needs to be accompanied by concern over the outcomes of Bukele’s approach beyond the short-term. These hardline approaches, while often effective in reducing crime at the outset by isolating criminal elements, often falter over the medium- and long-term. Some inmates will eventually be released, and imprisonment often acts as an incubator for gang activity among inmates with no prior organized crime affiliation. More generally, imprisonment can increase recidivism rates among some inmate populations (including the innocent individuals caught up in the sweeps).

This concern should be demonstrated through proactive measures, as well, and not just by pointing out problems. For example, many countries around the Americas have had significant success piloting alternatives to incarceration programs for non-violent offenders. When properly implemented, these programs reduce recidivism, help participants improve their lives and communities, safeguard human rights, and save state resources. The OAS and many of its member states have been very active in this area, and there are many opportunities for collaboration.

Similarly, authoritarian approaches towards public safety, such as states of emergency, foster distrust in the very systems of justice required for resilient democratic institutions to form and endure. Thus, if this drop in crime is to last, an “off-ramp” from the state of emergency will be necessary.

But transitioning away from states of emergency is very difficult. Those who institute them often fear imprisonment, destitution, or worse at the hands of their political enemies upon leaving office—and therefore often avoid leaving office. And when a political transition does inevitably arrive, the successor government will be sorely tempted to wield the sword its predecessor forged.

That is why the third foundational principle for a more productive bilateral relationship is to press for a post-election discussion with El Salvadoran officials about transitioning back to political “normalcy”: that is, establishing clear and public benchmarks for when and how these emergency powers should be allowed to expire. Even if that transition lies in the future, benchmarks will inject some accountability into a situation whose very nature favors unaccountable decisions.

But to do this, the United States must be willing to more forthrightly recognize the societal crisis and needs that have created both the Bukele presidency and the state of emergency in the first place. If it cannot, it will likely torpedo the chance of a productive bilateral relationship with the second Bukele administration—and the anti-democratic norms Bukele’s approach has fostered are almost certain to entrench themselves and spread.

### Economic Aid Key---Migration

**Targeted economic aid programs like R4P offer a proven path to reduce irregular migration while advancing U.S. economic interest**

Dennis **Hall 25** [Dennis Hall, director at Economic Growth in the Americas, “El Salvador Shows the Way: Legal Migration That Works for the U.S.” Palladium Group USA, 04/14/2025, https://thepalladiumgroupusa.com/news/El-Salvador-Shows-the-Way-Legal-Migration-That-Works-for-the-US BJR]

With migration from Latin America dominating headlines and political talking points, it’s easy to lose sight of a simple truth: economic growth is the most powerful force for long-term regional stability. The United States has a chance right now to support cooperative governments like El Salvador’s in ways that advance U.S. economic interests, address root causes of irregular migration, and strengthen critical industries at home – not by reinventing the wheel, but by building on what already works. One example is the El Salvador Economic Competitiveness Program (ECP), funded by the United States and implemented by Palladium. ECP worked closely with President Bukele’s administration to create direct and legal paths for Salvadorans to fill seasonal jobs in the U.S. through the H-2 visa program. The project worked by both improving El Salvador’s capacity to identify, recruit, and conduct background checks on Salvadorans willing to work legally and by partnering with U.S. businesses in need of vetted and capable labor during peak periods. In 2023 alone, 395 U.S. companies benefited from the support, generating an estimated $168 million in additional revenue in the U.S. economy. This kind of targeted, cooperative effort reduces illegal immigration and boosts U.S. economic productivity. It’s a win-win. The program’s successor, Roots for Prosperity (R4P), was designed to carry on and scale those efforts. As the Trump Administration finalizes its review of programs to ensure alignment with U.S. foreign policy objectives, R4P provides a ready platform to strengthen the U.S. partnership with El Salvador and cooperate on issues of mutual interest and benefit. R4P is foreign assistance at its best: effective, immediate, and aligned with American economic and security goals. It makes America safer by reducing irregular migration, stronger by supplying U.S. industries with workers, and more prosperous by creating new channels for trade and investment. The United States doesn’t need to start from scratch as it turns toward a more America-focused approach to foreign assistance and cooperation. We still have access to tested, proven platforms like R4P that can begin having an impact right away and adapt as policy needs require. What’s needed now is the political will to reinvest in them. Legal immigration pathways aren’t just humanitarian solutions – they’re economic necessities. And we already know how to make them work.

### Neg---Authoritarian Engagement Bad

**Engaging with authoritarian regimes exports injustice and erodes U.S. constitutional human rights**

Lauren-Brooke **Eisen 25** [Lauren-Brooke Eisen, senior director of the Brennan Center’s Justice Program, “El Salvador’s Offer to House U.S. Prisoners Is Illegal?” Brennan Center For Justice, 03/12/2025, https://www.brennancenter.org/our-work/analysis-opinion/el-salvadors-offer-house-us-prisoners-illegal BJR]

Deporting American citizens to serve their sentence in an El Salvador prison would violate the 8th Amendment of the U.S. Constitution, which ensures that “Excessive bail shall not be required, nor excessive fines imposed, nor cruel and unusual punishments inflicted.” The “cruel and unusual punishments” clause protects those convicted of crimes from excessively long sentences in prison in addition to ensuring that prison conditions meet certain health and safety standards. But despite this provision, it has been up to the U.S. Supreme Court to provide the contours of what is acceptable punishment that doesn’t violate the 8th Amendment. There have been several significant cases that have helped shape the constitutional guardrails against “cruel and unusual punishment.” In the 1958 case of Trop v. Dulles, Chief Justice Earl Warren wrote that the “basic concept underlying the Eighth Amendment is nothing less than the dignity of man. While the State has the power to punish, the Amendment stands to assure that this power be exercised within the limits of civilized standards.” Almost 20 years later in Estelle v. Gamble, the U.S. Supreme Court established what is known as the “deliberate indifference” standard. In that case, Justice Thurgood Marshall wrote that “deliberate indifference to serious medical needs of prisoners constitutes the ‘unnecessary and wanton infliction of pain’” which is prohibited by the Eighth Amendment. Other Supreme Court cases have focused on providing guardrails against “unnecessary and wanton infliction of pain,” and excessive use of force. More recently, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled in the 2011 case Brown v. Plata that the conditions of confinement in California’s prisons were so inhumane that they violated the Eighth Amendment. In that case, evidence indicated that California’s prisons had operated at around 200 percent of design capacity for at least a decade. Some prisons were even operating at almost 300 percent capacity. There were not enough treatment beds because of the overcrowding, so suicidal individuals in prison were held for long time periods in “telephone-booth sized cages without toilets.” So what are the conditions like inside the prison in El Salvador where people are likely to be sent? The Center for the Confinement of Terrorism (CECOT), a 40,000-capacity megaprison 45 miles from the capital San Salvador that opened in 2023, is a place where prisoners receive no visitors, do not participate in any rehabilitative or educational programming, and do not spend any time outside. The prison was constructed as part of Bukele’s campaign to eliminate crime and gangs. The result: more than 84,000 arrests in the country since March of 2022, almost entirely without due process. Bukele suspended basic rights such as access to attorneys and the right to a speedy trial through his “State of Exception,” making it simpler to arrest, prosecute, and imprison suspected gang members. As of January 2024, El Salvador had the highest incarceration rate on the planet, with more than 1,000 people in prison per 100,000 residents. Notably, Senator Ossoff, in his letter to Rubio and Bondi, pointed out that the U.S. State Department warns U.S. citizens who travel to the country about Bukele’s declaration of a “State of Exception” and notes that those released from some of the country’s prisons “reported a lack of food and potable water and being limited to two tortillas, one spoonful of beans, and one glass of water per day.” Human rights advocates have found more than 6,000 violations in the country’s justice system, including “arbitrary detentions, torture, due process violations, enforced disappearances, and 366 deaths within state custody.” If the Trump administration sends U.S. citizens convicted of a crime to El Salvador, it is almost certain that this maneuver violates the 8th Amendment, making the transportation unconstitutional. What Happens From Here? In the best-case scenario, this offer goes down in history as a public performance of world leaders who are known for their populist and authoritarian tendencies, in addition to their belief that reducing or eliminating civil liberties will reduce crime. It is unclear whether the Trump administration is still researching the “legality” of this proposal or thinking through this scenario with any seriousness. But if genuine steps are taken to remove U.S. citizens convicted of crimes to prisons in El Salvador, this removal would violate not only U.S. law but the U.S. Constitution.

**U.S. engagement with authoritarian leaders like Bukele and Maduro legitimize the use of innocent migrants as pawns in cynical political trade**

Tom **Philips 25** [Tom Philips, Latin America correspondent for the Guardian, “Families of detainees in El Salvador and Venezuela decry Bukele’s prisoner swap offer.” The Guardian, 04/23/2025, https://www.theguardian.com/world/2025/apr/23/el-salvador-bukele-venezuela-prisoners BJR]

The families of prisoners being held by the authoritarian governments of [El Salvador](https://www.theguardian.com/world/el-salvador) and [Venezuela](https://www.theguardian.com/world/venezuela) have condemned President Nayib Bukele’s [offer to swap 252 Venezuelan detainees sent to his jails](https://www.theguardian.com/world/2025/apr/21/el-salvador-president-nayib-bukele-prisoner-swap-venezuela) by the [Trump administration](https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/trump-administration) for the same number of political prisoners incarcerated by [Nicolás Maduro](https://www.theguardian.com/world/nicolas-maduro)’s regime. Nelson Suárez, whose brother was among the Venezuelan immigrants sent from the US to a notorious maximum-security jail in [El Salvador](https://www.theguardian.com/world/el-salvador) last month, said he was desperate for the release of his brother, from whom he has heard nothing in five weeks. But Suárez voiced outrage that his sibling – a 33-year-old musician who uses the stage name [SuarezVzla](https://www.youtube.com/@SuarezVzla) – had become a bargaining chip in a political game. “I feel they are treating my brother like merchandise … like political merchandise,” said Suárez. Sebastián García Casique, whose 24-year-old brother Francisco [was also sent to the prison in El Salvador](https://www.theguardian.com/world/2025/mar/19/venezuelan-deportations-families-trump), also condemned the proposed trade. “Why are you using human beings in a negotiation as if they were toys?” he asked Bukele in a post on Instagram. Relatives of the estimated 900 political prisoners who are incarcerated in [Venezuela](https://www.theguardian.com/world/venezuela) also questioned Bukele’s controversial offer, which the rightwing populist made on Sunday on the social network X, where he has more than 7.5 million followers. In an open letter, the Committee for the Freedom of Political Prisoners in Venezuela said it wanted both political prisoners in Venezuela and innocent immigrants jailed in El Salvador to be freed. But the group said it did not support the “exploitation of the pain of victims for propaganda purposes in an effort to cover up injustices being committed against innocent Venezuelans, either inside or outside of the country”. The committee opposed those incarcerated being “played with” or “used as a political resource to make invisible the inhumane conditions” in which prisoners were being detained in both countries. Bukele repeated his offer on Tuesday after Maduro’s administration rejected what it called his “cynical” gambit, with Venezuela’s top prosecutor [calling](https://www.theguardian.com/world/2025/apr/21/venezuela-el-salvador-bukele-maduro-prisoners) El Salvador’s president a “tyrannical” human trafficker. Scores of Venezuelan immigrants have been deported to El Salvador since mid-March without due process, with [Donald Trump](https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/donaldtrump)’s officials accusing them of being dangerous terrorists and gang members. However, the administration has produced little evidence for those claims and many of the detainees – who were at least initially held in a maximum-security prison called the Terrorism Confinement Center (Cecot) – [appear to have no criminal background](https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2025/mar/20/deported-because-of-his-tattoos-has-the-us-targeted-venezuelans-for-their-body-art). Their relatives insist they are innocent. “First they were supposedly alleged terrorists – and now they are no longer terrorists, they’re part of a political exchange,” complained Suárez, who believed the Venezuelan migrants were being treated by Bukele “as if they were animals”. Adelys Ferro, a Florida-based Venezuelan American activist who runs an advocacy group called the Venezuelan-American Caucus, said she also wanted freedom for both Venezuela’s political prisoners and the innocent immigrants being held in El Salvador. Ferro slammed Bukele’s “painful and disgusting” political stunt. “What he’s trying to do – to negotiate innocent Venezuelans back and forth with the Maduro dictatorship – is despicable,” Ferro said. “We cannot celebrate two authoritarians negotiating back and forth with Venezuelan lives.”

**Circumventing court orders by deferring to authoritarian allies undermines democratic institutions and risk aligning with regimes that violate human rights in the squo**

Franco **Ordoñez et al. 25** [Franco Ordoñez, White House Correspondent, “El Salvador's Bukele says 'preposterous' to suggest he return Abrego Garcia to U.S.” National Public Radio, 04/14/2025, https://www.npr.org/2025/04/14/nx-s1-5364502/trump-bukele-el-salvador-deportation BJR]

El Salvador's President Nayib Bukele said on Monday that he was not inclined to return [Kilmar Armando Abrego Garcia](https://www.npr.org/2025/04/10/nx-s1-5358421/supreme-court-abrego-garcia-deportation-decision) to the United States. Abrego Garcia, a Salvadoran citizen who had lived in Maryland for about 15 years, was deported to El Salvador despite being granted protections by an U.S. immigration judge. He is in custody in Bukele's mega prison known as CECOT. The [Supreme Court ordered](https://www.npr.org/2025/04/10/nx-s1-5358421/supreme-court-abrego-garcia-deportation-decision) the Trump administration to facilitate his return. During Bukele's Oval Office visit on Monday, Trump and his team said it was up to the Salvadoran government to decide whether to return him. Bukele said he would not do that. "The question is preposterous: how can I smuggle a terrorist into the United States?" Bukele said. Bukele has been a key ally to Trump as he ramps up deportations to the notorious Salvadoran prison. The Trump administration is paying the Salvadoran government $6 million to house migrants there. More than 200 migrants have been sent to the prison. Many have been sent there without due process using an obscure wartime law called the Alien Enemies Act to deport large groups of Venezuelans and Salvadorans who the administration says are gang members. Abrego Garcia's attorney says he is not a member of any gang. While the Supreme Court ultimately ruled that the Trump administration could use the law — invoked during the War of 1812 and the two World Wars — to deport migrants, the high court also ordered the Trump administration to facilitate Abrego Garcia's return. Attorney General Pam Bondi, who was part of the Oval Office meeting with Bukele, said the administration's obligation only extended to providing a plane, but said that Abrego Garcia was now in Salvadoran custody. She said that Abrego Garcia had not been in the United States legally and downplayed the issue with his deportation as a "paperwork" issue. "That's up to El Salvador if they want to return him. That's not up to us," Bondi said. Secretary of State Marco Rubio and White House deputy chief of staff Stephen Miller said the matter was up to Bukele. "He's a citizen of El Salvador, so it's very arrogant even for American media to suggest that we would even tell El Salvador, how to handle their own citizens," Miller said. Rubio emphasized that no court in the United States had the right to conduct foreign policy. "What we saw today at the White House should shock every American who cares about our system of checks and balances and the rule of law," said Vanessa Cárdenas, executive director of America's Voice, an immigration advocacy nonprofit, in a statement. She said the decision not to return Abrego Garcia violates the Supreme Court's ruling to bring him back. "All of this is a reminder why immigration is the tip of the spear for Trump's larger assault on key pillars of our democracy and why what's at stake should alarm Americans of all political persuasions," she added.

## Puerto Rico

### Background

#### Quick Background: U.S. territory with ongoing debates over status; affs could explore statehood initiatives, expanded self-determination, or economic development programs.

#### Why is this in the potential section and not the recommended: we understand that Puerto Rico being a US territory is a “topic outlier” and would require the mechanism wording to be more carefully constructed.

#### This article identifies most of the affirmative ground on the Puerto topic and distinguishes statehood from other alternatives (nationhood, international standing, etc) and provides multiple potential counterplans

PRAC 24 [Puerto Rico Advisory Committee to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights February 2024, The Insular Cases and the Doctrine of the Unincorporated Territory and its Effects on the Civil Rights of the Residents of Puerto Rico Overview Memorandum – Part I, https://www.usccr.gov/files/2024-02/final\_english\_pr-ac\_memo-1.pdf?eType=EmailBlastContent&eId=9d25fd19-aa8e-4256-8f60-f4052dd1d9d3]

I. Introduction In July 2022, the Puerto Rico Advisory Committee to the United States Commission on Civil Rights ("Committee") voted to examine the Insular Cases and the Doctrine of the Unincorporated Territory and its effects on the civil rights of the residents of Puerto Rico. To this end, the Committee agreed to focus on the following subtopics: (1) voting rights and lack of political representation, (2) racial and national discrimination, and (3) access to federal public programs. The Committee's plan includes organizing a series of briefings to receive input on these issues and publishing a memorandum for each subtopic over the course of its term, concluding in a final report with recommendations prepared by the Committee. On May 10, 2023, the Committee held an in-person briefing to hear testimony focused on an overview of the main topic, the Insular Cases and the Doctrine of Unincorporated Territory and its effects on the civil rights of the residents of Puerto Rico.1 The Committee invited a variety of stakeholders to serve as panelists and prioritized a balance of different perspectives. They heard testimony from a historical, academic, and legal perspective and also from community representatives of organizations and individuals speaking about their own experiences and those of their respective communities. This memorandum is based on those testimonies. The Committee also held a virtual briefing on September 14, 2023, as a second part of this overview phase of the project, which focused on the economic perspective of this topic. Most of that testimony will be the main focus of the upcoming memorandum – a second part of the overview.2

This memorandum is intended to share the main findings identified in the testimony as they were directly described by the panelists, including most of the written testimony. It begins with historical context prepared by the Committee shortly after it selected its topic as part of its project proposal. It is followed by additional context provided and expanded upon by testimonials received. The final section is based on recommendations shared in the testimony. The findings and recommendations in this report do not reflect the views of the Committee. The Committee's recommendations will be included in this project's final report. The Committee offers these findings and its recommendations in order to provide a context to begin evaluating and analyzing the impact that the Insular Cases and the Unincorporated Territory Doctrine have had on the civil rights of the residents of Puerto Rico from as a foundation for the rest of its project. II. Historical Context The Treaty of Paris of 1898 sealed the end of the Spanish-American War that same year.3 Spain renounced all rights it had over Puerto Rico and ceded its territorial possessions to the United States.4 One of the provisions of the Treaty, specifically Article IX, stated that “the civil rights and political condition of the natural inhabitants of the territories ceded to the United States shall be determined by Congress.”5 The Supreme Court of the United States presided over several controversial cases related to the laws Congress enacted for the acquired territories, including the Philippines, Guam, Cuba, and Puerto Rico. These cases are referred to as the Insular Cases, in which the Supreme Court has articulated a theory of selective application of constitutional rights to newly acquired territories.6 Since the beginning of the 20th century, this series of opinions has declared that full constitutional law does not automatically apply in certain territories of the United States because they have not been incorporated into the Union.7 In 1900, Congress passed the Foraker Act that transitioned the military government to a civil one in Puerto Rico. The legislation affirmed American sovereignty and imposed a local government beholden to federal authority in Puerto Rico.8 This included the power to repeal legislation and the creation of a government structure that consolidated legislative and executive functions in a single body – composed for the majority by mostly non-native inhabitants – that imposed tariffs on goods exchanged between Puerto Rico and the United States and defined the limits of territorial authority.9

The Insular Cases have established a constitutional justification for the consolidation of different and unequal norms that have determined the indefinite relationship between the territories and the United States. These cases also established a political and racial framework that treats its inhabitants unequally and without voting representation, subject to the plenary powers of Congress under Article IV, Section 3 of the Constitution.10 The Committee will examine the Insular Cases and their continued applications by the Supreme Court of the United States and their effects on the civil rights of residents of Puerto Rico, beginning with Downes v. Bidwell (1901) to United States v. Vaello Madero (2022). One of the most notorious Insular Cases, and perhaps most important with respect to Puerto Rico, is Downes v. Bidwell.11 The plaintiff argued that Puerto Rico ceased to be a foreign country in relation to the United States since the invasion of 1898.12 Therefore, a fifteen percent tariff could not be charged on goods from the island since the federal Constitution establishes that taxes and tariffs will be uniform in all parts of the United States.13 The Supreme Court decided that the tariff was valid as Puerto Rico belongs to, although it is not part of, the United States.14 To support this reasoning, a legal distinction was created by the United States Supreme Court based on its interpretation of the territorial clause.15 While incorporated territories were already part of the United States, unincorporated territories, such as Puerto Rico and Guam, were not.16 This decision recognized Congressional authority over the territory of Puerto Rico, allowing for the selective application of constitutional protections. Associate Justice Edward Douglass White stated the following in his concurring opinion in Downes v. Bidwell: "there may nevertheless be restrictions of so fundamental a nature that they cannot be transgressed although not expressed in so many words in the Constitution."17 In other words, all constitutional clauses that were not reserved for the states would have applied to the incorporated territories; however, only the protection of “those rights that are considered fundamental” would have applied to unincorporated territories, although the Court failed to define what rights those were. White's concurring opinion became the legal justification for the Insular Cases.18 Congress passed the Jones-Shafroth Act in 1917, which conferred U.S. citizenship on residents of Puerto Rico and changed the government structure. This included the separation of Executive, Legal and Legislative powers; the provision of civil rights to people; and the creation of a locally elected bicameral legislature at the local level. 19 The decisions made subsequently by the Supreme Court reaffirmed the continued territorial status of Puerto Rico. In Balzac v Porto Rico (1922) the Supreme Court decided that, although residents of Puerto Rico enjoy statutory citizenship, they are not guaranteed a jury trial in criminal cases as would be required under the Fifth Amendment of the United States.20 This opinion exemplifies the doctrine of Insular Cases regarding the selective application of constitutional rights to territories. The Insular Cases doctrine and its broad interpretation of Congressional powers makes it possible for federal programs and benefits that are applied on the continent to be limited or inapplicable in Puerto Rico. This result was recently exemplified in U.S. v. Vaello Madero (2022) which recognized the Congressional authority to legislate different eligibility criteria in federal programs for American citizens residing in Puerto Rico.21 Furthermore, the Insular Cases doctrine, as recently reaffirmed by Justice Gorsuch in U.S. v. Vaello Madero, is explicitly racist and discriminatory against residents of Puerto Rico and other territorial jurisdictions. The Insular Cases were decided on the grounds of an alleged inherent difference between residents of the United States and “alien races.”22 As Justice Gorsuch indicated in his concurring opinion in U.S. v. Vaello Madero, “The Insular Cases have no foundation in the Constitution and rest instead on racial stereotypes. They deserve no place in our law.” 23 The Territorial Doctrine in the Context of Racism in the United States When evaluating the Insular Cases, it is important to highlight that the case of Puerto Rico cannot be grouped with the other unincorporated territories. The legal framework of Puerto Rico is different from the other territories because it is the only one that meets all the criteria to be a state by having the necessary population, as Panelist Gregorio Igartúa, an attorney in private practice, stated in his testimony. 24

For Panelist Sam C. Erman, law professor at the University of Michigan, the origins of the Insular Cases date back to the U.S. annexation of Puerto Rico and the Philippines after the conclusion of the Spanish-American War.25 Dr. Erman explained that the U.S. authorities viewed Filipinos as racially degraded people who should not receive U.S. citizenship or full constitutional rights.26 This idea clashed with the constitutional principles of the time as agreed by what Dr. Erman calls the “Constitution of Reconstruction.” 27 These principles stated that Americans who were not American Indians were American citizens, all American lands were or would become states, and the Constitution applied in its entirety wherever the borders of the United States extended.28 If these applied to the Philippines, then Filipinos were full-fledged American citizens who would participate in the national government when the Philippines became a state.29 To avoid this, the American authorities invented a new constitutional theory that is known today as the doctrine of territorial non-incorporation. 30 Its purpose was to deny statehood, rights, and citizenship to Americans whom the U.S. authorities considered racially inferior and marked unincorporated territories as disadvantaged spaces and their residents as disadvantaged peoples, using terms such as "foreign races" and "savage tribes" to describe the people in the territories.31 Other panelists argued that the Insular Cases were used to legitimize colonialism and create the legal framework to govern the territory, based on anachronistic concepts, since several of the judges who participated in the Downes v. Bidwell also participated in the Plessy v. Ferguson decision, which established the discriminatory practice in the United States of treating people “separate, but equal.”32 This group of opinions produced by the Supreme Court between 1901 and 1922 articulated and consolidated the doctrine of unincorporated territories, allowing a selective application of constitutional rights that are considered fundamental.33 Having acquired Puerto Rico and other jurisdictions following the conclusion of the SpanishAmerican War, the United States decided to incorporate the new territories as its property but did not apply the Constitution in its entirety based on the Downes v. Bidwell decision, in which it was established that there could be incorporated and unincorporated territories.34 Panelist Charles Venator Santiago, Professor of Political Science at the University of Connecticut, commented that “although some fundamental rights are recognized for the residents of Puerto Rico, those fundamental rights are not defined, and it will be a historic process of determining which ones will be applied. There is a selective application of the Constitution.”35 Furthermore, Dr. Venator Santiago mentioned that Downes v. Bidwell creates contradictions that have not yet been resolved by establishing that an annexed territory can be governed as an external territory when convenient.36 Among the reasons given in Downes v. Bidwell for not applying the Constitution in its entirety in these new territories, it was believed that this would not be appropriate for “distant ocean communities of a different origin and language from those of our continental people.” 37 In additional testimony received by the Committee, it was also stated that it is important to take note that Judge Henry Brown wrote in the decision that Puerto Ricans are “foreign to the United States in a domestic sense.”38 This doctrine changed the trajectory of the territories because, prior to the Insular Cases, all the territories had followed a process towards statehood, and being a territory was considered a transitory status.39 It also allowed the United States to have control over the territory without establishing a path towards statehood in the future.40 There is no text within the United States Constitution that supports the doctrine, and it is predicated on an ethnic and racial distinction that Puerto Ricans are political subjects who do not deserve the full protection of rights in the Constitution.41

The Balzac v. Porto Rico Case Another of the Insular Cases, Balzac v. Porto Rico, reiterates that the right to a jury trial within the Sixth Amendment of the Constitution does not apply to unincorporated territories. 42 Panelist Francisco Ortiz Santini, Professor at the University of Puerto Rico, Río Piedras Campus, explained that the Balzac case, which originates in a dispute over control of the mayor's office of Arecibo and has its origin in two articles published by Jesús María Balzac, editor of the newspaper El Baluarte who criticized the governor of that time, and this led to him being accused of criminal libel.43 For Dr. Ortiz Santini, this decision is an example that for the Supreme Court, locality was more important in considerations of how to apply the Constitution than the fact that the affected people were U.S. citizens.44 This case reiterates that providing citizenship does not change the unincorporated status in Puerto Rico politics.45 The irony of this, as Dr. Venator Santiago pointed out in his testimony, is that the case of Balzac v. Porto Rico applies the doctrine of the Insular Cases to a territory with citizens, although it had originally been designed to govern territories without citizens, and despite this dichotomy, it is still in force.46 Role of the Constitution Protected by the Territorial Clause, the U.S. federal government exercised its power to authorize the territorial legislature in Puerto Rico to convene the residents of the island to draft and approve a constitution while reserving the right to give final approval of said constitution.47 When Puerto Rico approved its Constitution through a plebiscite in 1952, it did not come into effect until it was approved by Congress and the President of the United States.48 Although Congress approved the Constitution, it amended it significantly, for example, removing Section 20 of Article II, which established the right to work, an adequate standard of living, and social protection in old age or disease.49 This was the version that President Truman signed, and that the local legislature in Puerto Rico ratified.50 This local Constitution gave Puerto Rico the same level of autonomy over its jurisdiction as a state; however, the actions taken by Congress and the President demonstrated that Puerto Rico remained under the authority of Congress and received differential treatment from it.51 The power of Congress to selectively apply the Constitution and have control over local government has influenced arguments that the Constitution should be interpreted as a 'living' document, in which rights should be applied using current standards and not based on outdated decisions.52 III. Preliminary Findings FINDING I - Panelists pointed to a colonial relationship between the United States government and Puerto Rico. Colonial Relationship between Puerto Rico and the United States Among the arguments provided by the panelists, testimony about the colonial relationship between Puerto Rico and the United States stood out as one of the main problems facing Puerto Rico, and they highlighted the fact that several constitutional rights do not extend to the island.53 Panelist Rafael Rodríguez, a lawyer at the Community Legal Office, Inc., stated that the fact that Puerto Rico a territory in itself constitutes its position as a colony, and argued that the colonies “have never been made so that they have all the corresponding benefits; however, they have been made to respond to the interests of the metropolis.”54 This idea that the colony benefits the entity with the power in the relationship is shared by Dr. Venator Santiago, who described two types of colonization in the 19th century – one based on expansionism that, after annexing the territory, organizes it and acquires it; and the other type that is based on imperialism, and uses the territory strategically to obtain economic and military benefit.55 The irony in the case of Puerto Rico and the United States is that the United States is based on the idea that the government derives power from those it governs as part of a social contract, and because of this, it has been a global example of democracy.56 However, these ideals have not materialized in the relationship between the United States and Puerto Rico. Panelist George H. Laws García, director of the Puerto Rico Statehood Council, commented that “unfortunately for 125 of those years, the United States government has not fulfilled the promise of government by consent in Puerto Rico, denying the residents of the island the right to vote at the federal level. This discrimination and political

exclusion against the 3.1 million American citizens in Puerto Rico has its roots in the legal doctrine established by the so-called Insular Cases at the beginning of the 20th century.”57 Several panelists highlighted that these arguments have been validated by the United Nations and the treatment that Puerto Rico has received from the Supreme Court. Mr. Rodríguez shared that United Nations representatives commented during a visit to Puerto Rico that the populations of the territories are separate and distinct and have the right to self-determination.58 The United Nations agreed that “Puerto Rico is being controlled by an overseas colonial power to the detriment of its people, without any significant representation at the national level and without real capacity to govern itself as a non-self-governing territory, in the international sense.” 59 As for the Supreme Court, in deciding that rights can be applied selectively, Mr. Laws García believes that it has allowed “systematic discrimination against the residents of the island as the indefinite perpetuation of a system of government where there is a clear democratic deficit that directly contradicts the fundamental principles of the American democratic system.”60 Civil society and political participation The Committee heard arguments about the instability that this colonial relationship creates and the negative effects it has had on civic participation in Puerto Rico. “Puerto Rican communities fighting more and more for their empowerment and sustainable development,” said Adi Martínez Román, law professor and Co-Founder and Co-Director of the organization Right to Democracy in her public comment, “The government does not attend to their needs” and this does not allow people to have a direct role in determining their situation.61 This limitation extends from the community level to the leadership of local government agencies. Edison Avilés Deliz, President of the Public Service Regulatory Board in Puerto Rico, submitted written testimony which said that “the lack of effective political participation at all levels of government of the residents of Puerto Rico not only greatly hinders our management, but delays our impact. Maintaining these discrepancies or rationalizing inferior treatment arbitrarily restricts our ability to fully develop within the United States.”62 Furthermore, Director Avilés Deliz cited the preamble of the InterAmerican Democratic Charter of the Organization of American States, an international, regional organization to which the United States belongs, and emphasized the declaration that “democracy is essential for social, political, and economic development of the peoples of the Americas.”63 The limitations imposed by the colonial relationship extend inequality in access and implementation of health programs, public education, and environmental protection, according to Dr. Michael González Cruz, Professor at the University of Puerto Rico, who shared a public comment and written testimony with the Committee.64 Additionally, Dr. González Cruz referred to the plebiscite of November 6, 2012, when the majority of voters voted that they did not want to continue with the current territorial status of Puerto Rico.65 “Failure to comply with the will of the citizenry as expressed in a duly convened and held referendum constitutes a violation of the civil, constitutional, and human rights of the Puerto Rican electorate,” said González Cruz.66 According to Panelist Efré n Rivera Ramos, Law Professor at the University of Puerto Rico, Río Piedras Campus, this non-compliance is part of a political problem that could be resolved if the United States wanted.67 FINDING II - The testimony indicates that Puerto Rico has lived under unequal and discriminatory treatment by the United States government. Several panelists shared that the fact that Puerto Rico is an unincorporated territory has left the island in a state of limbo, and this has been an excuse that the United States Congress has used to not address civil rights or the political status of Puerto Rico in full.68 Yet, as American citizens, residents of Puerto Rico do not have many guaranteed civil rights, including the right to vote federally, nor do they have representation in Congress with voting power, which results in unequal treatment between citizens living in the states and those who live on the island.69 According to Mr. Laws García, “This represents a fundamental democratic deficit because the residents of Puerto Rico are subject to the laws passed by Congress, the decisions of the Supreme Court, and the actions and public policy established by the president without being able to offer

their consent through suffrage.”70 This creates two levels of discrimination for Puerto Rico – aside from not being able to practice self-determination, U.S. law continually prevents this from happening.71 According to the written testimony submitted by social worker and attorney Hilda Sciera, “everything that is unequal or perceived as unfair or unjust is justified by 'status.’” 72 The testimony also attributes this discrimination to the territorial clause, which indicates that territory is property.73 This clause has been used as a basis to deny various rights, including equal access to federal programs such as nutrition assistance or Medicaid and Medicare, to which a different formula applies than to the states.74 The testimony received suggests that a formal plan and long-term resources are needed because the current situation has created an environment of uncertainty and instability that requires local agencies to adjust their plans and projections constantly.75 There can be no intermediate space for Puerto Ricans. Calling them equal citizens but, at the same time, treating them differently by limiting their rights is a contradiction and a stigma without justification.76 FINDING III - Panelists agreed that the Supreme Court is not the ideal vehicle through which to solve the problems caused by the Non-Incorporation Doctrine The Committee heard testimony that pointed out that the status as a territory under the nonincorporation doctrine has placed Puerto Rico in a unique legal space because it represents the history of complex and discriminatory treatment towards the island.77 The non-incorporation doctrine treats residents of the territory as “less than” and has been used as an excuse for the continuation of colonial status for quite some time, indicating that it is one of the main obstacles to achieving decolonization.78 However, the Supreme Court cites the Insular Cases as legal precedent and panelists such as Brig. Gen. Victor Pérez, argued that the Insular Cases should not have to be recognized just because they have been a legal norm.79 Dr. Erman commented that the non-incorporation doctrine should have been rejected long ago, and that doing so would not present any major disruption to existing law because very little

depends on the distinction between incorporated and unincorporated territories.80 Regarding statehood, the Constitution leaves to Congress the question of when and whether to admit new states.81 That has never been a question for the federal courts.82 Other contributions to the testimony established that, over time, it has emerged that, regardless of the Insular Cases, most of the fundamental rights in the Constitution extend to Puerto Rico, including freedom of speech and due process of law.83 It is worth mentioning that other constitutional rights, such as the right to trial by jury, do not extend to Puerto Rico.84 The United States Congress has unilateral power over the territory and can also modify local government within Puerto Rico.85 Mr. Laws García shared an example from 2016, when Congress took action at the local level in Puerto Rico and approved the Puerto Rico Oversight Management and Economic Stability Act, better known as PROMESA.86 As part of the law, Congress established a Fiscal Oversight and Management Board comprised of appointed members with authority that allows them to review and determine the conformity of the laws that have been passed by the legislature and signed by the Governor with the Fiscal Plan approved by the Board, which has further increased what Mr. Laws García calls the democratic deficit. 87 Congress had given the Board the authority to block or nullify any local law that they did not believe was consistent with their financial priorities for Puerto Rico, a practice that gives extraordinary power to Congress that would not normally apply to a state and serves as another example of differential treatment under the Insular Cases.88 Dr. Rivera Ramos commented that Congress has used this power to discriminate against Puerto Rico, especially regarding public benefits.89 FINDING IV - The Committee heard testimony regarding the contradictions in the U.S. citizenship of residents of Puerto Rico. Although the residents of Puerto Rico are American citizens, this citizenship holds various contradictions and interpretations resulting from the Insular Cases. Dr. Venator Santiago commented that although the Supreme Court treats Puerto Rico as an external territory, “foreign

in a domestic sense,” Congress has determined that being born in Puerto Rico after 1940 is being born in the United States - “In other words, citizenship by birth in an external territory, a contradiction.”90 In 1917, Congress collectively naturalized the residents of Puerto Rico.91 Later, in 1940, Congress provided in the Immigration and Nationality Act that all persons born in Puerto Rico between the date of ratification of the Treaty of Paris in 1899 and January 12, 1941, were retroactively converted into citizens of the United States and that anyone born after January 13, 1941, would be a citizen of the United States at birth.92 Before the Treaty of Paris, residents of Puerto Rico were citizens of Spain and could vote for their representatives there.93 The Treaty had no provision for the transfer of United States citizenship to Puerto Ricans; it did not specify the relationship they were going to have with the federal government.94 Dr. Erman explained that the Supreme Court has never taken a formal position on this issue – it has not answered whether birth in an unincorporated United States territory guarantees citizenship under the Constitution.95 Dr. Erman continued that Congress has granted citizenship based on place of birth in the United States territories (with the exception of American Samoa), and it is unclear whether local birth makes one a U.S. citizen or a U.S. national without citizenship.96 Furthermore, he proposed that this can be resolved by abandoning the doctrine of non-incorporation.97 Panelist José Julián Álvarez González, Professor at the School of Law at the University of Puerto Rico, supports an idea related to the fact that the United States citizenship of those born in Puerto Rico comes from the laws that have granted it and not from the 14th Amendment. Under the principles established in the Insular Cases, those born in Puerto Rico were not born in the United States.98 Other testimony received in writing indicates that the only way to have all rights permanently is under the 14th Amendment to the Constitution, which does not mention the territories.99 In the case Rogers v. Bellei 401 US 815 (1970), it was decided that even if citizenship were to be granted on a statutory basis as an extension of the 14th Amendment, this would also be under the discretion of Congress.100 The other way that

citizenship can be conferred would be under a status determined by Congress, which occurred in Puerto Rico under 8 USC § 1402 that established that all persons born in Puerto Rico on or after April 11, 1899, and before January 13, 1941 would be declared citizens of the United States as of January 13, 1941. 101 Regarding whether imposing Compulsory Military Service on American citizens of Puerto Rico constitutes a violation of their civil rights, Dr. Rivera Ramos stated, “If you accept the legitimacy, validity, etc., of the doctrine established by the Insular Cases, what has been said about the power of Congress under the ‘Territorial Clause,’ it can be concluded that under its full powers, Congress can establish mandatory military service in Puerto Rico. I go further, it is possible that it could also be said that it could be established only for Puerto Rico under the ‘Territorial Clause.’” 102 These contradictions that exist in the citizenship of the residents of Puerto Rico extend to the right to vote, a topic that the Committee will study in more depth in the near future as part of this project. However, it is relevant to mention that although residents of Puerto Rico are subject to federal laws without being able to participate in the federal legislative process, they can only exercise their right to vote at the federal level when they live permanently in a state, but not in Puerto Rico due to its status as a territory.103 Furthermore, Puerto Rico only has one representative in Congress – the Resident Commissioner who cannot vote, even though they represent a population of more than 3 million people.104 This population is larger than 20 states and there are other members of Congress with full authority who represent significantly smaller populations.105 Only an amendment at the constitutional level could allow Puerto Ricans to vote in a presidential election, which Professor Álvarez González described in his testimony as something very difficult to achieve.106 FINDING V – Throughout the testimony, the Committee heard about the significant impact that Puerto Rico’s status as an unincorporated territory has had on the limited access to social welfare programs. Experience of José A. Hernández

The Committee heard the testimony of José A. Hernández, a member of the Board of Directors of the organization Movement for the Attainment of Independent Living, who shared his experience as a person with a physical disability in need of federal assistance programs when he lived temporarily in Florida after Hurricane Marí a. Mr. Hernández experienced firsthand the differential treatment towards Puerto Rico residents when it came to accessing public benefits. Within the first month of being in Florida, Mr. Hernández was able to seamlessly enroll in several programs including Medicare (including his choice of a new Medicare Advantage Plan), Medicare drug savings programs provided by funds from the supplemental assistance program, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), and gained access to group transportation services for people with physical disabilities.107 However, upon returning to Puerto Rico after the federal government ended a housing waiver for Puerto Ricans affected by the hurricane emergency that included seeking alternative housing in the states, Mr. Hernández had to re-register for all the services he had before leaving.108 He explained that the Social Security Administration required him to report when he was back in Puerto Rico because if he didn’t do so, it would be considered a violation.109 Upon his return to Puerto Rico, Mr. Hernández had to follow the re-registration process for each program individually, and he lost access to the transportation service.110 The process of accessing his medical services again and returning to his routine took him between six to twelve months, which caused his vulnerable health condition to worsen.111 Mr. Hernández described receiving unequal treatment after having the experience of accessing medical services in a state and on the island.112 Inequality in Federal Social Welfare Programs Panelist Betzaida Ramos, Director of the organization, Movimiento para el Alcance de Vida Independiente (MAVI), based her testimony on a study that was carried out in collaboration with the federal agency National Disability Council on the state of the quality of life and resources for

people with disabilities in Puerto Rico.113 She shared that the study's results prove that there are disparities in assistance programs such as Medicaid, SSI, Medicare, NAP versus SNAP, and disaster assistance when comparing Puerto Rico with the states and other territories.114 Additionally, Ms. Ramos explained that the amount of funds allocated to these programs is calculated through “block grant” programs, which are appropriated by Congress through formulas used for the territories, and these funds are considerably lower than what is allocated to the same programs in the states. 115 For example, the investment in Medicaid for a person in Puerto Rico is $1,980 annually, while in the United States it is $6,060 annually.116 Similarly, a person who receives nutrition assistance (NAP) in Puerto Rico receives, on average, 60 percent fewer benefits than those who receive SNAP in the United States.117 Regarding medical benefits, Ms. Ramos stated that there is disparate treatment in the Medicare program when it comes to the reimbursement rates for providers.118 Ms. Ramos explained that the reimbursement rate “is 43 percent below the national average and 26 percent below the US Virgin Islands, which shows us the reason why there is a current brain drain of health professionals in Puerto Rico.”119 More than 1,000 health professionals have migrated to the mainland in the last five years, leaving the residents of Puerto Rico with disabilities even more vulnerable.120 Regarding the Medicaid program, 39 percent of all residents of Puerto Rico receive health insurance through the Medicaid program compared to 10 percent in the states, even though Puerto Rico receives less federal funding than any state.121 Appropriations for the Medicaid

program, in part, are calculated using the Federal Medical Assistance Percentage (FMAP) formula, which calculates per capita income against the nation's per capita income.122 Although this is intended to provide support to the poorest regions, Ms. Ramos explained that in Puerto Rico, despite being one of the poorest jurisdictions in the United States, the FMAP has been applied below other states and other territories, directly affecting the quality of life of the people who most need these resources.123 Panelist José Acaron, Director of AARP Puerto Rico, said that a possible reason behind this differential treatment in benefits is that with 3.2 million inhabitants, Puerto Rico has a larger population than other territories, and this can influence the costs for extend programs in Puerto Rico.124 Another factor that increases the level of inequality is the fact that the Supplemental Security Income (SSI) program, which provides financial support to people with low incomes, is not available to residents of Puerto Rico.125 In written testimony submitted by Anita Teekah and Lia Fiol-Matta of the organization Latino Justice PRLDEF, SSI is available in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, and the Mariana Islands, and it is estimated that 436,000 people in Puerto Rico can qualify for SSI if not for discriminatory treatment by Congress.126 Furthermore, they commented that “While this program was specifically designed to assist those ‘who have little to no income’ with their basic needs and is intended for those who cannot work and, therefore, do not pay federal taxes, this clearly does not extend to those living in Puerto Rico.”127 The Aged, Blind, and Disabled Program (AABD), which is similar to SSI, does exist in Puerto Rico but provides a minimum amount of assistance compared to what SSI would provide if it were available - a person in Puerto Rico would receive 75 dollars per month [with AABD], while in

the United States, it [the amount received] would be 841 dollars with SSI.128 Panelist Alex Ortiz, a military veteran and leader in Puerto Rico's veteran community, explained that this disproportionately affects disabled veterans who often need financial supports due to their inability to work or the additional costs associated with their disabilities in service to the American nation.129 Lack of Access to Supplemental Security Income (SSI) As part of the written testimony for this project, the Committee also received legal reports on a pending case seeking access to SSI from attorney Isabel Abislaimán-Quílez, who represents Emanuel Rivera Fuentes through his father, and several individuals in need of SSI assistance as an example of the impact of differential treatment and the arguments in favor of expanding SSI to Puerto Rico.130 In 2019, Rivera Fuentes, who suffers from severe disabilities due to cerebral palsy, went to the Social Security Administration offices in Puerto Rico to apply for SSI and was placed on a waiting list. In July of that year, he received a letter with the determination of ineligibility saying: “SSI benefit (sic) are not payable in Puerto Rico.”131 Since this case began, 11 additional people have joined as plaintiffs.132 Notably, this case was delayed waiting for the decision in the United case States v. Vaello Madero, 142 S. Ct. 1539 (2022), which also raised important questions about equal protection in access to SSI but was rejected by the Supreme Court.133 Attorney Abislaimán-Quílez argued that the plaintiffs have a constitutional right to the same protections and guarantees as other citizens of the United States, including equality before the law and freedom from discrimination by the federal government based on race or ethnicity, and since the Constitution applies wherever a citizen is, the rights of the plaintiffs are protected while in Puerto Rico.134 Attorney Abislaimán-Quílez added that the plaintiffs have natural rights such as protecting their life and dignity, among other factors, and SSI has been fundamental in protecting the natural rights of people in need, so they should be eligible for this program.135 SSI exists to support seniors, people who are blind, and people with disabilities who are eligible based on income and other eligibility criteria. 136 As one of these requirements, the individual must be a resident of the United States, but for the purposes of SSI, the United States is defined

in a geographic manner that includes the continental states and the District of Columbia.137 Furthermore, Abislaimán-Quílez argues that the Privileges and Immunities Clause of the 14th Amendment places limits on the Territorial Clause because it does not allow a separate category of citizens to be formed when Congress establishes statutes that are intended to benefit individuals with uniformity at the national level.138 According to the brief, the interpretation that the Territorial Clause gives complete power over the territories and their inhabitants is equivalent to treating those inhabitants as property at the discretion of Congress, which is only one branch of the federal government.139 The Territorial Clause does not describe or stratify different categories of territories or citizens.140 As part of the Rivera Fuentes case, the U.S. Department of Justice submitted a brief in September 2023 against the expansion of SSI in Puerto Rico. The Department of Justice said that participation in SSI is not a privilege of citizenship and agree that the Supreme Court's decision was appropriate.141 They explained that residents of the territories (except for the Mariana Islands) are not eligible for SSI and anyone who spends 30 consecutive days or more in the territories would not receive the benefit for that period.142 Instead, Congress offers the AABD program to help the same population, although it does not receive the same level of federal funding for this program.143 The difference between the two programs is important since the amount of SSI aid increases each year ($914 dollars in January 2023) while in Puerto Rico, the amount of the AABD program is set at $58 dollars.144 Abislaimán-Quílez argues that SSI is an advanced version of AABD.145 The U.S. Department of Justice argued why this case cannot be successful after the decision in United States v. Vaello Madero, which establishes that Puerto Rico's unique tax situation provides a rational basis for exclusion.146 They say that the exclusion of Puerto Rican residents is

not racial discrimination and that, as in the Vaello Madero case, it is not necessary to involve the Insular Cases to resolve this case.147 Despite this statement that exclusion from SSI is not racial discrimination, attorney Abislaimán-Quílez emphasizes in her response that race and disability are overlapping identities, and that is why there is inequality before the law based on race.148 According to Abislaimán-Quílez, plaintiffs meet all SSI requirements, except for geographic exclusion, and the need for this assistance is more and more urgent, especially due to the growing elderly population.149 “SSI does not provide a definition of geography. However, SSI does not apply to physical characteristics of the landscape; it applies to people,” says Abislaimán-Quílez.150 Geography considers the racial, ethnic, and ancestral characteristics of the inhabitants, and therefore exclusion based on geography does not ignore color [race].151 Abislaimán-Quílez argues that the fact that this emphasis on geography excludes a primarily Hispanic population demonstrates that it is at least partially based on race, ethnicity, and ancestry.152 This opinion is shared by Judge Gustavo Gelpí, who in his opinion in the Vaello Madero case, stressed that this exclusion from federal law that is part de facto on a suspicious classification based on the Hispanic origin of its population, is constitutionally impermissible.153 Regarding differential treatment, Abislaimán-Quílez writes that “there is only one citizenry in one nation. Nowhere does the Constitution authorize Congress to redesign national lines, much less create categories of citizenship.”154 This most recent response filed in October 2023 asks the District Court to reverse its decision.155 In Rivera-Fuentes, plaintiffs reserved the argument to repeal the Insular Cases because these cases create a system of inequality before the law by separating territories and citizens residing in them, without basis on the Constitution.156 Access to Benefits for People with Disabilities In her testimony, Panelist Betzaida Ramos indicated that, in Puerto Rico, 21.7% of the population are people with disabilities, which represents around 687,000 people in Puerto Rico.157 The poverty level of people with disabilities in Puerto Rico is close to 48%; that is, almost half of the population are currently living below the poverty level. And of this nearly

50%, only 23.7% are people who work, compared to 36% in the United States and 44% in the other territories.158 The inequality in the level of assistance provided through various federal programs imposes a unique challenge on people with disabilities in Puerto Rico. Even if a person with disabilities wants to work, they must meet Medicaid eligibility criteria in order to continue receiving that assistance. 159 This requirement forces individuals to decide between continuing to receive the minimum benefit that is barely enough to cover their expenses, or working and risking earning more than the eligibility cap and losing the benefit they need to maintain their health. 160 That is why many individuals often have to decide on what they will spend their minimal income on– whether on food or medicine- and often, they face having to go to the United States to preserve their lives.161 Ms. Ramos said: “If we eliminate these barriers of discrimination, we allow them to contribute to life in society actively, and we would have more Puerto Ricans working, working hand in hand and demonstrating the capacity of Puerto Ricans in any area of life in society.”162 In the testimony, there were arguments about how disparities in access to federal programs and benefits contribute to social and economic challenges in Puerto Rico.163 In written testimony submitted by Resident Commissioner Jenniffer González Colón, she commented that “in those instances when Congress has chosen to treat Puerto Rico differently under a particular federal assistance program, it has relied, either explicitly or implicitly, on the argument that such differential treatment is warranted because individuals and businesses in Puerto Rico do not contribute federal income taxes into the general fund to the same degree as their counterparts in the states.”164 The testimony of veteran Alex Ortiz captures the frustration of the residents of Puerto Rico regarding this inequality – “What many of us do not understand is why Congress and the judicial branch do not act on the issue in favor of the equality of the rights [of] Puerto Ricans who live on the island. At the center of the Insular Cases is the denial of basic civil rights guaranteed by the United States Constitution.”165

FINDING VI - The Committee heard testimony about the effects that limitations on access to public programs have had on certain social groups, including older adults, veterans, and families with minors. Description of Effects on Older Adults The Committee heard testimony about one of the most vulnerable populations who experience the impact of inequality in Puerto Rico every day – older adults, one of the largest social groups in Puerto Rico.166 Panelist Lucy Cruz, President of the community group Grupo de Ocho Comunidades Aledañas al Caño Martín Peña (G8), shared that her organization sees this reality often and sees how government aid is among the few support systems that older adults receive, although it is not enough for their daily needs. She stated that local resources for this population have also decreased – “Almost all the senior centers in the Municipality of San Juan have closed for us. And we have been fighting for years to reopen help centers for the elderly because at least one plate of food a day, at least solves something for them.”167 Mr. José Acarón of AARP Puerto Rico shared that “Puerto Rico ranks seventh in the world in terms of having the oldest population.”168 Additionally, the poverty level in Puerto Rico is four times greater than in the states - in 2019, the poverty level was 43%, while in the United States, the average was 10.5%. 169 Mr. Acarón also noted that although many older adults live alone in the United States, there is usually some access to services in their communities, while, in contrast, that type of network does not exist in Puerto Rico.170 The loneliness of older adults was evident after Hurricane Maria, where it was observed that in many homes, older adults were living alone or even taking care of older people without support from anyone else.171 Mr. Acarón said that “finally, people understood that Puerto Rico is a country that has already aged. It is not aging; it has already aged, and we have not wanted to acknowledge our reality and create a support system for the population.”172 The experience of older adults in Puerto Rico points to the urgent need for

programs like fully covered Medicaid and SSI, which could help approximately 700,000 residents.173 Another challenge this population faces is the lack of a system of long-term care institutions in Puerto Rico. Mr. Acarón mentioned, "an industry of long-term care institutions has not developed, because Medicaid does not pay for the long-term care part either.”174 Along these lines, one of the services required under Medicaid that do not apply to Puerto Rico includes community-based home care services that help older adults receive the necessary care without leaving their homes.175 Acarón shared that AARP Puerto Rico conducted a survey in which "87% of the population wants to age in their home, but we do not have the funds, nor do we have the structure to provide those services. And what's happening, the social evils of, 'I don't have transportation, I live in isolation.' Social isolation causes cognitive conditions, it causes depression, it causes health conditions.”176 Description of Effects on Veterans The Committee also received testimony relevant to the experience of veterans in Puerto Rico and how differential treatment affects them. Panelist Alex Ortiz stated: “The Insular Cases have left Puerto Rican veterans in a state of limbo, denying them certain rights and benefits that they otherwise enjoy with their veterans in the United States. To enjoy these benefits, a veteran living in Puerto Rico only has to move to another state and that's it, as if nothing had happened.” 177 Puerto Rican veterans have contributed significantly to United States conflicts. Mr. Ortiz informed the Committee that: “In the First World War, there were about 18,000; in the Second, over 65,000; in the Korean War, about 61,000 and where our “Borinqueneers” showed how valuable we have been since then; 48,000 in the Vietnam War. And we still do not have official data on how many Puerto Ricans have participated in the war against terrorism, which includes Iraq and Afghanistan. We do know that since 2001 the Puerto Rico National Guard has been deployed more than 18,000 times in service to the nation, including combat zones.”178 The panelist Brig. Gen. Victor Pérez shared the following data about the participation of Puerto Rican residents in the Armed Forces: “More than 250,000 Puerto Ricans have served honorably and bravely throughout history, in all wars, and all contingencies. Per capita, more Puerto Ricans have served than most states in the United States. More than 100,000 veterans live on the island today, and approximately 35,000 men and women currently serve in different regions. It is incredible, after the service and sacrifice defending democracy, freedom, and justice around the world, we return to our country Puerto Rico and we are denied equality and the right to vote for

senators and representatives and for the commander in chief of the Armed Forces, the president of the United States, who are the ones who send us to war.”179 Mr. Ortiz shares this frustration saying, “This lack of representation is what allows us to be subject to discriminatory treatment in many federal programs.”180 Given this limitation of being unable to participate as a citizen fully, testimony pointed out that from a pro-self-determination perspective, the requirement to register for military service can be seen as another form of discrimination resulting from the Territorial Clause.181 Access to Federal Programs for Puerto Rican Veterans Panelist Alex Ortiz shared that many veterans in Puerto Rico live below the poverty level and are of the age to qualify for Social Security.182 Regarding income, approximately 30,117 veterans in Puerto Rico live below the poverty line.183 He argued that SSI would be essential to help these veterans. Aside from these alarming income-related numbers, Puerto Rican veterans also face limited access to health services, including mental health services. Mr. Ortiz explained that retired veterans in the states have TRICARE Prime coverage, a free health plan option that is not available in Puerto Rico.184 Mr. Ortiz shared that according to the 2020 Census, 67.7% of veterans in Puerto Rico are over 55 years old.185 A significant problem that many of these veterans face is that in order to process any document with the Department of Veterans or the Department of Defense, most of the information is online only and is primarily in English.186 The DD-214 form required to request assistance is only in English, presenting barriers for Spanishspeaking veterans in their requests. 187 Additionally, a decline in the veteran population in Puerto Rico is projected in the coming decades, and this means that federal investments for medical services at the local level may also decline - one more reason why veterans who have gone to the United States do not want to return.188

Educational benefits are also applied differently in Puerto Rico. Mr. Ortiz explained that Puerto Rico is considered a foreign place for the GI Bill purposes, which means that the cost-of-living increase is not provided for this benefit.189 Compared to the states, these reduced benefits make it more difficult for veterans to achieve their educational and career goals within the island.190 Mr. Ortiz said that in his own experience, he received $2,700 through the GI Bill when he lived in Rhode Island and only $1,900 under the same law as a student in Puerto Rico.191 Among the veteran community in Puerto Rico, many people left for the states after Hurricane Maria, mainly Florida and Connecticut, to be with their families and receive an increase in benefits. In his testimony, Mr. Ortiz regrets that the same level of federal resources cannot be offered within Puerto Rico, something that could help keep the community intact in Puerto Rico.192 He said: “The reality is that many veterans leave for the United States precisely because they do not have the equality that they know you have when you are in one of the United States. They have SSI, better Medicaid, and better medical services, but not only that, we talk about the family and the children; they have better education. And then all that makes them stay there.”193 Child Tax Credit (CTC) Panelist María Enchautegui, Director of Research and Public Policy at the Youth Development Institute, presented data on the Child Tax Credit (CTC) and its effect on the economy of Puerto Rico. Dr. Enchautegui explained how the child poverty rate has been relatively high and has changed less than the senior poverty rate since the year 2000.194 According to a report published in 2022 by the Youth Development Institute, “approximately 326,000 children, and young people live below the poverty level in Puerto Rico. Of these, over 75% live in households headed by women, with a median of $8,400 annually.”195 The CTC benefit began in Puerto Rico in 1997 with the Taxpayer Relief Act for families with three or more children and was mainly based on people who file income tax.196 In 2021, the

benefit was significantly expanded under the American Rescue Plan (ARPA) and applied to all families with children up to age 17 and there was no requirement for proof of income.197 One significant update was that families with fewer than three children were eligible for the first time.198 Under ARPA, the CTC had a $1.78 billion impact on the economy and a 16% increase in the average family income.199 Since most people in Puerto Rico do not have a federal tax liability, the “Additional Child Tax Credit” applies to them, which calculates 7.6% of their income and results in $1,500 per minor, while, in the United States, 15% of income is calculated.200 This remains one of the most significant differences between Puerto Rico and the United States regarding the CTC.201 Under the current CTC, we have only seen a 1% reduction in the child poverty rate and a 5% change in household income.202 An example of how differential treatment is materialized through the CTC is that it is determined that the funds are paid to taxpayers, and this is the argument for not giving certain funds to Puerto Rico.203 Dr. Enchautegui explained that the Youth Development Institute published a report in which they analyzed the social welfare system in Puerto Rico and came to the conclusion that Puerto Rico is treated in a discretionary manner - sometimes as a state, sometimes like the other territories, and sometimes in a unique way – and frequently it has nothing to do with paying taxes.204

FINDING VII - Discrimination and differential treatment have directly affected the quality of life of the residents of Puerto Rico and have caused an increase in displacement from the island. Several panelists agreed that, over time, the differential treatment towards residents of Puerto Rico, with roots in the Insular Cases, has had a negative effect on the general well-being of the population. Pastor Otoniel Font Nadal of the Fuente de Agua Viva Council of Churches shared in his testimony that the Insular Cases and the territorial doctrine “have affected the identity, the culture of the people of Puerto Rico, understood as culture, knowledge, beliefs, values, customs, and opinions of our people, among other factors. The ambivalence and insecurity of who we are, where we are, and where we are going has impacted the lives, mental health, self-esteem, ability for empowerment, and self-realization of many Puerto Ricans.”205 As a pastor, he has seen firsthand the people of his congregation go to the States to improve their quality of life and obtain benefits that they do not have on the island, and that is why he has opened churches in Florida to serve the community there.206 Pastor Font Nadal shared that he has seen the effect of the emotional issues this has created in the community – the depression that comes with leaving family and home for long periods – and he believes this is part of the social and mental crisis that exists.207 Panelist Lucy Cruz also spoke about seeing firsthand the effects of people leaving Puerto Rico. She described that after Hurricane Maria, people with damaged or destroyed homes received funds to go to the states for temporary shelter because the deeds to their property were not acknowledged in order to receive assistance for repairs or their homes had been destroyed.208 Although this was meant to be a short-term solution, some people stayed in the States because they no longer had the resources to rebuild their homes.209 While communities are being displaced in this way, Ms. Cruz said that Puerto Rico has been changing, attracting new people through Airbnb, and she suggests that it is urgent to find alternatives so that Puerto Rican residents can stay on the island.210 This departure of Puerto Rico residents to the States coincides with data shared by Mr. Laws García, who quoted a drop in population of 11% according to the Census and said, “This means that the discrimination and inequality institutionalized by the Insular Cases are separating

families and destroying communities on the island.”211 Laws García added that this is the cumulative result of the unequal treatment of Puerto Rico.212 This can also harm Puerto Rico since funds are received according to the population census numbers.213 Migration to the states reflects the urgent need to resolve the inequities faced by the residents of Puerto Rico, who seek the same opportunities to improve their quality of life as any other citizen.214 According to Mr. Acarón, this can only change with the creation of a holistic economic development plan that includes various social determinants and prioritizes quality of life and access to resources for Puerto Ricans.215 IV. Recommendations Proposed in the Testimony Throughout the testimony, the Committee heard different perspectives on how the political situation and quality of life in Puerto Rico could be improved. Although these ideas are not recommendations that were formulated by the Committee, it is important to integrate them in this memorandum to present the options that stand out in the testimony. The Committee will use this information to develop its recommendations for the final report of this project. The Role of the Courts vs. the Political Process According to several panelists, Puerto Rico will only emerge from the limitations it currently faces with the Insular Cases through a political process, and not a judicial one, since the courts have continually refused to resolve this problem.216 Dr. Rivera Ramos commented that the Supreme Court has “created a kind of political doctrine concerning the condition of the territories…therefore, the way out is the political route: putting pressure on Congress, putting pressure on the Executive, trying to join alliances, solidarity with sectors of the population of the United States that can understand this idea...it has to be a movement that is not focused only on the political issue, but that in some way has to be associated with social, economic, cultural aspects of the various sectors of the Puerto Rican population.”217 Several panelists argued that it must be demanded that Congress take action, although this is difficult without adequate

representation.218 Currently, attention is only paid to Puerto Rico's situation periodically when there is a relevant case before the Supreme Court, but without this, there has been no action.219 The Role of International Law Some panelists shared testimonies about the importance of managing Puerto Rico's territorial situation through the perspective of international law and not as a domestic issue of the United States. The United States has signed and ratified the 1966 International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, which in its first article proclaims: “All peoples have the right to selfdetermination. By virtue of that right they freely determine their political status and freely pursue their economic, social, and cultural development."220 Along these lines, additional arguments maintain that Puerto Rico should not be considered an internal issue of the United States but rather as a nation that has been occupied for more than 125 years, whose access to international law has been violated, and can only move forward through decolonization and independence.221 Panelists recommended analyzing the issue of Puerto Rico within the global context with an emphasis on human rights.222 The challenge would be whether the United States government would be willing to pass this situation on to international organizations with experience on colonial issues, since the United States has not complied with the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.223 The U.S. Congress must also confront the question of whether Puerto Rico is a colony under current understanding of international law.224 According to the testimony of Panelist Dr. Iyari Ríos González of the Association of Economists of Puerto Rico, this would be the best-case scenario since the problem of colonization is aggravated when the territory's residents are forced to depend on and migrate to the other entity.225 Panelist Rafael Rodríguez argued that Puerto Rico's territorial status has been the focus

of countless forums, working groups, and other efforts. Still, these have not had significant results because they have not addressed the root of the problem – prioritizing self-determination under international law.226 Treating this as a domestic issue would be a repetition of previous efforts.227 Self-Determination If self-determination were to be considered as an option for Puerto Rico, within a referendum, for example, the testimony maintains that the United States must comply with the principles of international law and collaborate with international organizations in the monitoring of the process to ensure that voters have access to all the information and be aware of the specific consequences of each option. 228 For the United States Congress to hold a public hearing on this issue to better understand the mechanics of how this process could be carried out would be an essential step forward.229 A self-determination process would be an essential step for democracy.230 According to Mr. Laws García, “For Puerto Rico to have an opportunity to definitively address its civil rights and the civil rights of American citizens in Puerto Rico, Congress must pass legislation to offer Puerto Rico the opportunity to decide between options that are not territorial. That would be the most important recommendation I think this Committee can make for the Commission.”231 In Mr. Laws García's perspective, Congress has the responsibility to legislate so that Puerto Rico can choose its political future and, in doing so, would act following its ideal of government by consent.232 Additionally, it was recommended that the Committee follow developments on legislative proposals that support selfdetermination. 233 Bills proposing a plebiscite between three options for voters in Puerto Rico were introduced in 2023 in both the House of Representatives (HR 2757, introduced for a second time) and Senate (S. 3231). 234 Elimination of the Insular Cases Revoking the Insular Cases would not be the only solution since it does not resolve political discrimination, such as the inability to vote at the federal level, which is only reserved for the states. On the other hand, decolonization does not require the revocation of the Insular Cases.235 In written testimony submitted by Resident Commissioner Jenniffer González Colón, she also

mentions that, furthermore, eliminating the Insular Cases would not put an end to discrimination, especially regarding the appropriation of funds and the availability of social programs.236 “Only by achieving a non-territorial status – either Statehood or Nationhood – can do that [resolving inequalities in Puerto Rico]; and only the U.S. Congress – not the courts – achieve that.” 237 In general, panelists stated that a political movement that transcends traditional divisions is necessary to decolonize Puerto Rico.238 Eliminating the Insular Cases could reduce disparities in society and eliminate the harmful contradictions with which Congress and the Supreme Court treat Puerto Rico – this would result in a different experience for residents.239 Calling for the revocation of the Insular Cases could be an important action taken by the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights that would promote recognition towards equality for Puerto Rico.240 It is important to reevaluate the relationship between Puerto Rico and the United States and work toward a solution, not only for the current problems but to advance equality and justice for the residents of Puerto Rico.241 Statehood Another perspective is that, although there are three non-territorial options for Puerto Rico – statehood, independence, and free association – statehood is the only one that offers equal treatment and the right to vote.242 Other Recommendations o Support House Resolution 314 which recognizes that the decisions of the United States Supreme Court discriminate against Puerto Ricans.243 o The Committee should recommend that Puerto Rico receive equal treatment under the TRICARE Prime program. 244 o It is recommended that the Committee consider a declaration that the Insular Cases are a form of discrimination against the civil rights of the residents of Puerto Rico.245

### Statehood Key---Broad

#### [Puerto Rico is demanding statehood + are willing to appease Trump]

Jaime **Molera 25** 3-28-2025 [Jaime Morela is an American politician who served as the 18th Superintendent of Public Instruction for the state of Arizona, appointed by Governor Jane Hull to replace Lisa Graham Keegan, and served from 2001 to 2003, "AZ Republicans showed why Puerto Rico statehood should be a GOP cause," Arizona Capitol Times | Your Inside Source for Arizona Government, Politics and Business, https://azcapitoltimes.com/news/2025/03/28/az-republicans-showed-why-puerto-rico-statehood-should-be-a-gop-cause/] AND?

Last November, Arizona’s Latinos overwhelmingly swung to the right side of the aisle. We saw this trend across the country and many were surprised, but we weren’t. While Democrats told Latinos what they should care about, Arizona Republicans listened to them, understood their values and demonstrated to them that conservatives share their priorities.

Now, it’s time for Republicans in other parts of the country to take notice and follow our lead.

President Donald Trump won the state of Arizona comfortably, driven in part by significant gains with Latinos. In Santa Cruz County, which is 85% Hispanic, Trump received an 8-point increase in his vote share compared to his 2020 total. In Yuma County, which is 60% Hispanic, Trump gained a 13-point bump. These numbers are unprecedented for modern Republican presidential candidates.

Latinos’ [rightward](https://www.newsweek.com/arizona-maps-show-how-state-flipped-donald-trump-1983430) shift in Arizona should be a case study for the Republican Party. Trump won big among Latinos in Arizona because he spoke about their concerns like inflation, crime and traditional family values, not identity politics or wokeness. And yes, he focused on immigration too, which clearly resonated with Latino voters in Arizona who agree on the need to prioritize safety along the border. Arizona Republicans and President Trump listened and focused on the issues Latinos care about, winning them over in historic numbers.

We’ve seen this shift across the country and across the diverse Latino community. In the recent election, **Puerto Ricans made it** explicitly **clear** that they **are ready to vote for Republicans**, and **they are ready for statehood.**

In 2024, Puerto Rico [elected](https://www.mcvpr.com/newsroom-publications-2024_PR_Election_Results) Jenniffer González-Colón, an ally of President Trump, as governor. Her party also won legislative majorities in Puerto Rico’s House and Senate, which elected Republicans to lead each body. That success coincided with Republican gains among Puerto Ricans in places like Osceola County, Florida, and Berks County, Pennsylvania. On top of that, the island’s most recent “shadow” senator, Zoraida Buxó Santiago, is a Republican who endorsed President Trump last year. The trend is clear. Puerto Ricans want to support Republicans. And at the same time that Puerto Ricans were turning out for President Trump and Republicans, they were also making their voices heard on the issue of statehood.

**In the recent election, Puerto Ricans**[**voted**](https://ballotpedia.org/Puerto_Rico_Statehood,_Independence,_or_Free_Association_Referendum_(2024))**overwhelmingly once again in favor of statehood**. That follows previous elections in 2020, 2017 and 2012 when Puerto Ricans voted for statehood. Time after time, they have made their wishes clear, but politicians in Washington haven’t listened… yet.

**Republicans** in Washington D.C. and across the country **must respond to Puerto Ricans’ support for their party and statehood**. **Listening to them and advocating for their cause** is exactly how Republicans won over Latinos in Arizona. It’s largely how President Trump won our state. And while Republicans have not always listened to what Puerto Ricans want when it comes to statehood out of fear that the island would only send Democrats to Washington, it’s time for Republicans to flip that misguided conventional wisdom on its head because it’s simply not the case. In fact, recent evidence shows the very opposite is true.

President Trump famously [said](https://www.rev.com/transcripts/donald-trump-maga-event-speech-transcript-north-carolina-rally), “We’re one people, one family and one glorious nation under God.” **It’s time we** live up to those words by **embrac**ing **Puerto Rico as a full member of** our **America**n family. Republicans in Arizona and across **the country should champion statehood** because it’s in the best interest of our party and our nation.

### Statehood Key---Stability

#### The topic of the “Puerto Rico question” is one of rich debate – ensuring stable aff and neg ground on both sides

#### Puerto Rico is at risk of societal collapse due to systemic economic shocks and government mismanagement.

Cheatham and Roy, 22 [Amelia Cheatham is a master’s candidate at Columbia University’s School of International and Public Affairs. Diana Roy covers Latin America and immigration for CFR. "Puerto Rico: A U.S. Territory in Crisis," Council on Foreign Relations, 9-29-2022, https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/puerto-rico-us-territory-crisis]

What does its territory status mean?

Article 4, Section 3, of the U.S. Constitution, known as the territorial clause, gives Congress broad authority to govern U.S. territories. Puerto Rico is the most populous U.S. territory. Others include American Samoa, Guam, the Northern Mariana Islands, and the Virgin Islands. They are granted various measures of self-rule, but lack their own sovereignty.

Though Puerto Ricans are U.S. citizens eligible for military conscription and subject to federal laws, they lack full congressional representation. A single member of the U.S. House of Representatives, known as the resident commissioner, represents the island’s interests but has no voting power; Jenniffer González-Colón has held the position since 2017. Nor can Puerto Rico residents cast ballots in U.S. general elections, though presidential candidates curried support on the island in 2020 to win votes from the Puerto Rican diaspora in the primary race.

Puerto Rico also lacks economic sovereignty. The U.S. dollar is its currency, U.S. federal regulators oversee its businesses, and U.S. laws dictate its trade policy. Residents pay most federal taxes; their contributions totaled more than $4 billion in fiscal year 2021. However, Puerto Ricans generally do not pay federal income tax, and they continue to enjoy the tax exemptions that have historically incentivized outside investment.

Largely because of these exemptions, residents receive fewer federal benefits than other Americans. Puerto Rico residents are ineligible for the Earned Income Tax Credit and earn less, on average, in Social Security and veterans’ benefits. However, some benefits could change as a result of legal challenges. In August 2020, a district court judge ruled that denying island residents several forms of federal assistance, including Supplemental Security Income (SSI), is unconstitutional. The federal government appealed the decision, and in November 2021, the case was heard by an appeals court, which held that Puerto Rico’s exclusion from the SSI program violates the Fifth Amendment. In April 2022, the Supreme Court reversed that decision.

Like most U.S. states, the island receives billions of dollars more in federal spending, including on Medicare and Social Security, than its residents pay in taxes. In addition, the U.S. government has allocated more than $25 billion in disaster-recovery funding to the island since 2017.

What is the island’s economic outlook?

Puerto Rico continues to be ravaged by a sustained recession.

Annual economic growth fell by roughly 12.5 percent overall between 2004 and 2020, while Puerto Rico’s population shrunk by more than 16 percent. It has also struggled under a large public debt in recent years, totaling about $70 billion—or 68 percent of gross domestic product (GDP)—in 2020. Puerto Rico’s downward spiral has been compounded by natural disasters, government mismanagement and corruption, and the COVID-19 pandemic.

Unable to borrow on global markets, Puerto Rico was in economic limbo for years after turning over its budget to an independent control board appointed by Washington as part of a plan to restructure its debts. Making matters worse, in 2019, U.S. authorities arrested former high-level officials in a corruption scandal, leading to the resignation of Governor Ricardo Rosselló.

The island’s average household income is about one-third of the U.S. average, and its poverty rate is more than twice that of the poorest state, Mississippi. Meanwhile, the territory’s unemployment rate has stayed at almost twice the national average for the past decade, at times reaching double digits. However, it fell to about 8 percent in 2021 and has continued to drop.

What has driven the crisis?

Experts say the island’s **economic crisis** is rooted in [PDF] twentieth-century legislation that encouraged Puerto Rico’s reliance on debt to fill federal funding gaps. It did this by giving bond investors higher returns and loosening borrowing limits. Since 1917, lenders to Puerto Rico have been exempt from local, state, and federal taxes—the so-called triple tax exemption—effectively boosting their profits and making the island a more attractive investment. The territory’s constitution also allows Puerto Rico to balance its budget with its debt, among other provisions that facilitate borrowing.

The debt problem accelerated after 1996, when the U.S. government began phasing out Internal Revenue Code Section 936. This provision had allowed American businesses to operate tax-free in Puerto Rico, which critics viewed as a windfall for wealthy corporations. Section 936’s repeal triggered a deterioration of Puerto Rico’s manufacturing sector, and the territorial government increasingly turned to debt to cover its spending.

The 2008 global financial crisis hit Puerto Rico especially hard, with the recession further lowering tax revenues, souring an early-2000s construction boom, and giving investors pause. The territorial government implemented austerity measures, including layoffs of public workers, that sent unemployment soaring. It also crafted dubious deals to balance its budget, including letting government agencies borrow from one another to pay back bonds.

On top of that, experts say, much of this money was poorly spent. Leaders failed to parlay the billions of dollars they borrowed into strong institutions, a deficit laid bare by the natural disasters that have devastated Puerto Rico’s underfunded and poorly maintained infrastructure. Hurricane Maria brought ruin to the island in 2017, causing about three thousand deaths [PDF], knocking out the electrical power grid, and costing tens of billions of dollars. An earthquake at the start of 2020, the island’s strongest in a century, also created a power blackout. Months later, the pandemic exposed the territory’s disjointed and inefficient health system, which critics say has impeded care for COVID-19 patients. In September 2022, Hurricane Fiona triggered severe flooding and mudslides and knocked out power to more than one million homes and businesses.

The combination of government mismanagement and unrelenting natural disasters has driven an exodus from the territory, further depressing economic activity, ~~crippling~~ [collapsing] schools and other institutions, and leaving fewer taxpayers to shoulder the debt. More than 130,000 residents fled to the mainland after Hurricane Maria alone. Today, more people of Puerto Rican descent live on the mainland than on the island, and a 2019 study projected that the territory’s population would fall by another 8 percent [PDF] by 2024.

#### Territory status ensures economic disadvantages across multiple sectors. Statehood builds in resilience to shocks by expanding federal benefits.

Borgen Project, 22 [BORGEN Magazine is produced by The Borgen Project, an influential humanitarian organization working to make global poverty a focus of U.S. foreign policy. "Statehood: A Solution to Impoverishment in Puerto Rico," BORGEN, 9-6-2022, https://www.borgenmagazine.com/impoverishment-in-puerto-rico/]

How the Island’s Status as a Territory Impacts Poverty

Though its political status is not the sole cause of poverty in Puerto Rico, the lack of **federal investment** or **choice over economic policy** that comes from its limited sovereignty puts the population at a significant disadvantage.

One area where this disadvantage plays out is in the field of medical care. Government-funded public health care plans provide insurance to most of the island’s residents. Due to federal limits on spending in territories, the programs in Puerto Rico rarely receive proper funding. For instance, research from 2013 estimates that Puerto Rico usually receives a federal reimbursement rate of around 23% for Medicaid, but if it were a state, its needs show that it would receive 83% reimbursement.

Basic health indicators demonstrate the impact of these disparities. In 2017, the prevalence of diseases such as diabetes and high blood pressure stood 6.7% and 12.4% higher, respectively, in Puerto Rico than in the mainland U.S.

SNAP Versus NAP

Another area where the territorial status has had an impact on poverty in Puerto Rico is its food systems. The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, also known as SNAP, is a tool used by the federal government to help provide greater access to food for needy families in the U.S. Puerto Rico does not have access to this. Instead, it relies on a program known as the Nutritional Assistance Program (NAP), which came about in 1981. While SNAP uses a flexible budget to adjust to the needs of the poor that it serves, NAP provides a fixed amount of money that requires a vote in Congress in order for funding to be increased.

**Before** the hurricanes of 2017 and the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, 1.5 million Puerto Ricans, including more than half of all Puerto Rican children, experienced food insecurity. When disaster struck and needs increased, these people found themselves dealing with an inflexible food welfare system.

Statehood as a Solution

In response to the inequality that exists between the impoverishment in Puerto Rico and the rest of the nation that governs it, lawmakers in Congress and on the island have taken up the fight for statehood. Statehood would offer up to $12.5 billion more in federal benefits and give Puerto Ricans a say in the politics that affect them the most.

#### Statehood ensures short-term stability and builds resilience against hurricanes, earthquakes, and economic shocks.

Soto and Colón, 21 [Rep. Darren Soto (D-Fla.) and Del. Jenniffer González Colón (R-Puerto Rico), "The case for Puerto Rico statehood," Hill, 3-18-2021, https://thehill.com/blogs/congress-blog/politics/543761-the-case-for-puerto-rico-statehood/]

The reasons for Puerto Rico statehood are simple and compelling. A majority of Puerto Rican voters yet again chose statehood in November 2020. The ballot was a clear "yes or no" question in a high-turnout general election. They cast their vote after suffering through a long recession, deadly hurricanes, powerful earthquakes, fiscal board budget cuts and now COVID-19. Many believe that two U.S. senators and four U.S. representatives will **help them** greatly in resolving these crises.

The opposition is far more complicated to decipher.

First, there is the fictional concept of an "enhanced commonwealth." This "having it all without paying for it" option is promoted as an upgrade to the current status but is found nowhere in our Constitution. It presumes Puerto Rico can get all the benefits of a state without ever becoming one. Of course, the federal government will never agree to such chicanery. Its support is found mostly by a minority of Puerto Ricans on the island.

Second, there is independence. The peak of hypocrisy, this movement is predominantly supported by Puerto Ricans living stateside. Many in the Puerto Rican diaspora have forgotten the realities of an island that does not enjoy the full advantages of the states where past generations have settled. They disguise their stalling tactics in attention-grabbing and misleading phrases like "self-determination" or "considering all options." They confuse and muddy the issue, hoping that most Puerto Rican voters will one day change their minds. They won't. The vast majority of Puerto Ricans prize their American citizenship, serve in the military in higher percentages than most states and enjoy a quality of life boosted by billions in federal funding.

Election after election has proven a clear consensus: It is time to right the historic wrong of colonialism by paving the way for Puerto Ricans to enjoy the full rights of their U.S. citizenship and gain the representation they deserve. Statehood is ultimately the best, most likely option. The bipartisan Puerto Rico Statehood Admissions Act would bring that option to fruition. Delay tactics like Status Conventions only doom Puerto Rico to more endless debates, minority rule and another generation of second-class citizens living under a failed territorial status.

Should the current status be preserved, Puerto Ricans will continue navigating their economic challenges without protections afforded to states. Their medical system will continue suffering as federal funding continues falling short of their needs. While these problems are being debated in Congress, statehood offers a simple solution that would enable Puerto Rico to finally be on stable ground as it recovers from natural disasters and fiscal issues. It would not absolve them of responsibility but would offer paths to reform that could result in a more robust economy and a prospering people.

The American citizens living in Puerto Rico have spoken. It is time we listened and empowered them, not undermined their democratic process. They cannot afford to wait. Ignoring the will of voters only perpetuates 120 years of injustice, and we must do better. This is an issue of democracy and of guaranteeing equality for citizens. Delaying admittance of Puerto Rico as a state to our union would be a direct contradiction of our nation's democratic values.

It's time to move forward and pass the bipartisan Puerto Rico Statehood Admissions Act.

#### That provides direct representation to Puerto Ricans and enables economic prosperity.

Han, 21 [Sung Been Han is a writer for the Student Movement at Andrews University, "Statehood for Puerto Rico," Andrews University Student Movement, 10-6-2021, https://www.andrews.edu/life/student-movement/issues/2021-10-06/statehood-for-puerto-rico.html]

Since the end of the Spanish American War in 1898, Puerto Rico has been a territory of the U.S.–and just like any other territory owned by the U.S., Puerto Rico receives federal funding to support its economy, and its people are given U.S. citizenship. However, a pro-statehood party has recently been on the rise demanding the statehood of Puerto Rico. In the latest vote in November of 2020, over 52% of Puerto Rican voters voted yes for the idea of Puerto Rico becoming the United State’s 51st state; however, the U.S. Congress has yet to approve. This has been Puerto Rico’s **seventh attempt** to become a state since the 1960s, which raises the question: Why are Puerto Ricans so persistent on becoming a state and why has Congress been so against it?

At first glance, reasons for wanting to become a state of the U.S. seem obvious. At the moment, Puerto Rico has its own government, under the direct jurisdiction of the U.S.–however, it has very little representation, with only one representative in congress. If the U.S. were to grant statehood to Puerto Rico, Puerto Rico would gain more power in government with the addition of two senators and representatives. In addition, they would qualify for more U.S. federal programs that would greatly benefit the progression of their economy. In an interview on CBSN, Pedro Pierluisi, Governor of Puerto Rico, explained, “We want to have the same rights. We want to vote for president, have congressional representation — voting congressional representation — and equal treatment in all the federal programs. It's about time that happens."

Puerto Rico becoming a state could benefit the rest of the U.S. as well, since granting statehood means that the U.S. government would start collecting federal income and corporate taxes. According to a government report published in 2014, if Puerto Rico was a state in 2009, the U.S. could have received about 9 billion dollars just in income tax alone. Ideally, Puerto Rico becoming a state and gaining additional federal funding would allow it to prosper economically.

### Statehood Key---Colonialism

#### Providing Puerto Rican’s self-determination is a reversal to a long colonial history

**Cohan 19** [Erin Cohan, Vice President and Chief of Staff American Progress, Public Policy at Amazon, Puerto Rico: The Time Has Come for Progressives To Support Self-Determination for Puerto Rico, 08-19 <https://www.americanprogress.org/article/time-come-progressives-support-self-determination-puerto-rico/> , Nicu]

The Time Has Come for Progressives To Support Self-Determination for Puerto Rico

The recent upheaval in Puerto Rico demonstrates that now, more than ever, progressives must incorporate Puerto Rican self-determination into policy and political agendas.

Over the past several weeks, the world has watched as Puerto Ricans—on the island, in the diaspora in the mainland United States, and around the world—took to the streets in incredible numbers to denounce the actions of Puerto Rico’s government leadership. The culmination of these protests occurred when Gov. Ricardo Rosselló announced his resignation, effective August 2. What followed was constitutional turmoil on the island, with the appointment of former Resident Commissioner Pedro Pierluisi by Gov. Rosselló, additional public outcry, and Pierluisi’s eventual removal by unanimous Supreme Court ruling. The constitutional successor to Rosselló, Justice Secretary Wanda Vázquez, was sworn in as governor on August 7, and tensions seem to have cooled.

The force with which Puerto Ricans showed up during this crisis should not go unnoticed. Puerto Rico has a strong and admirable culture of engagement; its residents are proud and compassionate, regularly participating in the political process. As Puerto Ricans demand a greater say over their own leaders, progressives should not lose sight of the powerlessness inherent in Puerto Rico’s relationship with the federal government. Puerto Ricans do not have voting representation in Congress and cannot vote for president in the general election, though they do participate in party primaries. Puerto Ricans still show up at high rates to vote in their local, quadrennial elections—at times, at a rate 50 percent higher than voters in the mainland United States. And despite all Puerto Rico has been through since the devastating hurricanes in 2017, its resilient people recently rose up against their government to demand accountability—and they got it.

At a time when tensions in Puerto Rico have reached an all-time high, progressives and federal policymakers are at an inflection point in their ongoing relationship. Despite efforts from mainland lawmakers and stakeholder groups, Puerto Rico was forced to live through a brutal initial recovery after Hurricane Maria and continues to endure abhorrent treatment by the Trump administration, which seems to relish in playing politics with people’s basic human needs and livelihoods.

The United States bears responsibility for much of Puerto Rico’s crisis

It has never been clearer that the colonial relationship between the United States and Puerto Rico has been the root cause of the injustice that the island residents have suffered, both during the storm recovery and for several decades before. At the end of the Spanish American War in 1898, the United States invaded Puerto Rico and seized control over the island from Spain through the Treaty of Paris. At the time of the invasion, Puerto Rico was already a nation in the sociological sense, although still under Spanish colonial domination. Even though Congress extended U.S. citizenship to Puerto Ricans in 1917, it was only in 1952 that a very limited form of local self-government was afforded to Puerto Ricans. The local self-government is limited by the application of congressional and federal laws, regulations, actions, and federal court decisions. Despite possessing what is generally considered to be an advanced, democratic local constitution, it is that limited grant of self-rule that has now proven to be politically and practically bankrupt. In addition, colonialism is a form of racism, and the residents of this island continue to face exclusion, discrimination, and exploitation in many forms.

Puerto Rico faces a long road of recovery ahead, not only from the immediate impact of the devastating storms but also from a long-standing and ongoing economic crisis. The United States bears responsibility for much of this crisis, as it is a result of the country’s colonial relationship with Puerto Rico as well as a number of misguided federal policy decisions—including the phaseout of Section 936 of the U.S. tax code—that eliminated significant incentives for business investment in Puerto Rico, causing the island to spiral into economic collapse and resulting in a pattern of problematic fiscal decisions that made matters worse for decades to come.

Progressives and progressive institutions must support Puerto Rico’s right to decide its own future.

Resolving Puerto Rico’s political status is the only way to begin to address the island’s significant economic crisis. Progressive institutions have traditionally remained neutral on the topic of the political status of Puerto Rico, despite being lobbied by advocates on all sides of the issue. As progressives find themselves in a new era of attacks on democracy and government institutions, they are also working to propose bold new policy agendas for future leaders to undo years of harm and build a strong, resilient future. Progressive institutions in the mainland United States should begin to take seriously the topic of the political status of Puerto Rico and build it into the larger policy discussions surrounding democratic values. It is time for progressives to firmly declare support for a fair and equitable process of self-determination to give the people of Puerto Rico agency to decide their future.

Puerto Rico has held five previous status plebiscites, or referendums, all of which were nonbinding and regarded as political exercises manipulated by the party in power—and in some cases, mainland U.S. politicians and U.S. corporate and other interests—to secure their desired outcome. It is for this reason that stakeholders must work across party lines to ensure this process remains free of undue political influence. In supporting self-determination for Puerto Rico, progressives must call on Congress to pass legislation that recognizes the right of Puerto Rico to its self-determination and to work in concert with the people of Puerto Rico to create an inclusive, open, and fair process by which all noncolonial and nonterritorial options are examined and considered as permanent solutions. Legislation must also include sufficient federal funding and encompass any regulations necessary to bring this process to final fruition, including provisions that clearly state that the outcome is binding and recognized by the U.S. government.

For too long, the Puerto Rican people have been denied the right to determine their own political future. Instead of empowering them, the United States has often treated Puerto Ricans in a fundamentally unfair and undemocratic manner. Puerto Rico is home to more than 3 million U.S. citizens and is a strong and vibrant society with its own unique culture, traditions, and vision for the future. The Puerto Rican people’s right to determine their own status in our democracy is long overdue.

Progressives and progressive institutions should take no other position on the political status of Puerto Rico than self-determination. And once the people of Puerto Rico have declared their intent through an inclusive and fair process, progressives should work to help the island and the federal government implement any changes so that Puerto Rico has the tools it needs to recover and rebuild toward a prosperous future.

#### Puerto Rico has been historically held at a disadvantage to other US territories.

**Joffe and Jesse 16** [Marc D. Joffe and Jesse Martinez, Mercatus Center, George Mason University, Origins of the Puerto Rico Fiscal Crisis, Meracatus Center, <file:///D:/Downloads/Joffe-Puerto-Rico-Fiscal-Crisis-v1.pdf>, Nicu]

Puerto Rico is facing a severe fiscal crisis. As this study was being completed, most knowledgeable observers were convinced that the commonwealth and other public-sector entities on the island would fail to service their debts on time and in full, making default and debt restructuring inevitable. The financial press and mainstream news outlets have provided and will continue to provide detailed coverage and commentary on the evolving crisis. The purpose of this paper is to add to the discussion by providing historical and institutional perspectives. We explore how certain events in Puerto Rico’s 118-year-long association with the United States produced economic and governing institutions unable to balance revenues and expenditures. We then give some examples of contemporary institutional problems including the island’s issues regarding its pension, healthcare, and correctional systems and offer some broad policy proposals. A data appendix provides annual Puerto Rico debt totals from 1910 to 2015 gathered from commonwealth annual reports and other historical sources. HISTORICAL SURVEY Puerto Rico’s history has bequeathed the island political institutions that are unable to balance revenues and expenditures, along with an economy that is dominated by the public sector and unable to address the unintended consequences of congressional action. Further, the roots of Puerto Rico’s troubles extend much deeper into Puerto Rico’s past than many observers realize. Developments before Full Democracy Spain colonized Puerto Rico in the early 16th century and governed the island until 1898. During the Spanish colonial period, Puerto Rico had little political autonomy and was largely ruled by governors appointed in Madrid. MERCATUS CENTER AT GEORGE MASON UNIVERSITY 4 In November 1897, the Spanish government issued La Carta Autonómica—a charter granting Puerto Rico substantial self-rule.1 Fernando Picó links the charter’s implementation to the influence of Puerto Rico’s Autonomist Party, which had been formed a decade earlier.2 Others characterize the charter as a reaction to the growing independence movement in neighboring Cuba3 and to fear of US intervention.4 The United States invaded and occupied Puerto Rico during the Spanish American War of 1898, stripping the new autonomous government of its powers and imposing military rule.5 In April 1900, Congress passed the Foraker Act, restoring civilian government. The act provided for an elected lower legislative house, with both the territory’s governor and upper house appointed by the US president— still leaving the island with less autonomy than it had at the end of Spanish rule. Congress’s approach to Puerto Rico differed from its handling of other territories. Arizona, New Mexico, and Oklahoma—all territories at the time—had fully elected legislatures. “Congress’s approach to Puerto Rico differed from its handling of other territories. Arizona, New Mexico, and Oklahoma—all territories at the time—had fully elected legislatures.” Suspicion of Puerto Rico’s Spanish speaking elite and condescension toward the territory’s general public was captured in an 1899 letter to the New York Times: Turn this island over to the dominant class, and it will be Spanish in all but name a hundred years from now. Make a district of Puerto Rico. Appoint a commission of citizens of the United States to govern it. Introduce a few hundred school teachers. Organize a system of free schools, teaching nothing but English, and in a few years a portion of these people can be safely admitted into the Government. . . . The people are a lighthearted, simple-minded, harmless, indolent, docile people, and while they gamble and are fond of wine, women, music, and dancing, they are honest and sober. They seem to realize that labor there has no reward, and that their existence is not much improved by the small share they receive of what they produce. Therefore they had just as well not labor at all. As Ignorant and simple as they are, they hope a change of government will improve their miserable condition. Aside from offering less democratic control, the 56th Congress declined to give Puerto Ricans US citizenship, while granting it to Hawaiians. The lack of US citizenship placed Puerto Rico residents in a legal limbo, unable to travel abroad without a US government endorsement. That inequity was resolved when Congress passed the Jones-Shafroth Act in 1917,12 which granted US citizenship to any Puerto Rican who did not explicitly refuse it. new law also replaced Puerto Rico’s unelected Executive Council with an elected Senate. One provision of the Jones-Shafroth Act had unintended consequences that still resonate today. The law exempted interest on Puerto Rico government bonds from federal, state, and local income taxation in the United States, making Puerto Rico municipal bonds attractive to tax-sensitive investors throughout the country.13 At the same time, however, the act limited government borrowing to 7 percent of the total assessed value of Puerto Rico property. The granting of US citizenship to Puerto Ricans would later facilitate mass migration to the United States mainland. During the 1920s, approximately 42,000 Puerto Ricans—representing about 3 percent of the island’s population— left for the mainland. After World War II, the pace of migration rose sharply,14 limiting economic growth and draining Puerto Rico of many ambitious workers and entrepreneurs. Three years after the Jones-Shafroth Act was enacted, Washington Senator Wesley Jones introduced the Merchant Marine Act of 1920, which prevents foreign-flagged ships from transporting goods between the US mainland and overseas territories such as Puerto Rico. The impact on Puerto Rico, Guam, Alaska, and Hawaii was and remains higher shipping expenses— increasing costs for offshore consumers and raising the prices of products shipped to the continental United States. Although Puerto Rico’s economy performed well during the initial years under American control, much of the benefit flowed to absentee owners, including large US-based sugar companies. Agricultural wages, typically less than $1 per day, were below those reported in Hawaii, Cuba, and Honduras.15 In the late 1920s and early 1930s, Puerto Rico’s economy was buffeted by two major hurricanes and the worldwide Great Depression. Wages fell and unemployment increased. Between 1929 and 1933, national income fell from $176 million to $134 million.16

#### Puerto Rico’s position as “territory” creates an “in but not of” and “separate but not equal” dynamic of control that ensures perpetual colonial control and violence over the region

**Cordova 23**[Andrés l. Córdova, opinion contributor, The Hill, Confronting the Unfair Limitations of Civil Rights in Puerto Rico, 01-27, <https://thehill.com/opinion/civil-rights/3833376-confronting-the-unfair-limitations-of-civil-rights-in-puerto-rico/>, Nicu]

The United States Commission on Civil Rights is an independent, bipartisan agency established by Congress, charged with studying and collecting information related to discrimination or a denial of equal protection of the laws under the Constitution because of race, color, religion, sex, age, disability, national origin or in the administration of justice. In line with the Federal Advisory Committee Act, the commission recently established advisory committees in the U.S. Territories, and the Puerto Rico Advisory Committee was established in 2022. The advisory committee, which I chair, is composed of 12 members who, freely and voluntarily, represent as a body the broad political spectrum that characterizes Puerto Rican politics, not limited to their identification with the national political parties.

Throughout 2022, the advisory committee has held multiple public meetings to discuss the civil right issues that affect the residents of Puerto Rico. Upon deliberation by members of the committee it agreed, unanimously, that the underlying and fundamental issue which impinges on civil right matters in the island is its current political arrangement with the United States.

Puerto Rico was ceded to the United States by Spain in the Treaty of Paris of 1898. Article IX of the treaty states that the civil rights and political status of the natural inhabitants of the territories hereby ceded to the United States shall be determined by Congress. Throughout the early 20th century the Supreme Court articulated in several cases, starting with the infamous Downes v. Bidwell (1900), the doctrine of unincorporated territories, possessions belonging to but are not part of the United States, in the segregationist language of one its cases. These cases, referred collectively as the Insular Cases, have allowed for the selective application of constitutional rights its inhabitants, today citizens of the United States. This doctrine was, and is applied to this day to Puerto Rico, Guam, United States Virgin Islands and the Northern Mariana Islands, each with its own spin.

In 1900, Congress legislated the Foraker Act, transitioning military rule to a civil government in Puerto Rico. This legislation affirmed United States sovereignty and imposed a local government in Puerto Rico beholden to federal authority. This included the power to repeal legislation, the creation of a governmental structure that consolidated legislative and executive functions in a single body, composed mostly of non-native inhabitants, imposed tariffs on goods exchanged between Puerto Rico and the United States and defined the limits of territorial authority.

In 1917 Congress approved the Jones-Shafroth Act conferring United States citizenship on Puerto Ricans and partially modifying the government structure. In a later decision by the Supreme Court, Balzac v. Porto Rico (1922) the Supreme Court ruled that although Puerto Ricans enjoyed statutory citizenship, as an unincorporated territory it did not have right to a jury trial in criminal cases, as required under the Sixth Amendment of the United States. This case continues to exemplify the limits of citizenship under the territorial clause. The Insular Cases are to this day the constitutional justification for disparate and unequal policies that has defined the relationship between the territories and the United States, authorizing Congress to act under the plenary powers granted by Article IV, Section 3 of the Constitution.

These cases created a political, national and racial framework that treats its inhabitants unequally and without voting representation, “separate and unequal,” in the phrase of the late Federal Circuit Court of Appeals Judge Juan Torruella. The 2016 Puerto Rico Oversight, Management, and Economic Stability Act (PROMESA), legislated to address Puerto Rico’s bankruptcy, is a telling instance of the continued territorial status and the political disenfranchisement of its population.

In the last seven years, the Supreme Court has extended the lease on the unincorporated territory with a new crop of Insular Cases: Puerto Rico v. Sanchez Valle (2016), Puerto Rico v. Franklin California Tax-Free Trust (2016), Financial Oversight and Management Board for Puerto Rico v. Aurelius Investment (2019) and, just recently, U.S. v. Vaello-Madero (2022).

This latest case confirmed congressional authority to discriminate against United States citizens in the participation of federal programs because of their geography, attests to the continue enforcement of the unincorporated territory doctrine. As Associate Justice Neil Gorsuch wrote in his concurring opinion in U.S. v. Vaello Madero, “the Insular Cases have no foundation in the Constitution and rest instead on racial stereotypes. They deserve no place in our law.”

The Puerto Rico Advisory Committee has taken as its charge to examine the Insular Cases and the doctrine of the unincorporated territory and how it serves to curtail the civil rights of its residents, concentrating on voting rights issues, participation in federal public programs and discrimination based on race and national origin. The advisory committee will be hearing from residents, scholars and other experts who represent the diverse political perspectives in Puerto Rico. The public briefings are intended to be timely announced, recorded and transcribed for the public record, with Spanish-English interpretation. The meetings will include time for public comments and will allow for written statements to be submitted for the record.

Our purpose is to advise the U.S. commission on Civil Rights on the continued pernicious impact of the Insular Cases and the doctrine of unincorporated territories and their toll on the civil rights of the people of Puerto Rico — 125 years of territorial discrimination is enough.

### Statehood Key---Assistance Programs

#### Statehood ensures increased government-assistance that expands preventative healthcare access in Puerto Rico

**Soto and González Colón 22** [By Rep. Darren Soto (d-fla.) and Del. Jenniffer González Colón, R-Puerto Rico), & The Hill opinion contributors, The Case for Puerto Rico statehood, 03-21, <https://thehill.com/blogs/congress-blog/politics/543761-the-case-for-puerto-rico-statehood/>, Nicu]

The reasons for Puerto Rico statehood are simple and compelling. A majority of Puerto Rican voters yet again chose statehood in November 2020. The ballot was a clear “yes or no” question in a high turnout general election. They cast their vote after suffering through a long recession, deadly hurricanes, powerful earthquakes, fiscal board budget cuts and now COVID-19. Many believe that two U.S. senators and four U.S. representatives will help them greatly in resolving these crises.

The opposition is far more complicated to decipher. First, there is the fictional concept of an “enhanced commonwealth.” This “having it all without paying for it” option is promoted as an upgrade to the current status but is found nowhere in our Constitution. It presumes Puerto Rico can get all the benefits of a state without ever becoming one. Of course, the federal government will never agree to such chicanery. Its support is found mostly by a minority of Puerto Ricans on the island.

Second, there is independence. The peak of hypocrisy, this movement is predominantly supported by Puerto Ricans living stateside. Many in the Puerto Rican diaspora have forgotten the realities of an island that does not enjoy the full advantages of the states where past generations have settled. They disguise their stalling tactics in attention grabbing and misleading phrases like “self-determination” or “considering all options.” They confuse and muddy the issue, hoping that most Puerto Rican voters will one day change their minds. They won’t. The vast majority of Puerto Ricans prize their American citizenship, serve in the military in higher percentages than most states and enjoy a quality of life boosted by billions in federal funding.

Election after election has proven a clear consensus: it is time to right the historic wrong of colonialism by paving the way for Puerto Ricans to enjoy the full rights of their U.S. citizenship and gain the representation they deserve. Statehood is ultimately the best, most likely option. The bipartisan Puerto Rico Statehood Admissions Act would bring that option to fruition. Delay tactics like Status Conventions only doom Puerto Rico to more endless debates, minority rule and another generation of second-class citizens living under a failed territorial status.

Should the current status be preserved, Puerto Ricans will continue navigating their economic challenges without protections afforded to states. Their medical system will continue suffering as federal funding continues falling short of their needs. While these problems are being debated in Congress, statehood offers a simple solution that would enable Puerto Rico to finally be on stable ground as it recovers from natural disasters and fiscal issues. It would not absolve them responsibility but would offer paths to reform that could result in a more robust economy and a prospering people.

The American citizens living in Puerto Rico have spoken. It is time we listened and empowered them, not undermined their democratic process. They cannot afford to wait. Ignoring the will of voters only perpetuates 120 years of injustice, and we must do better. This is an issue of democracy and of guaranteeing equality for citizens. Delaying admittance of Puerto Rico as a state to our Union would be a direct contradiction of our nation’s democratic values. It’s time to move forward and pass the bipartisan Puerto Rico Statehood Admissions Act.

#### PROMESA and Other Government Aid Programs Improve Economic Climate of PR.

**Stojanovic and Wessel 22** [Lorae Stojanovic and David Wessel, Brookings Senior Research Assistant, Senior fellow in Economic Studies at Brookings and director of the Hutchins Center on Fiscal and Monetary Policy, Pulitzer Prize holder for Journalism. Puerto Rico’s bankruptcy: Where do things stand today? 08-17 <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/puerto-ricos-bankruptcy-where-do-things-stand-today/> , Nicu]

In 2016, Congress passed the Puerto Rico Oversight, Management, and Economic Stability Act (PROMESA), which created the Puerto Rico Financial Oversight and Management Board to restructure the Commonwealth’s unsustainable burden of more than $72 billion in debt and more than $55 billion in unfunded pension liabilities. The board oversaw a bankruptcy process that culminated in March 2022, when a federal court confirmed a plan that reduced Puerto Rico’s debt by 80%. Still, the work of putting the Commonwealth on a sustainable fiscal path remains incomplete. At our annual Municipal Finance Conference in July 2022, four experts weighed in on the effects of PROMESA and the challenges that remain: Natalie Jaresko, former executive director of the oversight board; Sergio Marxuach, policy director at the Center for a New Economy; David Skeel, chairman of the oversight board and professor of corporate law at the University of Pennsylvania Carey Law School; and John Ceffalio, senior research analyst for Municipals at CreditSights. The panel was moderated by Michelle Kaske of Bloomberg.

Was PROMESA successful in achieving its goals? Yes, the panelists agreed. “It did take a long time, but it really did work overall in my view,” said David Skeel. “Our objective when we started was… once and done…. Puerto Rico can’t do this multiple times…. And that meant we were very, very careful about how much debt there would be going forward.” Under the plan crafted by the Financial Oversight and Management Board, the maximum amount Puerto Rico can borrow in any year is $1.15 billion, a sum equaling about 8 percent of the Commonwealth’s own revenues excluding federal aid. He described the plan as “clearly sustainable for Puerto Rico going forward” and “clearly fair to the creditors,” particularly the general obligation bondholders.

Sergio Marxuach cautioned, however, that while the debt limits were a temporary success, they will eventually expire, and the Commonwealth’s budgeting process still needs reform. “I do think there’s a need to legislate new Puerto Rico safeguards in terms of fiscal rules, limits on deficit spending, and debt issuance. We already have some of those… in our constitution, and they obviously did not work or at least they were relatively easy to work around,” he said. Natalie Jaresko emphasized that the debt restructuring was a necessary but not sufficient condition for Puerto Rico’s economic success. “Now you need political will on the part of the elected leadership to do what elected leaders need to do,” she said.

What about the Puerto Rico Electric Power Authority (PREPA)? PREPA, Puerto Rico’s primary electricity supplier, has long been a source of frustration for Puerto Ricans. Its troubles predate the island’s financial crisis. Electricity was unreliable and expensive, and Hurricane Maria further damaged the utility’s aging infrastructure. Its finances remain unresolved. Skeel said that the government of Puerto Rico and the oversight board have been working towards increasing system reliability by bringing in private operators. PREPA is also in negotiations for debt restructuring. Jaresko noted that critical FEMA funding has been slow to arrive and that many of its benefits are yet to be realized. In addition, legacy generation assets are being gradually decommissioned with a “cleaner, cheaper, and more reliable generation on the side of renewables” phasing in, she said.

When will the oversight board be disbanded? According to PROMESA, the oversight board will be terminated once Puerto Rico has access to credit at reasonable rates and has achieved four consecutive years of balanced budgets. John Ceffalio noted that the wording of this section is vague: “When you read it, it’s ‘adequate access to short-term and long-term credit markets at reasonable interest rates.’ What does ‘adequate’ mean? What are reasonable interest rates?”

Jaresko and Skeel agreed with Ceffalio’s assessment but noted that the law is purposefully written to allow the oversight board flexibility in determining the criteria for its own termination. Both Skeel and Jaresko believe the 2022 fiscal year (which ended June 30, 2022) could turn out to be the first year for which audited statements show Puerto Rico has balanced its budget.

What additional steps or safeguards are needed to improve Puerto Rico’s fiscal position? Puerto Rican bonds are not currently rated by any of the major credit rating agencies, making it difficult for the Commonwealth to borrow on public markets. For the bonds to gain wider traction on markets, Ceffalio said, Puerto Rico needs audited financial statements: “I don’t know if that’s enough to get the rating, but I think that would be a big step.” Jaresko and Skeel underscored this point, arguing that audited financial statements are needed to show definitively that the government’s budget is balanced.

While enabling future borrowing is important, Marxuach cautioned against enabling the excessive debt that led to the crisis:

“[T]he language in the constitution says that whenever… expenses exceed available resources… then Puerto Rico… must increase taxes. The thing is that the phrase “available resources” has been interpreted by different lawyers and even by the Puerto Rico Secretary of Justice, Attorney General, to include the issuance of debt. So, that’s how we got into this mess… [in]… the first place… because the concept of available resources is much broader than available revenues. And they include the issuance of new debt for deficit financing in order to bridge the gap. So, that’s one of the things that we definitely need to fix in the constitution.”

Resolving other problems could also improve the island’s economic health. By increasing PREPA’s reliability, uncertainty may be reduced in the eyes of rating agencies, Ceffalio stated. “Having reliable, affordable energy affects all economic activity,” and is essential for economic growth, Marxuach said.

What lessons does Puerto Rico offer other governments and the municipal bond market? One of the lessons from the Puerto Rico restructuring is the novel use of a Contingent Value Instrument that links bondholder payouts to sales tax revenues. Bondholders, in essence, will do better if Puerto Rico’s economy does better. “Sales tax revenues, as revenues go, are pretty precisely determined. It’s pretty hard to play games with them,” Ceffalio said. “They… track the economy really well.” He and Skeel agreed that this instrument could be used in future municipal bankruptcies.

The panel also discussed whether Puerto Rico had established a precedent of pensioners taking smaller haircuts than bondholders in municipal bankruptcies. Jaresko argued that the Puerto Rican pension system was structured differently than pension systems in other prominent municipal bankruptcies, such as Detroit. Also, Puerto Rico pensions had been cut before PROMESA. As such, she thought Puerto Rico’s situation was “somewhat unique.” Ceffalio, however, said that “there is a precedent that was set in Detroit and in some of the California bankruptcies” that “in negotiations… the pensioners I think have a better moral claim and better political claim… than does a mutual fund, who might be hesitant to get into a public fight with pensioners. So, I do think that’s largely a precedent and it’ll continue to go that way.”

### Statehood Key---AT: Puerto Rico Says “NO”

#### [No fr, Puerto Rico wants to be a state. Calls for Independence are basically non-existent]

**PRR 25** 2-5-2025 [Puerto Rico Report is an organization that specializes in political, historical, social analysis of Puerto Rico. Researching current events and bringing to light the concerns of political and public opinion, "Do the People of Puerto Rico Want Independence?," PUERTO RICO REPORT, https://puertoricoreport.com/do-the-people-of-puerto-rico-want-independence/] AND?

**Independence for Puerto Rico** is an idea that **was starting to receive increased attention** in recent years…in the states.

**Yet** as **results from the 2024**[**Puerto Rico status referendum**](https://puertoricoreport.com/puerto-ricos-plebiscites/)**make clear, this sentiment has not taken hold in Puerto Rico**.

Back in September of 2022, a [NBC News](https://www.nbcnews.com/think/opinion/hurricane-fiona-damage-shows-puerto-rico-go-way-rcna49809) report urged independence for the [U.S. territory](https://puertoricoreport.com/puerto-rico-a-u-s-territory/#.Y0RIVHbMLRY). “That Puerto Rico has to wait on Congress, in which it can’t vote, to have the possibility of determining the form of government it wants is just the strongest statement of why separation is needed,” explained the author, Luisita Lopez Torregrosa.

Two months later, in a November 2022 cover article for [The Atlantic](https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2022/11/puerto-rico-independence-not-statehood/671482/), Jaquira Diaz described an expansive vision of Puerto Rican independence. “Those, like me, who argue for sovereignty are not simply asking the United States to ‘free Puerto Rico’,” she wrote. “A return of sovereignty to the Puerto Rican people would require a U.S. commitment to a policy of reparations designed to provide independence and security—a policy that acknowledges and begins to address generations of environmental destruction, economic dislocation, and human-rights violations.”

Both writers, neither of whom lives in Puerto Rico, share a common narrative. Their position is easy to articulate from the comfort of a home office in a place where democratic freedoms are a given, and where access to prized U.S. citizenship is not at risk. But it’s a theoretical position for the authors, who have the luxury of taking it from afar.

Easy to say when you live in a state

**Independence has never gotten more than 12% of any vote** on political status in Puerto Rico, and even this small percentage is possibly inflated by the misperception in Puerto Rico that U.S. citizenship may be preserved in a new nation of Puerto Rico. [There is no such guarantee.](https://puertoricoreport.com/the-fate-of-u-s-citizenship-under-independence-free-association/)

**No Independence Party candidate has ever won a race for governor or resident commissioner**. In fact, **the Independence Party** on the Island **is too small** to be considered among Puerto Rico’s major political parties. The Party’s results are **equivalent**, numerically**, to the popularity in mainland politics of the Green Party or the Libertarians**.

### Statehood Key---AT: Secession

#### Secession dooms Puerto Rico to economic, medical, and education ruin; only making it the 51st state solves

**Bowen & Withrow 25** 03-11-2025 [Janae Bowens, National Journalist for the Sinclair Broadcast Group and Emma Withrow, National Investigative Journalist, "Fact Check Team: Push for Puerto Rico independence could save US $617B, report suggests," WEYI, https://midmichigannow.com/news/nation-world/push-for-puerto-rico-independence-could-save-us-617-billion-report-suggests-congress-disaster-relief-president-trump] AND?

WASHINGTON (TNND) — Members of Congress are reportedly lobbying President Donald Trump to consider making Puerto Rico an independent nation, according to a [report by the Daily Mail](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14470559/Trump-pressured-make-Puerto-Rico-independent-save-America-eye-watering-617-billion.html). A draft executive order obtained by the publication suggests that transitioning Puerto Rico from a U.S. territory to an independent country could save the United States approximately $617.8 billion annually.

The draft document also highlights that the U.S. government is projected to spend $1.37 trillion over the next 50 years in support of Puerto Rico, in addition to up to $8.6 billion in disaster relief.

If Puerto Rico were to become independent, Puerto Ricans born in 2027 would not be eligible for U.S. citizenship, the Daily Mail reported. Becoming an [independent country would also](https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/puerto-rico-us-territory-crisis) result in Puerto Ricans losing access to federal benefits, impacting healthcare, education, and public services. Currently, Puerto Rico's median household income is about $25,000, roughly one-third of the U.S. median, according to[Census Reporter.](https://censusreporter.org/profiles/04000US72-puerto-rico/)

The U.S. gained control of Puerto Rico in 1898 following the Spanish-American War, and [in 1952, Congress](https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1952-54v03/d902)approved the island's constitution, officially recognizing it as the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico.

While the idea of independence is being discussed, statehood for Puerto Rico has also been a topic of debate. An [October YouGov](https://today.yougov.com/topics/politics/survey-results/daily/2024/10/29/e7ac2/2)survey found that 59% of Americans support Puerto Rico becoming the 51st state. Advocates argue that statehood would grant Puerto Ricans full citizenship with representation in Congress and could bring up to $12.5 billion more in federal benefits, including Medicare and Medicaid, according to a recent report from[the Council on Foreign Relations.](https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/puerto-rico-us-territory-crisis#:~:text=Puerto%20Rico%2C%20which%20became%20a,and%20provide%20more%20economic%20relief.)

However, critics, including former Republican leader Senator Mitch McConnell, have expressed concerns that adding Puerto Rico as a state could [alter the political landscape](https://www.thenation.com/article/archive/mitch-mcconnell-puerto-rico-full-bore-socialism/) by potentially providing Democrats with two additional Senate seats.

### Neg---Colonial

#### Puerto Rican Statehood is colonialist and is growing massively unpopular amongst Puerto Ricans---Statehood Fails

**Hernandez 25** 2-19-2025 [Javier A. Hernandez, "Puerto Rico’s Youth Pro-Sovereign Sentiment a Powerful Political Shift," LA Progressive, https://www.laprogressive.com/foreign-policy/puerto-ricos-youth-pro-sovereign] AND?

For decades, Puerto Rico’s political status debate has revolved around three primary options:

Statehood

Current territorial Commonwealth (Estado Libre Asociado)

National sovereignty (independence or free association)

Historically, statehood and Commonwealth status have dominated Puerto Rico’s electoral landscape for decades, with independence garnering limited support. However, a new generation of Puerto Ricans—particularly millennials and Generation Z—are increasingly shifting toward pro-sovereignty positions. This shift is evident not only in polling and election results but also in broader social and economic trends, particularly among young professionals, university-educated individuals, and members of the Puerto Rican diaspora.

The recent 2024 elections and status plebiscite underscored this growing trend. A referendum on statehood vs. non-statehood options resulted in a 51% to 49% rejection of statehood, with 43% of voters supporting sovereignty options (*independence* and *free association*). These numbers indicate that statehood’s appeal is eroding, particularly among younger, educated Puerto Ricans who see sovereignty as a viable and necessary step toward self-determination and decolonization.

**Young Puerto Ricans Are Leading the Sovereignty Movement**

A university poll conducted in 2024 by Rayos X and the Universidad del Sagrado Corazón surveyed 1,900 young Puerto Ricans from at least 77 municipalities, revealing that among university students:

* 30% support Independence
* 22% support Free Association
* 15% support Statehood
* 33% remain undecided

This data confirms that a substantial percentage of Puerto Rico’s younger electorate, **approximately 52%**, is **moving away from colonial options** and toward sovereignty. Notably, these young voters are not just students but aspiring professionals, urban dwellers, and members of the Puerto Rican diaspora who are reshaping the discourse around sovereignty.

**This** generational **shift reflects** a broader dissatisfaction with the status quo and **statehood’s empty promises.** **Hurricane Maria** in 2017 was a pivotal moment that **exposed the failures of U.S. colonial governance over Puerto Rico**, leading many young Puerto Ricans to [question the effectiveness of remaining a U.S. territory](https://www.businessinsider.com/puerto-ricos-hurricane-maria-pushes-gen-z-millennials-to-independence-2021-10). According to NPR, many [young Puerto Ricans](https://www.npr.org/2020/11/02/930323316/in-puerto-rico-young-voters-are-trying-to-shake-up-traditional-party-politics) see sovereignty as an opportunity for economic development, self-reliance, and cultural preservation.

**Implications for Future Elections & Plebiscites**

The decline in statehood support and the growing pro-sovereignty sentiment among Puerto Rico’s youth are set to have a profound impact on the island’s political future. The 2024 elections marked a significant shift, with Juan Dalmau Ramírez, the candidate for the Alianza País electoral bloc—a coalition of the Puerto Rican Independence Party (PIP) and the Citizen’s Victory Movement (MVC)—securing second place with 31% of the vote. Additionally, he dominated among young voters, earning 77% of the youth vote, as indicated by the university student poll conducted across Puerto Rico. This trend suggests that pro-sovereignty forces will continue to gain momentum heading into the 2028 elections, as more young Puerto Ricans register to vote and become politically active and engaged in shaping Puerto Rico’s future.

Moreover, the diaspora plays a crucial role in this shift. Many Puerto Ricans who have moved to the U.S. in recent years remain connected to Puerto Rico’s political future and are increasingly [rejecting statehood](https://dcjournal.com/statehood-shift-happening-in-puerto-rico/). Their experiences abroad highlight the dangers of assimilation, racism, and cultural loss under statehood, further reinforcing their support for sovereignty.

**The Decline of Statehood: A Fading Nightmare**

Despite efforts by pro-statehood politicians like Jenniffer González and the corrupt PNP, the youth vote shows that statehood is losing ground. The 2024 plebiscite results confirm that statehood does not have the support of a majority of Puerto Ricans, particularly among younger voters. This aligns with the argument that [statehood is an outdated and inviable option](https://www.puertoricotequiero.com/la-soberania-de-puerto-rico-un-camino-hacia-la-prosperidad-y-la-seguridad/) that does not reflect the aspirations of Puerto Rico’s future generations.

While statehood proponents continue to argue and lobby that statehood is inevitable, the data suggests otherwise. With pro-sovereignty support growing among younger voters, it is likely that future plebiscites will see even stronger support for independence and free association. The next major plebiscite, possibly in 2028, could very well mark the tipping point where pro-sovereignty forces gain a decisive majority.

**The Sovereignty Movement’s Future**

The rise of pro-sovereignty sentiment, patriotism, and nationalism among Puerto Rico’s youth is one of the most significant political transformations in the island-nation’s history. Young Puerto Ricans in Puerto Rico and in the diaspora, are rejecting the colonial status quo and questioning the viability of statehood, particularly in an ever-polarized and conflict-rife United States. Instead, they are embracing independence and free association as legitimate, viable futures for Puerto Rico.

As more young, educated professionals enter the political landscape, the movement for Puerto Rican sovereignty will only continue to grow. The 2024 plebiscite results prove that statehood is not the consensus choice of Puerto Ricans, and the 2028 elections could further solidify this shift. The future of Puerto Rico is in the hands of its young people, and **the**ir **message is clear: it is time to move beyond colonialism** and toward a sovereign future.

### Neg---T-Foreign

#### According to 22 U.S Legal Code § 4341 Puerto Rico is a “domestic territory” and not “foreign”

LII N/A [Legal Information Institute, "Definition: foreign country from 22 USC § 4341(5)," Cornell Law School, https://www.law.cornell.edu/definitions/uscode.php?width=840&height=800&iframe=true&def\_id=22-USC-1107583050 1976503889&term\_occur=2&term\_src=title:22:chapter:53A:section:4343] AND?

(5) **The term “foreign** country” **means any country or territory**, **excluding the United States**, the Commonwealth of **Puerto Rico**, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands, American Samoa, Guam, the Virgin Islands, **and other territories or possessions of the United States**.

### Neg---Secession CP

#### Text: The US should issue an executive order to recognize Puerto Rico’s right to declare sovereignty

#### Statehood is Colonialist only Puerto Rican independence solves, K2 U.S global leadership, K2 Democracy, K2 U.S-Puerto Rican relations

**Hernández 25** 2-12-2025 [Javier A. Hernández Puerto Rican writer and pro-sovereignty activist and adviser, "Memorandum on Puerto Rico’s sovereignty gains traction," https://santamariatimes.com/opinion/editorial/memorandum-on-puerto-rico-s-sovereignty-gains-traction-guest-commentary/article\_fe72c05c-e8c4-11ef-9ce6-cb9d2e1db24c.html] AND?

A newly circulating memorandum within U.S. **political circles** has sparked intense discussions among policymakers and Puerto Rican stakeholders.

Titled “Addressing Puerto Rico’s Political Status through Executive Action,” this document, **direct**ed to President **Trump** and key members of his administration, outlines a path **to resolve Puerto Rico’s** longstanding **colonial status through** decisive **executive action**. In an unprecedented move, **the memorandum challenges the feasibility of statehood**, and **it prioritizes national sovereignty** as the only sustainable solution **for Puerto Rico**’s future, shaking the foundations of pro-statehood and pro-commonwealth advocates.

The memorandum delves into three proposed options**: issuing an executive order to recognize Puerto Rico’s right to declare sovereignty**, using emergency powers to address governance and transition, and — the recommended approach — establishing a Federal Task Force on Puerto Rico’s Transition to Sovereignty.

The task force would work for two years to craft a detailed and actionable plan for Puerto Rico to transition into sovereign nationhood through independence or free association. By year three, **Puerto Rico would** move to **establish a transitional government**, **hold a constitutional convention, and adopt a sovereign democratic system**. This structured and transparent approach balances U.S. national interests with Puerto Rico’s self-determination, fostering a relationship based on mutual respect and partnership.

The memorandum leaves no room for ambiguity: **statehood** is **neither politically nor economically viable** for Puerto Rico or the United States. Citing the 2014 Government Accountability Office report, it underscores the immense financial burden statehood would impose on federal resources and highlights the cultural and linguistic conflicts it would exacerbate. For Puerto Rico, **statehood would erode** its unique **cultural identity and national aspirations**.

This realization has left Jenniffer González, Puerto Rico’s newly elected governor and a staunch pro-statehood advocate, reeling. Her administration thought Republican leadership would never support Puerto Rico’s sovereignty. However, the memorandum’s recommendations have ignited fears among pro-statehood and commonwealth leaders of a coming shift in U.S. policy.

The recommended task force approach strikes a balance between urgency and inclusivity. By convening federal agencies, Congress, and Puerto Rican stakeholders, the task force would ensure a collaborative framework to address the legal, political and economic measures needed for sovereignty. Sovereignty would allow Puerto Rico to reclaim its political and economic destiny, establishing democratic governance while fostering economic growth, international relations and trade, and cultural preservation.

**For the U**nited **S**tates, **supporting Puerto Rico’s sovereignty** **would solidify** its **global leadership** in **promoting self-determination and democracy** while **reducing** long-term **federal expenditures** on corrupt and failed territorial governance.

**Pro-sovereignty leaders in Puerto Rico have applauded this memorandum**, viewing it as a long-overdue acknowledgment of the island’s right to self-determination. They argue that sovereignty would liberate Puerto Rico from the economic stagnation and political subjugation that colonial rule has perpetuated. As outlined in the memorandum, the prospect of crafting a Treaty of Friendship & Cooperation or a Compact of Free Association between Puerto Rico and the United States has further bolstered support, offering assurances of continuing partnership and mutual benefits.

As the memorandum gains traction and generates discussions in Washington, its potential to reshape Puerto Rico’s future cannot be overstated. For decades, the debate over Puerto Rico’s status has been mired in political inertia and competing interests. This bold and well-reasoned document provides a clear, actionable framework for resolving a centuries-old issue. However, its circulation has also created unease among politicians in Puerto Rico who fear losing power and influence.

Meanwhile, pro-sovereignty leaders, advocates and ordinary Puerto Ricans see this as a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to break the chains of colonial dependency and embrace a future of dignity, democracy and self-determination.

**The time for action is now**. **Puerto Rico’s colonial status is** not only **an affront to democratic values** but also an unsustainable model that harms the island and the United States. This memorandum, championed by those committed to justice and equity, lays the groundwork for a historic transformation.

The question remains: Will **America**n leaders **rise to the occasion and help lead Puerto Rico toward** freedom and **sovereignty**, fulfilling the promise of democracy and self-governance?

## Paraguay

### Background

#### Quick Background: Quiet relations; affs could explore anti-corruption, democratic development, or counter-narcotics.

#### Why is this in the potential section and not the recommended: the debaters assigned to this section thought there was not a balance in aff/neg literature. Considering that Paraguay is a smaller/less “big player” country in the region, the instances of Trump engagement now may gut link uniqueness.

#### U.S. Attention Key to Paraguay--- Peña is looking to cooperate

Martin and Parks, 1-17-2025 (Eric Martin, reporter for Bloomsberg News, Ken Parks, Correspondent in Latin America for Bloomberg, "Paraguay, a Remote Nation, Thrilled to Be on Trump’s Radar," Bloomberg, https://www.yahoo.com/news/paraguay-landlocked-island-thrilled-trump-195845788.html/, accessed on 4-23-2025), FC

(Bloomberg) -- Paraguay President Santiago Peña called President-elect Donald Trump’s incoming foreign policy team a “dream come true” as his nation stands to become more relevant in the next US administration.

“It’s a great opportunity for us to advance very, very fast in the bilateral agenda on trade, security, rule of law and make Paraguay a much closer ally” to the US, Peña said in an interview in Washington ahead of Trump’s inauguration Monday. “One of the biggest challenges for Paraguay was that image of an island surrounded by land, a country that was isolated and not many people know about it.”

Paraguay, a landlocked country of 6.1 million people, punches above its weight geopolitically as one of the last remaining countries that maintains diplomatic ties with Taiwan. China has steadily whittled down Taipei’s allies in Latin America amid rising tensions with the US. Honduras, Panama, El Salvador and the Dominican Republic broke ties with Taiwan and switched to Beijing in recent years.

Trump’s State Department stands to have some of the deepest policy experience in Latin America of any recent US administration. He tapped Marco Rubio as his secretary of state, while Mauricio Claver-Carone will return as one of the president’s top advisers on Latin America. Trump also picked Christopher Landau, a former US ambassador to Mexico, as deputy secretary of state. Mike Waltz, a Florida congressman, is set to become a national security adviser and has called for the US to counter China’s inroads in the region.

Rubio, who visited Peña last year in Asuncion, praised Paraguay during his confirmation hearing as an example for the US to encourage in the region.

“I also think it’s important to recognize allies in the region, like Paraguay, that have not flipped,” to China, Rubio said Wednesday.

That’s indeed music to Peña’s ears as he’s crisscrossing the world in search of foreign investment for Paraguay, making over three dozen trips abroad since taking office a year and a half ago. Paraguay has remained one of the region’s more stable nations politically and economically in recent years despite volatility in Argentina and Brazil next door.

Peña pitched his country as a destination for investments by US technology companies. He also wants the Trump administration to grant Paraguayan beef an import quota with preferential tariff treatment.

In the interview, Peña said he doesn’t have a bilateral meeting planned with Rubio, who is still awaiting confirmation by the Senate, but Pena expects to attend a gala dinner Saturday night hosted by the incoming top diplomat. Peña is also campaigning for Foreign Minister Ruben Ramirez to lead the Washington-based Organization of American States.

Peña’s neighbor, Argentine President Javier Milei, will also attend the inauguration, and is pushing for their trade bloc, Mercosur, to let Argentina independently negotiate a trade deal with the US. Peña pushed back against a bilateral US-Argentina trade agreement, as Mercosur requires all countries in the bloc to negotiate together. But he conceded that Mercosur, which Milei labeled a protectionist “prison” last year, needs reforms.

“We need to revitalize the bloc. I’m not happy with the current situation. I think nobody’s happy,” Peña said, without detailing reforms he supports. “Mercosur countries are better off negotiating as a bloc than individually. Either you maintain the bloc and you negotiate as a bloc or you dissolve the bloc and negotiate bilaterally.”

Peña’s visit to Washington to attend Trump’s inauguration ceremony caps a tumultuous four years for the bi-lateral relationship under President Joe Biden.

He added that during his visit he won’t address US sanctions brought against his political ally, former Paraguayan president and Colorado Party chairman Horacio Cartes, who faces allegations of corruption and ties to Hezbollah. Cartes, one of Paraguay’s wealthiest businessmen whose patronage was key to Peña’s landslide victory, has denied the accusations.

### Engagement Key---Stability

#### Increasing engagement with Paraguay over infrastructural integration is key to ensure regional stability, check contraband economies, & promote growth

Liriano and Arias, 4-7-2025 (Faruk Miguel Liriano is a Financial Sector Specialist for Latin America, and Cesar Arias is a senior consultant at the International Monetary Fund, "Paraguay's Capital Markets Opens Up to the World with Key Reforms," World Bank Blogs, https://blogs.worldbank.org/en/latinamerica/paraguay-capital-markets-reform/, accessed on 4-23-2025), FC

Paraguay is leading reforms to attract foreign investment to its local capital markets. On December 26, 2024, the Central Bank of Paraguay (BCP) overhauled the rules for the issuance, custody, and trading of public debt securities and expanded the limits for foreign exchange and hedging transactions for foreign investors in government bonds issued in guaranies.

Why is Internationalizing capital markets Important for Paraguay?

Paraguay's sovereign debt rating has reached investment grade status, aligning with economies in the region such as Chile, Mexico, Panama, Peru and Uruguay. The credit rating upgrade facilitates access to financing at lower costs and longer terms for Paraguayan households, businesses, and financial intermediaries. It enables the government to increase investment in infrastructure and attract private capital into sectors that foster employment and social development, such as forestry, light manufacturing, and renewable energy.

With support of the World Bank, the Central Securities Depository of the BCP updated regulations to facilitate access for local and international investment funds to the government bond market in a safe, competitive and efficient environment. The reforms promote the development of local capital markets, financial innovation, and adequate risk management. Regulatory reforms adhered to international standards and market best practices applicable to global custody activities, and referenced other central banks in the region such as those of Brazil, Chile and Colombia.

Boosting Investor Diversification, Market Liquidity and Risk Management

Foreign funds increased their investment in Paraguay's local currency government bonds from 1.7% in 2023 to 5.0% in 2024. This is due to solid economic growth, improvements in sovereign credit ratings, and the government's strategy to increase bond issuances in guaranies to mitigate exposure to currency risks. However, the participation of international investors in the Paraguayan local public debt market (5%) remains significantly lower than the average in emerging countries (14%) (Chart 1).

In this context, the BCP advanced the following financial and foreign exchange regulatory reforms to facilitate access of new international investment to the domestic debt market:

Foreign investors will be able to buy local currency government bonds through global custodian banks, and qualified institutional investors will be able to directly contract services of regulated local custodians such as banks, financial institutions, and brokerage firms

Financial institutions will be able to provide hedging and foreign exchange risk management instruments to investors in government bonds, thanks to the expanded limits on the purchase and sale of foreign currency on spot and future derivative markets.

Domestic and foreign holders of government bonds will be able to trade directly, both through stock exchange platforms and over-the-counter markets, contributing to the development of a more liquid and dynamic capital market.

The new regulations establish the rights and obligations of local custodians and guarantee standardized and competitive rules for access to and negotiation of public debt securities among market participants.

Market Infrastructure Modernization Strengthens the Impact of Regulatory Reforms

In November 2024, the Caja de Valores de Paraguay (CAVAPY) began a technological modernization initiative to improve the provision of registration, custody and administration services for private corporate debt instruments, shares and mutual funds in Paraguay. A dedicated portal for investors will give them greater control and transparency in the management of their financial assets. In addition, the Asunción Stock Exchange will adopt a new technological trading platform that will support agile and secure settlement of transactions in the primary and secondary securities markets.

Lessons Learned and Next Steps

Paraguay's experience provides valuable recommendations and lessons learned for other emerging and developing economies in the process of internationalizing their local capital markets.

Despite the cost of the reforms, the benefits are greater. Attracting foreign investment requires regulatory adjustments to the public debt and foreign exchange markets, modernization of the technological and financial infrastructure for transaction settlement, and the development of a reliable local custody activity aligned with strict global asset management standards. However, the benefits in terms of diversifying financing sources, mitigating exchange rate risks, and developing the capital markets outweigh the costs and challenges of the reforms.

Inter-agency coordination is key to the success of reforms. Coordination between the BCP and Paraguay's Ministry of Economy and Finance has been key to linking the trading systems of the central public debt depository and the stock exchange, and fostering constructive dialogue between regulators, custodians, financial intermediaries, and local and foreign investors. These efforts were crucial factors in implementing regulatory reforms and enhancing their impact on the development and internationalization of local capital markets.

The modernization of local capital markets in Paraguay is an ongoing process. In addition to updating financial and foreign exchange regulations, the BCP is analyzing initiatives that contribute to financial inclusion and strengthen the liquidity, transparency and efficiency of the Paraguayan financial market. This includes the implementation of a specialized depository for the issuance and custody of Electronic Deposit Savings Certificates (CDA-e), adding dynamism to digital transactions and significantly reducing operational, credit, and counterparty risks.

Paraguay successfully returned to international capital markets in February 2025, demonstrating that its economic and financial reforms continue to generate benefits for the country. For the first time, the government issued global bonds denominated in guaranies, with a 10-year maturity, and at a competitive interest rate of 8.50%. It also placed global bonds in US dollars, with a 30-year maturity, and at a historically low yield of 6.65%. Paraguay is the sixth Latin American sovereign issuer – after Brazil, Chile, Mexico, the Dominican Republic and Uruguay – to access markets on favorable terms in the first two months of 2025, signaling optimism and resilience in the region amid a volatile and challenging global financial context.

This blog post has been written in collaboration with Diego Legal, Deputy General Manager of Financial Operations of Central Bank of Paraguay.

#### Increasing engagement with Paraguay over infrastructural integration is key to ensure regional stability, check contraband economies, & promote growth

Ross, 4-8-2023 (Greg Ross, Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies (SAIS), "Integration Meets Insecurity: How Paraguay Is Shaping South America’s Center," SAIS Review of International Affairs, https://saisreview.sais.jhu.edu/integration-meets-insecurity-how-paraguay-is-shaping-south-americas-center/, accessed on 4-23-2024)

Policymakers across the Western Hemisphere often lament Latin America’s lack of regional integration. On average, countries in Latin America and the Caribbean conduct the least international trade as a share of gross domestic product (GDP) in the world. Broadly, this integration deficit results from underinvestment in infrastructure, inefficient trade architectures, and natural obstacles posed by vast geographies. In turn, a lack of regional integration inhibits competitiveness vis-à-vis advanced global value chains, further contributing to sluggish growth across Latin America and raising the possibility of another “lost decade” for the region.

Sandwiched between the two largest economies in South America, landlocked Paraguay is becoming an exception to the region’s stagnant integration story. Although rarely noted alongside other regional outliers, Paraguay is pursuing growth via outward-facing infrastructure projects.[1] Yet, by overlooking integration efforts from this small but central economy, foreign policymakers preclude a holistic view of transnational flows of commodities and capital across the core of the South American continent. Patching this knowledge gap is necessary to not only evaluate local growth prospects, but also to effectively address broader issues of regional security and stability.

Marcha al este: Paraguay’s First Step to Integration

Paraguay’s present-day integration fits a longer history of shifting geopolitical positions vis-à-vis its Southern Cone neighbors. Without direct access to the sea, the Paraguayan political economy historically centered to the south as commerce on the Paraguay and Paraná Rivers navigated to the ports of Buenos Aires and Montevideo. Under Spanish colonial rule, Paraguay’s principal river ports of Asunción and Concepción grew largely under the gravitational pull of the Rio de la Plata political economy. Through the early twentieth century, European migrant flows passing through Buenos Aires continued north to Paraguay by river and railroad, reinforcing Paraguay’s commercial and cultural ties to the Rioplatense world.

Yet, a new frontier opened eastward by the mid-twentieth century. In Brazil, demographic and economic growth moved westward from southeastern population centers toward Mato Grosso and Paraná, the agro-states bordering Paraguay. From the capital Asunción, the Paraguayan government, backed by international capital, paved roads to the Brazilian border in its marcha al este.[2] Over 300 kilometers to the east of Asunción, the border city of Ciudad del Este was established in the 1950s, followed by construction of Paraguay’s first bridge to Brazil in the 1960s and the binational Itaipu Dam in the 1970s and 1980s.[3]

During the decades to follow, the resulting flow of capital and people across the Paraguay-Brazil border pivoted the Paraguayan political economy, and what was once a firm gaze toward Buenos Aires became “pendular” as Asunción swung toward Brasilia.[4] This pivot steered the small Paraguayan economy through the second half of the twentieth century as Ciudad del Este became Paraguay’s second-largest city and Itaipu became the world’s most powerful hydroelectric dam. Across the eastern administrative departments of Alto Paraná, Caagauzú, and Canindeyú, forest turned to soy fields as Brazilian agribusiness crossed the border.

The pivot toward the Brazilian border powered the Paraguayan economy with soy production and electricity from the Itaipu dam. The Itaipu dam’s construction brought a positive shock to GDP while also shielding the economy from Latin America’s lost decade and introducing Asunción to international financial markets. On a larger scale, Paraguay’s proximity to the protectionist Brazilian economy moved local markets to seek comparative advantage by exporting consumer goods at low cost, primarily via a vast re-export trade based in Ciudad del Este. These conditions shaped the contours of Paraguay’s transition to democracy and subsequent entry into the Mercosur trade bloc as the twentieth century came to a close.[5]

Look to the North: Paraguay’s Present-Day Integration

Today, another growth frontier is emerging in Paraguay’s sparsely populated north. The Paraguayan state is laying asphalt through the country’s vast Chaco region to form the central stretch of the Bioceanic Corridor, a nearly 2,000 kilometer highway to connect southwestern Brazil’s agroindustrial states to Chile’s Pacific ports.[6] Given its expected role in expanding market access for Brazilian exports, the highway arguably represents the largest project since Itaipu in which the Paraguayan state is forging new infrastructure for regional logistics.[7]

Paraguay’s bioceanic highway will connect to Porto Murtinho, Brazil via a new bridge at the northern river post of Carmelo Peralta. This bridge is one of several new crossings at international junctions. A brand-new bridge spans the Paraná River at Paraguay’s tri-border with Brazil and Argentina, and another over the Paraguay River near Asunción will facilitate movement between the capital and the Argentine border. Further downriver is a proposed bridge to connect the city of Pilar with the province of Formosa, Argentina—meaning that altogether, the number of Paraguay’s international bridges over its principal waterways will increase from two to five in just a few years.[8]

Whereas the Bioceanic Corridor may serve primarily as a modality for Brazilian exports seeking outlets to the Pacific, other projects will improve connections between the Paraguayan north and existing population centers. From Asunción, the government is widening and repaving 550 kilometers of the Ruta Transchaco, the highway that connects the capital region to central Chaco hubs and the Bolivian border.[9] While executed by Paraguay’s Ministry of Public Works, the major road projects underway are backed by international financial institutions such as the Development Bank of Latin America and Inter-American Development Bank, an indication of broader regional importance. Several of Paraguay’s infrastructure investments are also backed by FOCEM, a Mercosur mechanism that funnels contributions from the trade bloc’s larger members to infrastructure projects in the smaller member states.[10]

Integration Infrastructure: Beneficiaries Local and Foreign

Despite its promise to facilitate greater regional connectivity, Paraguay’s present-day bet on integration is not certain to produce immediate benefits for local productivity or export diversification. Even for Paraguayan agroindustry in the Chaco, existing export channels via the Paraguay-Paraná River may remain more efficient than the new Bioceanic Corridor.[11] Likewise, the new bridge in Asunción that will span the Paraguay River to virgin land held by private capital is unlikely, at least in the near future, to efficiently serve transport and productivity in the congested capital region.

Nor do Paraguay’s state-led integration efforts have a history of promoting local over regional economic growth. The centerpiece of Paraguay’s first step toward integration, Itaipu, for decades failed to spur complementary investment to incentivize industrialization across the Paraguayan interior. The dam added electricity exports to Paraguay’s matrix of extractivist activities, but it failed to spur significant diversification of Paraguay’s basic export basket, hindering overall output growth.[12] Only in 2013, three decades after Itaipu’s completion, did Paraguay install its first 500-KV transmission line connecting the power station to the capital region. Similarly, as the mid-century Paraguayan state paved roads across the eastern half of the country, new routes prioritized newly-arrived brasiguayos and Brazilian agribusiness’ soy shipments to river ports over existing population centers. Partly as a result, Paraguay’s present-day integration projects fuel doubt over who they primarily serve—local development or Brazil’s expansive geopolitical and multinational interests.[13] Familiar with past foreign imposition upon internal affairs, or at least a narrative of state entreguismo, cross-sections of Paraguayan society remain skeptical of today’s state-led integration.[14]

Nonetheless, more of Paraguay’s productive centers are in need of greater connectivity to mitigate the risk of external shocks such as climate change. Severe droughts from 2019 to 2022 not only reduced agricultural yields, but also forced barge fleets that move Paraguayan commodities to market to lighten loads due to low Paraguay River levels. These events underscore the importance of complementary infrastructure that boosts resilience against external shocks.[15] Not only is the waterway critical to Paraguay and up- and down-river trade partners, but also the United States and China, who both buy the region’s commodities in bulk. The formal involvement of the US Army Corps of Engineers in Paraguay-Paraná dredging studies signals the international dimensions of the waterway, especially as it becomes intersected by new corridors of transit and industry.[16]

Ideally, investment in infrastructure will accelerate productivity gains in Paraguay’s agroindustrial sector and aid local insertion into regional value chains. At the eastern Brazilian border, where integration infrastructure has accumulated over decades, there are signs of success as Paraguay’s small but growing maquila industry produces auto parts for the large Brazilian market. Cheaper labor in Paraguay makes Brazilian industry more competitive, an example of how Paraguay’s regional insertion can facilitate greater regional integration into global markets.

Today’s public-sector investment in connectivity across the north could support foreign direct investment elsewhere in Paraguay. In the department of Concepción, Paraguay’s largest-ever private investment of a nearly $4 billion USD pulp mill is under construction on the banks of the Paraguay River. This project expects to export paper sourced from eucalyptus grown in local silvopastoral systems and from land across the Brazilian border, recalling nineteenth-century trade patterns in which Mato Grosso exported commodities down the Paraguay River via Concepción. Investors are also betting on new concrete and meatpacking plants in Concepción, which, after decades of neglect by the state, is proximate to the infrastructure and growth coming to the Paraguayan north.[17]

Integration Infrastructure: Regional and US Security Implications

Beyond issues of local growth and productivity, Paraguay’s renewed regional integration encompasses broader security dimensions. As a relatively open market between the protectionist Brazilian and Argentine economies, Paraguay is a hub for illicit trade and an increasingly central narcotrafficking corridor. Mid-century infrastructure investment at the eastern Brazilian border fueled Paraguay’s expansive contraband economy, with goods from Asia, Brazil, and the United States imported to Ciudad del Este and then re-exported to the Brazilian market. Today, as new infrastructure facilitates regional logistics across once-remote swaths of the Paraguayan north, illicit trade is also likely to find additional footholds. The risk of illicit actors capitalizing upon Paraguay’s formal investment in connectivity should invite closer study from policymakers across the Western Hemisphere.

Following the 1994 Argentine Israeli Mutual Association bombing in Buenos Aires and the September 11, 2001 terror attacks, the United States and international security community partners placed greater attention on the porous tri-border area for its links to Hezbollah financing cells and money laundering networks. Since then, however, other transnational criminal organizations, such as the Brazilian cartel Primeiro Comando da Capital, have branched out from border strongholds into the Paraguayan interior as the drug trade becomes more sophisticated.[18] In 2022, Paraguay’s largest-ever anti-narcotics operation exposed how Andean cocaine passes through remote northern departments, down the Paraguay River, and to European and Asian markets. Narco-violence, once confined to the Brazilian border, has since spread as far as Asunción, and the influence and proceeds of the sprawling illicit economy allegedly infiltrates top levels of the Paraguayan state.

The international security community would therefore benefit from a perspective of Paraguay that looks beyond the tri-border area, especially as new infrastructure investments materialize across the Chaco and Paraguayan north. Paraguay’s security apparatus, which includes the National Anti-Drug Secretariat and the Secretariat for the Prevention of Money Laundering, already faces institutional deficiencies. Yet, in confronting the expanded reach of transnational crime, Paraguayan authorities face not only a scarcity of resources but also a delicate balancing act between security and competitiveness. While Paraguay’s national customs agency promotes the installation of new anti-narcotics scanner technology (donated by longstanding partner Taiwan) at the country’s river ports, greater surveillance also raises costs across the supply chain, which is detrimental to a landlocked country that seeks to lower barriers to trade. Paraguay’s formal investments in connectivity may ultimately benefit both economic growth and transnational organized crime, creating dilemmas for local government and security policy in the Western Hemisphere.

Conclusion

When Washington’s foreign policy circles look at Paraguay, they focus on issues of corruption, weak institutions, and illicit activity at the tri-border. These issues will remain at the forefront of bilateral and multilateral agendas after a new Paraguayan government takes office in 2023. However, without greater awareness of Paraguay’s evolving role in regional integration, policymakers may fail to recognize how new axes of growth could also exacerbate existing challenges to regional security. Situated at the center of South America and between the continent’s largest markets, Paraguay’s potential to see deteriorating security poses risks well beyond national borders.

Investment in integration infrastructure is critical to Paraguay’s pursuit of market access, productivity, and growth. However, it is important to recognize that greater connectivity is likely to facilitate flows of illicit activity in areas vulnerable to insecurity. This situation should invite more studies on the relation between formal logistical networks and transnational illicit activity in Paraguay.[19] Just as mid-twentieth century infrastructure investment at the eastern Brazilian border created conditions for Paraguay’s illicit economy to flourish, formal investment in northern transit corridors may also aid narcotrafficking in the present day.[20] For US policymakers, a renewed look at Paraguay’s increasingly central place in the region is necessary to work effectively with local institutions and produce hemispheric security policy for the decade-plus ahead.

### Engagement Key---Broad

#### Foreign engagement is key to counter corruption, secure green energy partnerships, & bolster pro-U.S. regional alignment

Runde, 7-31-2024 (Daniel Runde is a senior executive and strategist in international development, international trade, investment, global business and organizational change, M.A. in Public Policy from Harvard), " Helping Paraguay Become a Stronger US Ally," The Jerusalem Strategic Tribune, https://jstribune.com/runde-helping-paraguay-become-a-stronger-us-ally/, accessed on 4-23-2025), FC

Paraguay is at a hinge moment in its history, with the election last year of a new president. With small steps, the United States could make a significant difference. This collaboration would both enhance Paraguay’s development and its status as a US ally. The country’s biggest constraint, however, is corruption. and more engagement from the US and new offers of deeper partnership in exchange for governance reforms may be the format for enabling change in Paraguay.

Political Development

A landlocked nation of around 6.1 million people, Paraguay went to war in the mid-19th century with its neighbors – Argentina, Brazil and Uruguay – resulting in the loss of over 50 percent of the country’s adult males. The demographic imbalance led to significant social distortions and it took over a generation to reestablish an even ratio between the sexes

An era of dictatorships, including a nearly 40-year regime under Alfredo Stroessner in the 20th century, ended in 1989. For the past 35 years, Paraguay has maintained a fragile democracy. The center-right Colorado Party has dominated politics for 100 years, similar in tenure to the Institutional Revolutionary Party in Mexico or the Liberal Democrats in Japan.

Under President Santiago Peña, Paraguay has arguably assembled its most capable cabinet in history, recently experienced substantial economic growth, and maintained relative political and economic stability. Paraguay is a country of serious economic potential; it could be a “mini Brazil.”

As allies of the United States, Paraguayans often feel taken for granted or overlooked, despite a record of support for US diplomatic priorities. Paraguay is the only country in South America that maintains diplomatic relations with Taiwan. In contrast to Brazil, Venezuela and other South American countries, it has been a vocal supporter of Israel, including in the current war in Gaza, and a reliable ally of Ukraine in the United Nations. Their country might get more attention from the United States, Paraguayans lament, if it were seen as more of a “problem country.”

Economic Potential

Strategically located in between Santiago, Buenos Aires, and Sao Paulo, Paraguay has the potential to become a regional hub for connectivity and technology. This strategic significance, combined with its economic potential, makes it a country that the United States cannot afford to overlook. Major drivers of economic growth in Paraguay include the agricultural, retail and construction sectors. There is considerable room for growth in the economic relationship; US-Paraguay bilateral goods trade was $3 billion in 2023, compared to the US-Colombia bilateral goods trade of more than $39 billion.

The country possesses several sources of “green” energy. It can leverage enormous electricity surplus for artificial intelligence and other technological activities. The Itaipu and Yacyreta hydroelectric dams are among the largest in the world, generating substantial surplus energy. Itaipu alone produced 79 million MWh of energy in 2019 and set a world record in 2016 with an annual production of 103 million MWh. This hydroelectric capacity offers a unique advantage for tech companies needing sustainable and cost-effective power supply, particularly for energy-intensive industries like data centers and AI development.

The global market for green hydrogen is expected to grow significantly, driven by international commitments to reduce carbon emissions. Paraguay’s ability to harness electricity and produce green hydrogen at scale could attract investments and position the country as a major exporter of this clean energy source. Another Paraguayan export, fertilizers, can also reduce fossil fuel use, enhance food security in the region, and reduce reliance on Russian-manufactured fertilizer.

The United States should consider steps in four areas.

Trade and investment. In exchange for governance reforms, offer to negotiate a free trade agreement. In addition, consider making Paraguay a recipient of the trade benefits that Congress proposed for Ecuador through the IDEA Act. If the bipartisan Americas Act becomes law, encourage Paraguay to meet its criteria. Open the US market to Paraguayan beef, conditioned on meeting international standards, as evidenced by its success in the Canadian market.

In order to increase business and tourism, establish a direct flight between the US and Paraguay’s capital city, Asuncion. It is easier to travel from Asuncion to Europe than to the continental United States. Paraguay’s airport is International Air Transport Association (IATA) certified, eliminating safety concerns.

Military and Law Enforcement. Bolster existing anti-narcotic and counterterrorism support by helping Paraguay acquire US radars and military aviation, or suitable technologies from other allies, in order to combat drug trafficking and corruption.

Education. Encourage US universities to set up campuses in Asuncion to strengthen educational ties and provide opportunities for development, building on longstanding ties with the universities in Kansas.

Aid. As a supplement to the modest aid program, initiate micro, small and medium enterprise loan programs to increase productivity. Offer credit in sectors with greater responsibilities and support alternative financial inclusion initiatives, such as the development of fintech services.

Two Key Challenges

Paraguay suffers from the perception, and reality, of corruption, including in public procurement. Paraguay is also a transport hub for drugs and the production of marijuana. But it is not unique in this regard nor has the level of criminality merited the US reaction. The US has sanctioned for corruption the former president, Horacio Cartes, head of the Colorado party and political sponsor of current President Peña. The US works with several countries in Latin America, the Middle East, and Eastern Europe that are equally or more corrupt than Paraguay, yet rarely sanctions these other nations or individuals. The US might consider what “asks” or reforms it would like to see happen in return for lifting sanctions against Cartes.

Additionally, Paraguay suffers from a human capital deficit. As noted above, US universities might consider opening campuses in Asuncion or other cities, with the US government potentially playing a brokering role in this endeavor.

Conclusion

Paraguay may eventually be tempted to recognize Communist China over Taiwan, given Chinese efforts to influence the country. During COVID-19, Paraguay almost recognized China in exchange for low-quality Sinovac vaccines, owing to a vaccine vacuum left by the West.

The United States should decide if it wants to take additional actions to collaborate with Paraguay in spite of the corruption problems. If we do not take these steps, we may hasten the day that Paraguay turns away from its traditional ally, Taiwan. We should take additional steps now, perhaps linking these steps to actions on the corruption front to help Paraguay develop its immense potential.

### Engagement Key---China

#### Deepening U.S.-Paraguay cooperations vital to counter China’s regional influence, foster transparent resource management, and secure sustainable supply chains in the Americas

Kim, 8-23-2023 (Anthony Kim research international economic issues, M.A. in International Trade and Investment Policy from GWU, Paraguay’s New President Presents Strategic Cooperation Opportunities for U.S.," The Heritage Foundation, https://www.heritage.org/americas/commentary/paraguays-new-president-presents-strategic-cooperation-opportunities-us/, accessed on 4-23-2025), FC

Paraguay merits Washington’s elevated attention as the country just inaugurated a new president interested in promoting economic freedom, combating corruption, and building alliances with democratic nations. Paraguay is an important U.S. ally in a South America where many nations are turning away from the U.S. toward China and toward increasingly socialist governance.

Santiago Peña, the former finance minister who sailed to clear victory in Paraguay’s April election by a significant margin, was sworn in on Tuesday as the country’s new president.

In his inaugural speech, Peña, a conservative, business-friendly technocrat (who visited The Heritage Foundation when he was finance minister), underscored the importance of “firm and ethical leadership” and highlighted his policy direction to “build alliances” with the U.S. and other democratic nations for the next five years of his presidency. (The Daily Signal is Heritage’s news and commentary outlet.)

Pledging his pursuit of economic freedom-enhancing policies for the landlocked nation, the new president put an unambiguous emphasis on his intention to combat state corruption, attract greater foreign investment, and improve the overall quality of life for Paraguayan families.

While it may be still premature to gauge exactly how Paraguay’s economy will ensure its ongoing transformation, the country has been on an encouraging development trajectory supported by stable and resilient macroeconomic conditions. Paraguay’s level of public debt is among the lowest in the region, and the country has also made strides in battling corruption and inefficiency in the public sector. Paraguay continues to move forward, with economic growth for 2023 expected at 4.5%, according to the International Monetary Fund.

The sustained push for economic liberalization and greater transparency in government has markedly improved Paraguay’s competitive edge. According to The Heritage Foundation’s 2023 Index of Economic Freedom, the annual global benchmark report that compares countries’ economic governance and competitiveness, Paraguay’s economy is rated as “moderately free,” with its global ranking of No. 76 placing the country ahead of neighboring Argentina, Bolivia, and Brazil.

It is also notable that Paraguay has already shown itself to be a good partner for the United States in hemispheric relations. It has worked closely with Washington in counter-narcotics initiatives as well as cooperating to reduce other illicit cross-border activities.

On the international stage, Paraguay under the Peña administration is likely to play a larger and more constructive role in forging greater partnerships with Israel and Taiwan, two important allies of the United States. This will unambiguously make Paraguay stand out as a partner that Washington should cultivate a closer and greater strategic relationship with

So, early signs from Peña are undoubtedly promising.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu congratulated Peña on his election victory, and the two leaders reaffirmed their commitment to strengthening bilateral ties. Foreign Minister Eli Cohen, representing Israel at the Aug. 15 inauguration ceremony, also had forward-looking conversations with Peña, who accepted the invitation to visit Israel within the year and pledged to reopen Paraguay’s embassy in Jerusalem.

Regarding Taiwan, Peña highlighted during his inaugural address that Paraguay and Taiwan are “not just allies, but also brothers.” Taiwan’s vice president, William Lai, attended the inauguration. Lai is also the ruling Democratic Progressive Party’s presidential candidate for the January 2024 elections.

Paraguay is the only country in South America and one of just 12 countries around the world to have diplomatic relations with Taiwan, which lost an ally earlier this year when Honduras cut diplomatic ties with the island nation.

Underscoring that Paraguay under his presidency “will build alliances and cooperation with a geostrategic vision, seeking horizontal agreements,” Peña further noted that his country’s relationship with Taiwan “is an example of this and of Paraguay’s friendly and cooperative spirit with nations for which [Paraguay has] deep affection.”

Washington should welcome the constructive and forward-looking interaction between America’s two critical partners, one in the Indo-Pacific and the other in South America. A greater Paraguay-Taiwan relationship matters to America in holding back China.

China has been seeking trade, diplomatic, and military ties in Latin America and the Caribbean for years. The region is rich in natural resources and has developing markets for Chinese-manufactured goods.

The United States can and must win the geopolitical diplomatic competition. There is still time for America to counter China’s malign and manipulative influence with other nations, but that window is quickly closing. Washington cannot win the battle of ideas and diplomacy without being proactive on this critical front.

To that end, Washington should pay closer attention to the ongoing interaction and the broad relationship between Paraguay and Taiwan while proactively paving a deeper and wider path of a pragmatic, strategic partnership amongst the three nations.

All in all, Paraguay is becoming one of the most reliable partners of the United States. It’s in the clear interest of Congress to welcome Paraguay’s new president, Santiago Peña, and work closely with him on a range of vital issues that advance freedom, opportunities, and prosperity for both nations.

This piece originally appeared in The Daily Signal

### Engagement Key---Drug Trafficking

#### DEA support critical and essential for Paraguay to combat drug trafficking

ParaguayTV.GOV, 3-6-2025 (ParaguayTV.gov.py), "DEA support in the fight against drugs: The United States and Paraguay reaffirm their cooperation," Government of Paraguay, https://www.paraguaytv.gov.py/2025/03/07/apoyo-de-la-dea-en-la-lucha-antinarcoticos-estados-unidos-y-paraguay-reafirman-su-cooperacion/, accessed on 4-23-2025), FC

In a joint statement from the United States Embassy and the Government of Paraguay, the commitment to combat drug trafficking through bilateral cooperation was reaffirmed. Within this framework, the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration will maintain its support for counternarcotics efforts in Paraguay. “This alliance reinforces joint efforts to combat transnational criminal organizations and strengthen security in the region,” reads an official statement.

“The United States looks forward to further strengthening our strong bilateral relationship with Paraguay, a key partner in defense, counternarcotics, and ICT infrastructure,” was the message posted by the U.S. Secretary of State on social media on March 6, 2025.

On the same day, U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio had a conversation with Paraguayan President Santiago Peña, where he congratulated him on the first purchase in the country's history through the Foreign Military Sales (FMS) program. This is a radar system, a key step that demonstrates the government's commitment to combating drug and arms trafficking.

The governments agreed to maintain collaboration in this area with Paraguay's National Anti-Drug Secretariat (SENAD), which remains part of the Sensitive Investigation Unit (SIU). "Counternarcotics cooperation between Paraguay and the United States is essential to dismantling organized crime networks and promoting a safer environment for our citizens. We will continue working together to achieve this goal," stated representatives from both countries.

"This alliance, based on mutual trust and effective collaboration, demonstrates the commitment of both nations in the fight against drug trafficking and organized crime," the joint statement concludes.

The confirmed DEA cooperation with Paraguay is the result of a dialogue process initiated in late 2024 between the Paraguayan government and the new US authorities, with the aim of strengthening cooperation in the fight against organized crime.

**This article has been translated with Google Translate.**

### Neg---Multilat CP

#### Multilateralism crisis is only solved with more multilateralism

WTO, 1-31-2025 (World Trade Organization, "Paraguay President: Any multilateralism crisis can only be solved with more multilateralism," Presidential Lecture Series, <https://www.wto.org/english/news_e/news25_e/pls_31jan25_e.htm>, accessed on 4-17-2025), FC

The President of Paraguay, Santiago Peña Palacios, stressed the critical role of the WTO in promoting peace and prosperity through free trade during his delivery on 31 January of the latest edition of the WTO Presidential Lecture. President Peña emphasized that, amid the current global challenges faced by the multilateral trading system, middle powers like Paraguay have a unique responsibility to act as bridge-builders and to foster dialogue and consensus. This will contribute to a more stable and cooperative international order, he said.

President Peña noted that Paraguay is one of the most open econ omies in the world, firmly anchored in the belief that “free commerce is a bedrock of civilized peoples.” In fact, Paraguay is the second most open economy in Latin America, with no significant restrictions on trade, a simple tax system and a markedly pro-business stance, he said. As a landlocked country and primarily an agricultural exporter, producing food for ten times its population, Paraguay has no other alternative, he added.

“We understand both the opportunities and vulnerabilities of global trade. Our experience has shown us that the path to development requires not isolation but deeper integration into global markets — guided by clear, fair and enforceable rules. For middle-sized economies like Paraguay, the multilateral trading system is not just one option among many, it is simply essential for our development and prosperity. This is why I believe that any crisis of multilateralism can only be solved by one thing: more multilateralism,” he declared.

President Peña stressed that Paraguay's commitment to the WTO stems from its experience as a country which has constructed a stable democracy with consistent economic policies and its unique perspective as a bridge between countries with different levels of development. It also comes from the deep conviction that multilateralism remains the most effective path to sustainable development, he added.

Referring to the historic decision to establish multilateral institutions after the Second World War, President Peña noted that it is precisely during difficult times that organizations like the WTO have the unique opportunity not only to show the world their crucial importance but to justify their existence. “The creation of an international organization which seeks to put order into chaos in the world of commerce was not only a sound decision but a brilliant and endurable insight. … The WTO has been, is and will be a great idea,” he added.

In his address to WTO ambassadors, heads of intergovernmental organizations, representatives of non-governmental organizations, business and academia, President Peña also underscored that WTO members must be proactive in order to overcome the challenges faced by the system.

He pointed to the need to make meaningful progress on agricultural reform to achieve less distorted markets and enhance food security, and to the importance of restoring a fully functioning dispute settlement system accessible to all members. He also called on members to ensure that environmental measures enhance, rather than hinder, international trade, and to secure justice, fairness and equality, the most fundamental principles of international commerce.

The lecture — titled “Sustaining Multilateralism in Uncertain Times: The Role of Middle Powers” — was preceded by opening remarks by WTO Director-General Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala, who stressed that under President Peña Paraguay registered South America's strongest rates of GDP growth in 2023 and 2024, according to IMF data, with a positive outlook for 2025 as well.

DG Okonjo-Iweala noted that as a landlocked developing country, Paraguay faces challenges familiar to many WTO members. In the case of Paraguay, these challenges have to do with diversifying its exports beyond meat, soybeans and electricity, and the vulnerability to climate change of the Paraguay-Parana River waterway that connects the country to world markets for goods.

DG Okonjo-Iweala referred to the [fifth WTO Trade Policy Review (TPR)](https://www.wto.org/english/tratop_e/tpr_e/tp563_e.htm)of Paraguay undertaken in November 2024 and the recognition by other members of Paraguay's active and constructive engagement at the WTO, particularly in agriculture negotiations. She noted that at the TPR meeting, members praised Paraguay's broadly open trade and investment environment and noted its reliance on regional and global trade to drive development and poverty reduction.

DG Okonjo-Iweala also drew attention to the current challenging environment and the potential for the world to become more fragmented. “We have lived in that world before in the 1930s. It was poorer and more violent. So we owe it to our children and grandchildren,” she said, to preserving the benefits of multilateralism whilst fixing its shortcomings. “This would help us build them a better future,” she added.

### Neg---Solvency

#### U.S. anti-corruption efforts in Paraguay risk falling short, entrenching impunity, weakening democratic credibility, and emboldening transnational criminal actors

Gedan, 3-30-2023 (Benjamin N. Gedan is the director of the Wilson Center’s Latin American Program, "In Paraguay, Politicians Await the U.S.’s Next Move," Americas Quarterly, https://www.americasquarterly.org/article/in-paraguay-politicians-await-the-u-s-s-next-move/, accessed on 4-23-2025), FC

ASUNCIÓN – The U.S. ambassador to Paraguay, Marc Ostfield, is getting ready to inaugurate a new embassy building on a 14-acre diplomatic compound a stone’s throw from the country’s presidential residence. But he hardly needs a ribbon-cutting ceremony to get the attention of Paraguayans.

That’s because a set of announcements over the past year by Ostfield have made waves across the country. In July, the State Department accused former President Horacio Cartes (2013-18), who is also the country’s most prominent businessman, of involvement in “significant corruption.” In August, the State Department leveled the same accusation against the current vice president, Hugo Velázquez.

Cartes and Velázquez have denied any involvement in corruption.

In January, the Treasury Department brought sanctions against Cartes and Velázquez for “systemic corruption” and “state capture.” Their conduct, Secretary of State Antony Blinken said, “undermines democratic institutions.” On March 23, the United States designated three more current or former Paraguayan officials “for involvement in significant corruption.”

The United States wields significant influence in the country and its announcements seem to have spooked many in Paraguay’s political class. Shortly after the August accusation, Velázquez suspended his candidacy in the presidential election set for April 30 and said he would resign his position as vice president, saying he did so to clear his name—later reversing himself and deciding to stay in his role.

But the Biden administration’s strategy in Paraguay, though dramatic, will not get the job done. Worse, it risks sending the opposite message, that the powerful are untouchable even when their alleged misconduct is splashed across Paraguayan newspapers. That is why the U.S. government should redouble its fight against corruption in Paraguay, first through Justice Department action and then by significantly expanding support for Paraguay’s criminal justice system to give it the tools for greater success in policing its own political class.

A shakeup for Paraguay’s political class

The U.S. allegations in Paraguay are part of a larger, regional campaign.

Elsewhere in Latin America, such as in Venezuela, the Biden administration has gone all in on the fight against corruption. The State Department regularly sanctions public officials in Haiti and in Central America, including by adding them to its “Engel List” of wrongdoers. Last year, the United States sought the arrest of former Honduran President Juan Orlando Hernández; he was extradited in April 2022. In January, the State Department accused former Panamanian President Ricardo Martinelli of corruption and banned him from visiting the United States. (Martinelli denies the accusations, and he is a leading presidential candidate.)

The allegations in Paraguay are serious, particularly those involving Cartes. The U.S. government accuses him of bribing public officials—including payments of up to $50,000 a month to loyal lawmakers—and of maintaining ties to Hezbollah, an Iranian-funded, Lebanese terrorist group. The State Department said Cartes had “obstructed a major international investigation into transnational crime” and warned of his “involvement with foreign terrorist organizations.”

The U.S. allegations stopped short of an indictment. Cartes replied in a statement last July: “I deny and reject the content of these accusations.”

More aggressive U.S. action in Paraguay could make life difficult for a large cast of bad actors. These range from terrorists, including Hezbollah, that do business in Paraguay’s Tri-Border Area, to organized crime syndicates, including Mexico’s Sinaloa Cartel and Colombian guerrillas, which reportedly smuggle Paraguayan cigarettes.

Already, the State Department’s corruption designations and the Treasury sanctions have provided a potential roadmap to local prosecutors. On March 23, Attorney General Emiliano Rolón Fernández announced the opening of an investigation into Cartes and Velázquez.

Yet in Paraguay, many question whether local authorities will follow through and thoroughly investigate the U.S. accusations. The State Department itself has complained that corrupt senior officials enjoy “a high degree of impunity” and that “politicization and corruption were pervasive throughout the judicial branch.” For almost two decades, Ciudad del Este has appeared on the U.S. government’s notorious markets report as a marketplace for counterfeit and pirated goods. Paraguayans say their country lives in the widening shadow of organized crime and institutionalized corruption; the country ranks 128th out of 180 countries on Transparency International’s Corruption Perceptions Index.

Cartes may be a particularly challenging target for the Paraguayan authorities. Though the U.S. accusations were not surprising to many Paraguayans, few in Paraguay dare criticize the former president, given his political and economic might and significant public support. Those who do sometimes avoid saying his name, calling him “the man on Avenida España,” referring to his address.

A rival of the current president, Cartes wields substantial influence in the dominant and conservative Colorado Party that has governed almost uninterrupted for seven decades. Last December, Santiago Peña, a former finance minister and an executive at one of Cartes’s companies, won the Colorado Party’s presidential primary, and Cartes won the party presidency.

Obstacles to greater U.S. involvement

For now, Paraguay is in a state of suspended animation. Amid silence from Washington, rumors circulate about potential new targets and supposedly imminent U.S. indictments and extraditions.

There is a precedent for collaboration with the United States: In the late 1970s, for example, President Jimmy Carter’s human rights advocacy helped free Paraguayan political prisoners. Today, 73% of Paraguayans have a favorable view of the United States, according to the Latinobarómetro survey.

There are several explanations for why the United States may be reluctant to go even further in Paraguay. The world is full of distractions; Paraguay is distant and landlocked; U.S. criminal investigations move slowly; and it might be difficult to scale up support for Paraguay from U.S. criminal justice experts.

There are also diplomatic considerations. Though the United States is widely admired in Paraguay, U.S. actions so far have provoked criticism about foreign intervention, particularly from Cartes’ defenders. It is also possible the Biden administration is simply delaying any possible extraditions, including of Cartes, until after Paraguay’s April elections.

Justice Department intervention could also backfire. If Peña is elected president, he would begin his term displeased by U.S. treatment of his political ally. Morevoer, the outcome of any eventual U.S. prosecution, where the burden of proof is higher than for State Department or Treasury sanctions, would be unpredictable. Finally, there is no guarantee that more aggressive U.S. actions—including extraditions and far more robust support for Paraguay’s federal prosecutors—would improve the climate of Paraguayan politics.

Still, now that the Biden administration has shown its willingness to stand up to Paraguay’s most powerful actors, it is the right moment to attempt systematic change.

# Other Countries

### Note

#### While the authors would not go as far to saying we do not recommend the following countries, our research has shown that these countries either already have deep to moderate levels of engagement, low hostilities with the US, or simply not enough scholarly advocates to increasing bilateral ties

### Belize

#### Background: Limited engagement; affs could explore environmental cooperation, development assistance, or security training programs.

<https://journals.co.za/doi/pdf/10.1080/20780389.2022.2057294>

#### US-Belize cooperation is key to check organized crime & drug syndicates

Silva, 9-7-2023 (Omar Silva, Editor, National Perspective Belize, ""U.S.-Belize Collaboration Bolsters Regional Fight Against Transnational Crime"," National Perspective Belize, https://www.nationalperspectivebz.com/2023-09-08/us-belize-collaboration-bolsters-regional-fight-against-transnational-crime, accessed on 4-23-2024)

In a rare display of unity, a high-level U.S. government delegation recently visited Belize, signaling the deepening collaboration between the two nations in addressing critical regional challenges. The delegation, consisting of representatives from the Office of the Vice President, State Department, Department of Defense, and USAID, underscored the importance of the U.S.-Belize relationship, focusing on key issues such as border security, transnational crime, and migration.

Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for the Western Hemisphere, Daniel Erikson, shed light on the specifics of this crucial partnership, emphasizing its regional significance. Erikson highlighted that transnational criminal organizations pose a shared challenge, affecting both Belize and the United States, with broader implications for Central America as a whole.

Enhancing Awareness and Border Security: The delegation discussed initiatives to enhance Belize's awareness of air traffic associated with transnational criminal activities. This effort, led by the Joint Intelligence Operations Center (JIOC), provides Belizean authorities with vital information on overflights, aiding in monitoring and responding to illicit activities. Border security along Belize's western border, characterized by challenging jungle terrain, was also a focal point. The U.S. is actively engaging with Belize to support their strategies for combating trafficking in this area and upholding the rule of law.

The Role of Domestic Law Enforcement: While border security is critical, Erikson emphasized that the primary responsibility for combating transnational organized crime falls on domestic law enforcement agencies, not the military. However, potential areas for military cooperation were explored, recognizing the need for a holistic approach to tackling these criminal activities.

Demand Reduction: Recognizing that the demand for illegal drugs fuels transnational criminal operations, Erikson acknowledged the importance of demand reduction efforts within the United States. These initiatives aim to curtail the demand for illegal substances and related activities, ultimately undermining the sustainability of these criminal organizations.

Regional Cooperation: Erikson stressed the imperative of regional cooperation among Central American governments. This collaboration involves sharing information, strengthening law enforcement cooperation, and collectively addressing the challenges posed by transnational criminal organizations. Belize's leadership in the region was commended, highlighting its significance as both a Central American and Caribbean community member.

In summary, the visit of the U.S. delegation to Belize signifies a deepening of the U.S.-Belize partnership to tackle pressing regional issues, with a particular focus on transnational crime. The collaboration aims to enhance Belize's capabilities, improve border security, reduce demand for illicit activities within the United States, and promote regional cooperation. As the two nations work together, the broader Central American region stands to benefit from a more coordinated and effective response to the shared challenge of transnational criminal organizations.

### Chile

#### Quick Background: Tensions over trade and social reforms; affs could explore climate change collaboration, trade expansion, or human rights initiatives.

#### US-Chilean lithium engagement checks unsustainable extraction practices & promotes EV supply chain diversification

Ulloa Peters & Tobin, 4-28-2023 (Ignacia Ulloa Peters and William Tobin, Ignacia Ulloa Peters is an assistant director at the Atlantic Council’s Adrienne Arsht Latin America Center. William Tobin is a program assistant at the Atlantic Council Global Energy Center, where he focuses on energy and climate policy., "Lithium Drives The Energy Transition. Will Chile’S Plan To Nationalize Production Be A Speed Bump?," Atlantic Council, https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/new-atlanticist/lithium-drives-the-energy-transition-will-chiles-plan-to-nationalize-production-be-a-speed-bump/, accessed on 4-23-2024)

Chilean President Gabriel Boric caused a jolt on April 20 when he announced plans to partially nationalize his country’s lithium industry. This decision would grant the government 51 percent control of the country’s lithium production via a state-owned company created to oversee and participate in the mineral’s entire production cycle. The announcement generated controversy in Chile and abroad, with a range of key players speaking in favor or against the initiative. While it is true that instances of nationalization of natural resources often result in debilitated industries, Chile’s strong institutions, recognition of the imperative to partner with private industry, and previous success with mineral nationalization ventures create a positive outlook for the country’s ability to deliver. While this may be the only path forward for the lithium industry to progress, policymakers should exercise caution with similar approaches to other industries.

Chile is one of the highest-volume lithium producers in the world, producing 26 percent of global supply in 2021, and possesses the world’s largest proven reserves. With the energy transition underway and demand for the metal estimated to increase by 450 percent through 2050, the country is uniquely positioned to benefit from a technologically and commercially mature lithium industry that, to date, has struggled to grow.

While the nationalization of resources in Latin America regularly raises alarms within demand centers and investor groups, Chile has demonstrated success in nationalizing its other abundant mineral resource—copper. Codelco, Chile’s state-owned copper company, has high technical expertise and standards with its main issues deriving from its misfortune of declining resources, not from mismanagement. Chile currently ranks thirty-fourth and thirty-third on the Atlantic Council’s Freedom and Prosperity Indexes, respectively, reflecting its institutions’ strong commitment to transparency, accountability, and integrity in economic, political, and legal spheres. While Codelco’s past success could steward the creation of Chile’s state-owned lithium business, there is limited precedent that this approach could benefit other industries.

Opponents of the initiative argue that the move could jeopardize foreign direct investment in lithium development in the country and ‘kill the golden goose’ for Chile’s economic diversification. However, the decision to nationalize could deliver overdue clarity and provide transparent foundations upon which industry development can proceed, providing businesses and investors with a degree of certainty for future operations and arguably more predictability than had existed previously. Boric has stressed that no existing contracts will be altered without being the “fruit of an agreement” with SQM or Albemarle, the two existing lithium mine operators—and that existing contracts will otherwise be respected.

This announcement extends beyond national economics. Boric’s administration designed the proposal to directly address longstanding grievances, such as inequality and water rights, that were highlighted during Chile’s Estallido Social in 2019. While Chilean state-owned enterprises have a complicated history concerning the well-being of local communities, this plan’s priority and primary purpose is to ensure that the population benefits from the lithium boom.

For instance, Chilean Minister of Mining Marcela Hernando announced that private companies that want to take advantage of lithium must do so by direct lithium extraction (DLE) and not through brine evaporation, a system that involves an ecologic loss of two million liters of water for each ton of lithium carbonate produced. This comes in direct response to Chile’s decades-long drought, which has led to anxiety from local communities, particularly in the Atacama Desert, regarding lithium brine extraction’s intense water use. Interestingly, DLE technology companies have said that state support could prove beneficial for growing this technology in Chile’s lithium operations.

The expertise and infrastructure of existing private-sector enterprises will be a continuing feature of Chile’s lithium industry for the foreseeable future.

Provided that the national lithium company will partner with private lithium firms already operating, this initiative is also set to enhance the public-private partnership model, which according to the administration is key to the successful implementation of the national lithium strategy. In fact, it is necessary to include the private sector in this venture, as the process of identifying reserves, as well as progressing from brine to lithium carbonate—the product that is exported—is technologically intensive. The expertise and infrastructure of existing private-sector enterprises will be a continuing feature of Chile’s lithium industry for the foreseeable future.

In this scenario, the United States has the unique opportunity to collaborate with Chile to make the most of its natural resources while identifying ways to establish regional supply chain partnerships. As one of the United States’ free-trade agreement partners in the region, Chile represents a strong partner to promote the diversification of supply chains for raw materials associated with the manufacturing of electric vehicle batteries, in line with the goals of the Inflation Reduction Act.

More broadly, Chile has the potential to participate as a valued partner in creating a more robust, diverse, and resilient global supply chain ecosystem as the new energy system develops. To realize this vision, Washington should not treat Chile’s nationalization of lithium as an impediment, but rather distinguish it from other nationalization trends in the region. Engagement with Chile in building this partnership should focus on maximizing the value of the country’s resources. By the same token, Chile’s inclusion in these partnerships will be part and parcel of ensuring that it feels it is obtaining the best deal from its resources for its economy and citizens, a precursor for obtaining the political consensus for its lithium industry to bring critical supplies to global markets.

Existing mechanisms such as the Americas Partnership for Economic Prosperity and the Minerals Security Partnership present ideal fora to engage with Chile through remaking those supply chains. These channels can be utilized to facilitate private-sector-public-sector interactions between lithium industry participants and the government of Chile as well as the new national business.

Chile’s national lithium strategy, if successful, could serve as a model for natural resource exploitation across the region. However, it is too early to extrapolate this historically successful approach of nationalization from mining to other industries. Such international collaboration, and facilitation of public-private partnerships, may yet facilitate the sustainable and equitable development of this particular industry that has struggled to scale.

### Colombia

#### Quick Background: Strained relations due to deportation disputes; affs could explore migration policy coordination, anti-corruption efforts, or security cooperation.

#### US-Colombian collaboration is necessary to combat Chinese influence and promote sustainable democratic governance.

Vence 25 [Cesar Vence, Senior Director for the Americas at the U.S. Chamber of Commerce and serves as Executive Director of the U.S.-Colombia Business Council (USCBC), 3-3-2025, "Strengthening the U.S.-Colombia Bilateral Relationship", U.S. Chamber of Commerce, https://www.uschamber.com/international/strengthening-the-u-s-colombia-bilateral-relationship-a-cornerstone-for-mutual-prosperity, accessed 4/20/25, AWright]

Despite the myriad successes of the U.S.-Colombia partnership, significant challenges persist, particularly as China deepens its influence in South America. With substantial investments in infrastructure, energy, and other critical sectors, China has emerged as a formidable competitor in the region. Notably, Chinese companies account for almost 30% of the smartphone market in Colombia, where the country’s telecommunications infrastructure also relies heavily on Huawei equipment.

Chinese firms have been awarded key transportation and infrastructure projects, including the Bogota and Medellin metro lines, and the Hidroituango hydroelectric project, which received over $1.5 billion in Chinese investment. Sinovac and the Bogota Mayor’s Office also announced a partnership to build BogotaBio, an initiative to develop vaccines in Colombia.

To counterbalance China’s expanding footprint, the U.S. must actively engage with both the Colombian government and private sector, fostering innovation, investment, and inclusive growth. Strengthening this bilateral partnership is not only vital for Colombia’s economic trajectory, but also for advancing U.S. strategic interests in the region. By prioritizing this relationship, the U.S. can ensure that Colombia remains a crucial ally in promoting democratic governance, economic resilience, and long-term prosperity across Latin America.

#### Engagement with Colombia is decreasing now risking them developing closer ties with China and the US losing a key partner in the region, but renewing engagement solves.

Shifter and Colombo, 23 (Michael, Adjunct Professor at the Edmund A. Walsh School of Foreign Service at Georgetown University and an Adjunct Professor at the Elliott School of International Affairs at George Washington University, and Andrea, Master’s student in the Erasmus Mundus Latin American Studies program, 9/13, “Why Washington Still Needs Colombia”, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/colombia/why-washington-still-needs-colombia-petro>) AJW

For many observers of Colombia, it is hard to imagine that a former member of M-19, the guerrilla group that waged war against the state for nearly two decades, could attain the presidency. Yet in 2022, that is exactly what happened. Gustavo Petro, a former M-19 organizer who later served as a leftist opposition senator and as mayor of the capital city of Bogotá, ascended to the country’s highest office. Petro’s populist platforms and anti-elite discourse clashed with Colombia’s tradition of more centrist, consensual politics, and going into the final round of voting, his victory seemed far from assured. But his promise of far-reaching reforms resonated with Colombians who were tired of the status quo, felt excluded from the country’s economic and political life, and sought greater social justice—so much so that they elected him to be the country’s first leftist president. Despite Petro’s populist and at times anti-U.S. rhetoric, the Biden administration has since made overtures to the new president, seeking to shore up Washington’s relationship with a country that has long been its chief partner in South America. Shortly after Petro’s victory in the runoff elections, President Joe Biden called to congratulate him. In April 2023, Biden welcomed Petro to the White House, touting Colombia as the “keystone to the hemisphere,” and he has since sent a series of high-level delegations to Bogotá. In addition to re-cementing ties with an important regional ally, the United States may be hoping to prevent Colombia from falling into China’s orbit. At present, Colombia is one of the few South American countries where Beijing has relatively minimal—albeit increasing—engagement. But as Petro begins his second year in office, Washington’s charm offensive is yielding diminishing returns. For one thing, Plan Colombia, a security and antidrug cooperation package that has been the linchpin of the U.S.-Colombian relationship for nearly a quarter century, looks increasingly obsolete. Signed in 2000, the joint initiative helped quell Colombia’s guerrilla war and arguably prevented the country from becoming a failed state, and it has been backed by more than $12 billion in funding—by far the highest level of U.S. aid to any country in the hemisphere. But Petro has opposed Plan Colombia since its inception, and as president, he has rejected his predecessors’ rhetoric about Bogotá’s “strategic” and “special” partnership with Washington. Indeed, at the United Nations General Assembly and in other international gatherings, he has frequently criticized the plan and the U.S.-backed “war on drugs” on which it is based. Over the past two decades, as the United States has directed its attention elsewhere in the world and drifted apart from other Latin American neighbors, Colombia has stood out as an exception. But in coming years, it is likely that this alliance, too, will be weakened by the evolving reality of the drug trade, complicated domestic politics in both Colombia and the United States, and a U.S. government that is increasingly preoccupied with other urgent global priorities. With no ready alternatives in the region, Washington may find that a cooling-off with Bogotá will further diminish its capacity to pursue its interests and policy goals in the troubled hemisphere. REBEL WITH A CAUSE Initially, Petro’s ambitious policy agenda generated expectations of a transformation of Colombian society and the country’s role in the region and the world. Even in Washington, where some hard-liners in the U.S. Congress were alarmed by Petro’s victory because of his guerrilla past, U.S. policymakers largely gave the new Colombian president the benefit of the doubt. Petro pledged to undertake sweeping agrarian, fiscal, health, pension, labor, and education reforms. Rather than continuing the forced eradication of coca cultivation, which failed to curb the production of cocaine, he pledged to promote legal crop substitution. He promised a radical shift from fossil fuels to clean energy. On paper, these goals are broadly supported by many Colombians, but in practice the often-chaotic Petro administration has faced multiple challenges and setbacks in following through. There have been some bright spots. Early on in Petro’s tenure, thanks to the governing coalition he fashioned, he was able to pass a fiscal reform package aimed at expanding social development programs that had eluded previous administrations. He has managed to keep the economy on track despite the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic and Russia’s war in Ukraine. And he has presided over an impressive drop in deforestation in the Amazon and nationwide, even though this can in part be attributed to armed groups enforcing logging bans. But some of Petro’s broader aims may be out of reach. One of the central parts of his political platform has been the concept of “total peace,” which entails seeking out and negotiating agreements with armed insurgent movements and major drug traffickers. Foremost is his widely supported goal of negotiating a peace accord with the National Liberation Army (ELN), an insurgency created in 1964, but he also envisions striking deals with an array of organized crime groups, an approach that is trickier and more controversial. One such group is the so-called Clan del Golfo, which controls a significant chunk of national territory, is among the largest distributors of cocaine in the world, and today poses the gravest threat to Colombia’s security. With Petro facing both domestic and international obstacles to these plans, his capacity to make good on his vision for a revitalized Colombia may be fatally limited. ONE STEP FORWARD, THREE STEPS BACK As a result of his own missteps, the optimism with which most Colombians greeted Petro as president-elect in 2022 has given way to considerable pessimism. He has been politically wounded by a series of scandals, including allegations that his son, Nicolás Petro, was involved in a money-laundering scheme connected to Petro’s presidential campaign. Many Colombians are worried about Petro’s lack of understanding about the limits of presidential authority. In May, for instance, during a clash over how to handle armed groups, he incorrectly asserted on Twitter that the Colombian attorney general answered to him, when in fact the attorney general is subordinate only to the country’s constitution. Petro backed down after a public backlash and criticism in the press. When tested, Colombia’s democratic institutions work. But amid mounting problems and controversies, Petro’s popularity, both within his governing coalition and with the public, has ebbed, with his approval rating plummeting from an initial 56 percent to 33 percent by the end of his first year (although this is admittedly a familiar pattern for Latin American presidents). More worrying than Petro’s political fate, however, is Colombia’s deteriorating security situation. Massacres and homicides have been on the rise for several years, and since Petro came to office, kidnappings have doubled and killings of social leaders and human rights activists have continued unbated. Petro’s conciliatory security policy aims to promote a climate of peace by showing goodwill toward armed groups; he has directed the country’s military and police to refrain from offensive actions. But the armed groups have refused to disarm, while security forces are hamstrung in their ability to protect ordinary Colombians. Notably, even as violent crime has gone up, the online publication La Silla Vacía reported that during Petro’s first year, confrontations between security forces and illegal armed groups have dropped by 45 percent, reflecting a laxity that heralds an increasingly dire security situation. As Petro begins his second year in office, Washington’s charm offensive is yielding diminishing returns. The resurgence of armed groups in Colombia can be attributed in part to more lenient rules regarding the cultivation of coca, used to make cocaine. Although cocaine production fell during the first decade of the century as a result of Plan Colombia initiatives, it began to increase again around 2014 and has reached record levels since the beginning of Petro’s term in office. The recent boom is in part the result of the previous government’s 2016 peace accord with the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), the country’s largest guerrilla group: although the deal successfully disarmed the country’s largest insurgency, it also created a void that was soon filled by other drug-trafficking organizations. Over time, these criminal groups have multiplied, contributing to rampant lawlessness, violence, and higher levels of coca cultivation in rural areas. This worrisome state of affairs has been exacerbated by Petro’s drug policy, which to date has been vague and incoherent. For example, as a result of his strategy to prioritize legal crop substitution over eradication, the latter has dropped more than 80 percent. Coca cultivation, which in the two years before Petro took office had already increased by a staggering 93 percent, rose 13 percent in 2022, setting a new record. Petro stated he would go after drug traffickers by seizing cocaine, but such busts dropped by 10 percent in his first year. To be sure, the drug challenge, fueled by steady U.S. demand, has vexed previous Colombian presidents, as well. But Petro’s failure to control coca through alternative means is especially unsurprising, given that his administration never laid out clearly how it intended to pursue a program of coca substitution. Petro’s rhetoric signaled a radical shift, but it has ultimately lacked the substance necessary for real change. Petro likewise continues to get in his own way in the international arena. Along with keeping the United States at arm’s length, he has tried to stake out a new position as a regional and global leader. Petro worked to rally other countries in the region to his side, particularly on antidrug and climate policies. But his confrontational nature and bombastic rhetoric, geared mainly for domestic consumption, cuts against his vision of regional cooperation and integration. Blaming the United States for environmental and drug problems, for instance, plays well with his political base but is poorly received among U.S. policymakers. It is under these inauspicious circumstances that both Washington and Bogotá must work to keep their partnership alive. WASHINGTON’S PETRO WATCH In Washington, engagement with Colombia over the past two decades is regarded as a rare Latin American success story. Although Plan Colombia failed to achieve its stated purpose—to curb cocaine and drug trafficking from Colombia to the United States—it enabled the Colombian state to assert its authority over much of the country’s national territory for the first time in decades. The landmark 2016 peace agreement with the FARC was made possible by U.S.-backed military pressure under President Álvaro Uribe, who governed from 2002 to 2010. Security gains were undeniable; massacres, homicides, and kidnappings fell markedly. For over a decade, Plan Colombia was regarded as the crowning achievement of the relationship, generating considerable collaboration between U.S. and Colombian government agencies and creating a high degree of familiarity—even trust—that stood out in Washington’s relations in the Western Hemisphere. Eventually, though, as tensions over human rights mounted and drug trafficking increased, the initiative lost its luster and the relationship began to slacken. Facing challenges on all sides, Petro wants to maintain friendly ties with Washington and has mostly handled the relationship adroitly. There have, however, been some rocky moments. In July, commenting on the war in Ukraine, Petro said he didn’t know “if it is preferable to support Russia or the U.S. It appears to me to be the same thing.” In the United States, he has come under fire from a small group of Congressional Republicans, many of them Cuban American, who seem to see the new Colombian president as another Fidel Castro or Hugo Chávez and threaten to cut support for Bogotá. But to date, the White House and the State Department have taken Petro’s broadsides in stride and downplayed his efforts to reduce coca eradication, negotiate with drug traffickers, and halt oil exploration. A key goal of the Biden administration’s outreach to Petro is to enlist his help with Venezuela. Petro, the theory goes, could foster a more effective regional effort to push for negotiations between Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro and the Venezuelan opposition to end the country’s economic and political crisis. In April, Petro hosted a regional meeting in Bogotá for this purpose. But the meeting was improvised and unproductive—and in any case, given his ambitions for Colombian-Venezuelan relations, it is doubtful that Petro can be counted on to press Maduro to democratize. Petro’s desire to win the strongman’s support for his own vision of “total peace”—support made necessary by the fact that part of the ELN operates from within Venezuelan territory—trumps other objectives. For this reason, he has minimized the issue of Venezuelan migration to Colombia, despite the estimated 2.5 million Venezuelans who have taken refuge in the country. Unlike his predecessor, he has rarely mentioned the influx in his speeches at home or overseas, avoiding calling attention to the economic spiral and government repression that have forced millions to flee. Petro has, however, shown himself willing to cooperate with Washington’s efforts to control migration to the U.S. southern border. In particular, he has agreed to set up three “safe mobility offices” in Colombia to help manage migratory flows to the United States. Yet despite these occasional gestures, dealing with such a mercurial leader poses significant obstacles for building trust, the basis of a long-term partnership. EBBING FRIENDSHIP Apart from the specific issues of migration and coping with Venezuela, U.S.-Colombian relations are at a crucial juncture. For at least a generation, the production of cocaine and trafficking to the United States have been the driving issue in the evolving relationship between Washington and Bogotá. Today, however, the rise of synthetic drugs, particularly fentanyl, is the overriding concern in U.S. drug policy, with these new substances contributing to the 100,000 overdose deaths the United States witnessed last year alone. Although concern about cocaine has not disappeared, political attention on the drug question has shifted toward China, where ingredients for the newer drugs come from, and Mexico, where fentanyl is produced before flooding the U.S. market. As a result, although bureaucratic inertia will ensure that U.S.-Colombian antidrug operations continue and resources keep flowing, Colombia will feature much less prominently in Washington’s drug policy. Another factor that threatens to weaken the partnership between Washington and Bogotá concerns China. To some degree, Colombia has been an exception to China’s ever deepening engagement in Latin America and the Caribbean, where over 21 countries have become a part of the Belt and Road Initiative, China’s signature massive infrastructure program. Colombia’s cautious attitude to a deeper relationship with China is in part due to Bogotá’s historically close economic ties with the United States, anchored by sustained cooperation on initiatives such as Plan Colombia, as well as a 2012 free trade pact that may soon be renegotiated at Petro’s urging to better boost Colombia’s agricultural sector. But China is only growing more aggressive in its bid to invest in Colombia; Chinese direct investments in the country tripled from 2021 to 2022, and Chinese companies have submitted winning bids on major infrastructure projects including building the Bogotá metro system. For now, Petro appears ambivalent about a closer relationship with China, and his busy travel schedule has not included a visit to Beijing. But should he follow his South American neighbors and decide to deepen economic ties with China, it would further erode the U.S.-Colombian partnership. OPPORTUNITIES LOST AND FOUND The main story of the Petro presidency to date has been one of lost opportunities. These include missed chances in Colombia, in the region, and in the country’s long-standing relationship with the United States. Having squandered the goodwill that accompanied his election victory, Petro has allowed a disorderly governing style and erratic personal behavior to weaken him politically and even threaten his undoing. He may try to rally his supporters before crucial regional elections in October and work to rebuild the coalition that served him well in the early months of his administration. But his record thus far suggests he will remain hobbled and increasingly isolated, preventing his administration from accomplishing much in his remaining time in office. To its credit, the United States has continued to engage Petro and has kept the partnership on course (although embarrassingly, there has been no confirmed U.S. ambassador in Bogotá since June 2022). The Biden administration has been careful to distinguish between Petro’s rhetoric, which is often combative, and his actions, which so far have fallen within accepted bounds. But Washington’s accommodationist stance will be increasingly on trial over the next three years and beyond as trust and institutional connections erode and as deeper changes in both countries create greater distance between them. Petro has allowed a disorderly governing style and erratic personal behavior to weaken him politically. Although the United States may face pressures to drift from its historic engagement with Colombia, it should resist doing so. Cocaine may no longer be the overriding concern it was a quarter century ago, but its resurgent supply fuels corruption and organized crime in Colombia and elsewhere. There is also room for collaboration on new shared priorities, such as migration, economic equality, racial justice, climate change, and the transition away from fossil fuels. Ultimately, though, the success of such ventures will depend on Petro’s ability to follow through—and on the United States’ willingness to open its pocketbook. As it stands today, Colombia is following the path of many Latin American nations, for which relations with the United States have remained reasonably cordial but become increasingly distant. Neither the United States nor any Latin American country appears to have much of an appetite for anything resembling a robust two-way partnership. U.S. policymakers are focused on building partnerships elsewhere—primarily Europe and Asia, in an effort to build bulwarks against Russia and China—and do not see the United States’ closest neighbors as particularly relevant or equipped to pursue Washington’s highest priorities. Facing widespread political turmoil, slumping economies, and a spike in organized crime, Latin America is profoundly unsettled. And many of its leaders increasingly do not trust a more and more unpredictable and inward-looking United States, which treats the region mainly as a source of problems—drugs, migration, and Chinese influence. Washington has not only failed to manage these challenges; it has alienated leaders throughout the region in its efforts to control these issues, casting a shadow over the future of U.S.-Latin American relations. It is a shadow only darkened by Washington’s waning partnership with Colombia, once its key ally and foothold on the continent. It will be very hard to restore the relationship to its former strength in light of profound changes in both countries and current geopolitics. But with Latin America facing an uncertain future, it will be essential for Washington to maintain these existing ties and to find a new basis for cooperation with Bogotá. If it fails to do so, it could lose one of its few effective partners in a region where it desperately needs them.

#### Here's an advocate for specific areas of engagement.

Blunt and Cardin, 21 (Senators Roy and Ben, September, “A Roadmap for US Engagement with Colombia”, <https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/A_Roadmap_for_US_Engagement_with_Colombia_web_0517.pdf>) AJW

Almost two decades after Plan Colombia was created to protect US interests, Colombia’s democratic institutions are increasingly strong, but need continued strengthening. While Colombia faces undeniable challenges, including consolidating the rule of law and combating resurgent coca cultivation, it has become a successful, entrepreneurial country that, in a decade, could well become one of Latin America’s first higher income nations. Today, a strong partnership with Colombia represents not just a chance to manage ongoing challenges but to seize opportunities. Growing economic, diplomatic, and governance capacity makes it an attractive partner for the United States. Having accompanied Colombia in hard times, an engaged United States stands to profit from Colombia’s emergence in a number of ways. But, it will require more than just business as usual. What is needed is a renewed long-term investment in the US-Colombia partnership, focused on four areas: robust peace accord implementation; security, counter narcotics, and transnational organized crime; enhanced economic cooperation; and collaboration on US geopolitical interests. Such an investment, detailed in this report’s recommendations, will position the United States to seize a number of strategic opportunities. The first opportunity is renewed momentum in the fight against transnational networks of organized crime. Colombia’s past success and more recent challenges in combating coca cultivation serve as a reminder that progress is possible but not inevitable. Colombia remains at the epicenter of a global cocaine trade that fuels organized crime across the Americas, in the United States, and beyond. The peace accord presents a platform to weaken the illicit drug trade in and beyond Colombia. But this is only possible if the Colombian government has the political will and resources to do so. It must quickly invest in post-conflict areas, prevent the National Liberation Army (ELN) and successors to illegal paramilitary armed groups from seizing former FARC territory and its illicit businesses (including drug trafficking, human trafficking, and illegal mining),12 enlist former FARC members in counter narcotics activities, and enforce the FARC’s commitment — as required by the peace accord — to turn over assets and provide full information about criminal operations. Accomplishing these objectives would provide the United States with an unprecedented opportunity to disrupt the broader global trafficking of illicit drugs. Yet, part of the controversy over the peace accord is whether the ex-FARC leadership will abide by their commitment to terminate involvement in the lucrative drug trade and surrender the funds derived from criminal activities. On balance, this task force believes that the opportunities outweigh the dangers. Following Ronald Reagan’s admonition to “trust but verify,” the United States must closely monitor the milestones in the implementation of the peace accords to ensure that both FARC and government are complying with the spirit and letter of the agreements. A second opportunity is to take advantage of Colombia’s emergence as an important security exporter in areas of vital strategic interest to the United States, particularly in Central America,13 Mexico, Afghanistan, and African countries such as Nigeria, Kenya, and South Africa.14 In 2013, for example, the US-Colombia Action Plan on Regional Security Cooperation delivered 39 capacity-building activities in four Central American countries, focused on areas such as asset forfeiture, investigations, polygraphs, and interdiction.15 By 2016, this cooperation had expanded to include over 271 activities in six countries in Central America and the Caribbean.16 In addition, Colombia signaled its intention to increase participation in United Nations peacekeeping missions with the signing of a framework agreement in 2015. Colombia’s long-standing deployment of hundreds of peacekeepers in the Sinai Peninsula,17 its shortterm commitment to send additional personnel to Haiti and Guinea Bissau,18 and its medium-term plan to contribute up to 5,000 troops19 creates an opportunity for a high-capacity, US-trained military to help the United Nation’s (UN’s) chronically under resourced Department of Peacekeeping Operations. Colombia has also moved to expand cooperation with NATO. Currently, a NATO “global partner” — the only one in Latin America — Colombia recently opened talks on a cooperation agreement with NATO, one step short of full membership.20 Peace with the FARC and potentially the ELN should, in time, free the Colombian military to play a greatly expanded role on global security initiatives of interest to the United States. As the new United States Administration reviews its role in such activities, Colombia stands ready to boost its presence. Third, the Trade Promotion Agreement (TPA) with Colombia — the fourth biggest market in Latin America21 with an economy that grew an average of 4.3 percent per year from 2007 to 201522 — provides increasing opportunities for US firms. US goods exports to Colombia totaled $13.1 billion in 2016, more than double the figure in 2005.23 Trade with Colombia supported an estimated 77,000 American jobs in 2014, the last year for which data was available.24 Effective implementation of the peace accord and eventual accession to the OECD, once Colombia implements all market access and labor rights requirements, will enhance investment opportunities for US businesses in areas such as infrastructure, the extractive sector, agriculture, and tourism. This will not be a small achievement. The OECD is an elite global club of countries that follow responsible economic policies. Only two Latin American countries (Chile and Mexico) are currently members. A recent study by Control Risks on Colombia’s peace dividend notes, for example, unexplored onshore oil potential in areas such as the Caguán-Putumayo Basin and immense mining potential in zones previously off-limits to large private sector projects. The Colombian government is investing in these areas. Expected infrastructure investments include $1 to $2.3 billion to pave tertiary roads in 281 priority municipalities and plans to modernize airports, seaports, and railroads.25 The study also notes that local communities, empowered by the peace accord and Constitutional Court rulings, will have a significant say in the development of projects, necessitating strong community consultation and corporate responsibility practices by US firms seeking to do business.26 Finally, Colombia is today one of the United States’ most consistent diplomatic partners in the Americas. State Department analyses of voting practices in the UN General Assembly show Colombia coincided with the US on 80 percent of important votes in both 2014 and 2015, the highest in Latin America for 2014 and second highest for 2015.27 Some key instances where Colombia has backed the US on global challenges are Ukrainian territorial integrity and human rights issues in North Korea and Syria. Within the Americas, Colombia is a consistent, if not uniformly, like-minded voice on issues of democracy, human rights, trade, defense cooperation, and the environment. Colombia was a founding member of the Pacific Alliance and supports a strong Organization of American States. Of particular relevance is Colombia’s potentially critical role in addressing the economic, governance, and humanitarian crisis in next-door Venezuela. Colombia’s equities with Venezuela are broad and complex, including border security, migration, and the ELN peace negotiations. Nonetheless, Colombia will have an essential role to play in responding to the deepening humanitarian catastrophe in Venezuela, as well as galvanizing a more forceful regional response to President Nicolás Maduro’s attacks on human rights, civil society, and democratic institutions and the devastation inflicted by food and medicine shortages and violence. More broadly, the Colombian example is an undervalued source of soft power for the United States and a powerful counter example to failed, authoritarian, anti-American governments like Venezuela. The United States has a deep stake in Colombia’s continued progress. But success will depend in large part on meeting the challenges and seizing on peace implementation to generate market-based sustainable growth, extend economic opportunity to the poor and excluded, create jobs and social mobility, formalize the economy and improve tax collection, and strengthen the rule of law to fight corruption, crime, and violence.28 Led by a Nobel Peace Prize recipient and carrying out a peace process that enjoys near universal international support, Colombia’s international standing has arguably never been higher than it is today. A close diplomatic partner of the United States appears poised to become a more formidable regional and international player. At a moment of unprecedented challenges on the global stage — and in a world seemingly plagued by bad news — a deepening partnership with an increasingly capable and democratic Colombia is of growing strategic value to the United States.

### Costa Rica

#### Quick Background: Stable relations with limited U.S. focus; affs could explore sustainable development partnerships, human rights promotion, or educational exchanges.

<https://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/resrep39856.pdf>

<https://www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/frma.2022.904029/full>

#### US engagement with Costa Rica is essential to promote democracy throughout the region – also spurs migration support & anti-trafficking coop

Feeley, 8-24-2023 (Ambassador John Feeley, John Feeley is the executive director of the Center for Media Integrity of the Americas and a retired U.S. ambassador., "To Advance Democracy In The Region, Washington Should Cultivate Its Relationships With Regional Democratic Stalwarts, Like Costa Rica.," United States Institute of Peace, https://www.usip.org/publications/2023/08/latin-america-us-should-put-democratic-partnerships-front-and-center, accessed on 4-23-2024)

One of the most sage and skilled diplomats of the last century, the late Secretary of State George Shultz, used the analogy of a “garden” to describe the essential work of quiet statecraft. A healthy garden needs constant care and tending, he would say, as validation of the importance of sitting down with friends on a regular basis to discuss trends and developments in the absence of crisis flashpoints. This is exactly the type of approach that Costa Rica has warranted because of its strong commitment to democratic governance.

When Costa Rican President Rodrigo Chaves Robles comes to Washington next week, he will be representing a peaceful, stable, democratic outlier in a region that has been wracked by ideological swings: from military juntas to Soviet-inspired revolutionary movements, from the neoliberal Washington consensus to Hugo Chavez’ pink tide and now on to more recent authoritarian populism. All the while, Costa Rica has remained a stalwart in the democratic governance column, a fact that should be celebrated. But more importantly it deserves to be cultivated like the precious flower it is in order to advance democracy in the region.

Recent Developments Provide Hope for Democracy in the Hemisphere

The past weeks have given Washington a few rare flashes of optimism amid many negative trend lines in the region. In drug cartel-plagued Ecuador, citizens voted peacefully last week, following a violent campaign, which saw two candidates assassinated and a third evading an attempted hit. Two candidates emerged as the top vote getters and the country will head to a constitutionally prescribed second round of voting to elect its new leader in October. Ecuador deserves the hemispheric solidarity of fellow democrats to support the consolidation of its new government and to begin to take back its streets from violent drug cartels.

Similarly, in Guatemala last week, citizens voted overwhelmingly for a little-known candidate from a party with few resources and no representation, but with an inspiringly powerful anti-corruption message that resonated with Guatemalans across the electorate. Bernardo Arévalo surprised many across the Americas, as he overcame underhanded judicial challenges to his candidacy and a powerful cabal of corrupt industrialists who have long colluded behind the scenes to dominate Guatemalan politics.

While no one should underestimate the entrenched interests that will conspire against Arévalo’s efforts at democratic transparency and reform, this work must be supported by the community of hemispheric landscapers in the garden of democracy. To its credit, the Biden administration issued timely, supportive statements from the president, vice president and secretary of state. In the arcane world of diplomatic communications, that is the trifecta of public support and a winning ticket. Now that vocal support must be turned into practical support. And this is where a chat between Presidents Chaves and Biden can come in handy.

Alliance for Development in Democracy

No one questions the sheer power asymmetry between the United States and Costa Rica. Militarily, economically and in a geostrategic sense, they are David and Goliath. But diplomatically, the good offices of an activist Costa Rica, a brother Central American Republic to Guatemala, could be enormously helpful. Absent the often-unhelpful vestigial trappings of American imperialism in the region, Costa Rica could spearhead a group of friends to support Guatemala, very similar to its founding engagement with Panama and the Dominican Republic in the Alliance for Development in Democracy (ADD).

Efforts like the ADD allow a small nation to “punch above its weight” in regional affairs. Costa Rica’s admirable human rights traditions lend it an air of authority in fora such as the Organization of American States and the United Nations. Costa Rican prison administrators, recognized as professional and observant of human rights, might be enlisted to help a new Ecuadoran government get hold of its notoriously corrupt and permissive penitentiary system, which has become a veritable command cell for narco-activity.

Costa Rica, like the United States, is a migrant receiving nation, absorbing much of the outflow of Nicaraguans trying to escape the horror of the Ortega dictatorship next door in Nicaragua. The attendant drag on social services, crime and security are issues Chaves deals with daily, like Biden. The scale may be different, but the essential push-pull factors are the same.

When U.S. presidents sit down with their Latin and Caribbean counterparts, the discussions are overwhelmingly focused on bilateral issues. In general, the Latin American leaders arrive with a list of complaints or “asks,” and the U.S. president engages with State Department- and National Security Council-drafted talking points. But in Costa Rica’s case, that list of bilateral friction points is mercifully short, so we can expect no breakthroughs or “frank” discussions with a “frenemy” from this gathering. In fact, it’s likely to be an under-the-radar visit as far as presidential tête-à-têtes go.

One key agenda item should be how the United States can provide Costa Rica, and the region more broadly, with the practical support I mentioned above. Such support could include:

* The United States could fund a political party incubator in San Jose, Costa Rica that trains Latin American politicians and party figures. U.S. organizations like the National Democratic Institute and the International Republican Institute and Germany’s Konrad Adenauer Foundation have decades of experience doing this type of work and could be a great resource.
* Washington could also increase its assistance to the Inter-American Court of Human Rights to provide it with the resources to finish investigations into human rights abuses.
* Another idea would be to establish a migration and anti-trafficking operation in San Jose — with investigators and prosecutors detailed from around the region — focused on humanitarian care for migrants and the prosecution of trafficking networks.

These types of initiatives and support would help highlight the centrality of Costa Rica’s democracy in the region.

In the garden of diplomatic engagement, the two leaders will have an all-too-rare chance to honestly discuss the state of hemispheric democracy from the perspective of a non-crisis situation. Biden’s own humility about the challenges to U.S. democracy is a welcome admission that contributes to his credibility with Latinos. With his Costa Rican counterpart, Biden need not be defensive or didactic; he can be sincerely collaborative in the search for ways to make democracy more resilient. George Schultz would be more than pleased.

#### Costa Rica engagement – Good Governance, anti-drug trafficking measures

Haney 2016 [S. Fitzgerald United States Ambassador to Costa Rica Costa Rica and the United States: An Enduring Partnership <https://www.americanambassadors.org/publications/ambassadors-review/spring-2016/costa-rica-and-the-united-states-an-enduring-partnership> Accessed 4/25/2024]

Promoting Good Governance¶ In addition to its leadership on environmental issues, Costa Rica has earned a reputation as a regional and global leader in promoting and defending democracy and civil society, key elements of good governance, the second pillar of the Strategy. In 2014, when Latin American leaders met in Havana, Cuba for the second Summit of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC), the Costa Rican delegation met with independent Cuban civil society representatives. That same year after Russia invaded Ukraine, Costa Rica helped lead the successful fight to pass a UN resolution dismissing Moscow’s push to annex Crimea, and Costa Rica has been one of the strongest, and often loneliest, voices calling for democratic reforms in Venezuela. In 2015, Costa Rican President Luis Guillermo Solis broke ranks regionally to demand access for election monitors from the Organization of American States ahead of Venezuela’s legislative elections, and more recently former President and Nobel Peace Prize winner Oscar Arias used an address at Venezuela’s National Assembly to call for the release of political prisoners. At the same time, Costa Rican lawmakers were the only Central American representatives to sign a US-coordinated letter calling on President Maduro to guarantee free and fair elections.¶ Costa Rica’s vocal and symbolic leadership is matched by a deep commitment to institution building and civil society. From hosting the 2014 Americas Regional Open Government Partnership (OGP) conference, a pro-transparency multilateral initiative, to working with President Obama on civil society promotion at the 2015 Summit of the Americas, President Solis has been a steadfast advocate for government transparency and citizen participation. Looking ahead, Costa Rica will host the 2016 Freedom Online Coalition as part of its ongoing support for effective Internet governance. Embassy San Jose is proud to work with Costa Rica and other countries to advance these initiatives. ¶ Deepening Security Cooperation¶ Costa Rica’s location in the Central American isthmus makes it an attractive transit point for drug traffickers, and 80 percent of all cocaine that reaches the United States today transits Panama or Costa Rica. As a result, the same type of violent crime that accompanies this trade and that presents significant security challenges in other countries in the region has recently been on the rise in Costa Rica. In 2015, Costa Rica recorded its highest number of homicides to date. Unfortunately, these statistics are not isolated, and efforts to stem the rise of violence, which is closely linked to drug-related turf wars, are stymied by fiscal problems that prevent sufficient investment in security. An increase in migrants from Latin America and other regions transiting the country only adds to the potential threats Costa Rica must address. Yet despite these security and fiscal challenges, Costa Rica has a demonstrated willingness to work in tandem with the United States, to maximize limited resources, and to eventually export this knowledge to others in the region. ¶ In Costa Rica, US foreign assistance equips and trains local authorities to secure national borders and create safe communities, improving security, the third pillar of the Strategy, while addressing the underlying causes of violence. Our Embassy works with a broad range of actors—from the security forces to the justice sector, with correctional authorities, and directly with vulnerable communities—to increase their collective capacity to counter the threats posed by organized crime, bolstered by an International Narcotics Control and Law Enforcement budget that has grown significantly over the past several years in order to help Costa Rica fight its increasing security threat. We also conduct robust Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) and Department of Defense engagement with Costa Rican counterparts and provide counternarcotics support under a joint patrol agreement between the US and Costa Rican Coast Guards. These joint patrols have resulted in excellent results on maritime drug interdiction and have garnered broad public support, with a recent poll showing that 78 percent of Costa Ricans strongly supported joint patrols with the United States. Our combined efforts focus on blocking transnational criminal organizations from penetrating Costa Rican society, reducing the tide of drugs transiting Costa Rica en route to the United States, and working with the government and civil society on prevention programs. ¶ And so, as the United States continues to increase its engagement and assistance in Central America, we can look to Costa Rica as a steadfast partner in achieving our broader regional goals. We are deeply connected, not just by proximity but by our history of common values—by our shared commitment to democracy, free trade, and sustainable development. Our strong cultural and commercial ties and our vibrant partnership on economic and environmental issues, human rights, and security all work together to make Costa Rica, Central America, and the United States stronger, safer, more equitable, and more prosperous.

#### Costa Rica engagement – Environment and warming initiatives

Haney 2016 [S. Fitzgerald United States Ambassador to Costa Rica Costa Rica and the United States: An Enduring Partnership <https://www.americanambassadors.org/publications/ambassadors-review/spring-2016/costa-rica-and-the-united-states-an-enduring-partnership> Accessed 4/25/2024]

Promoting Prosperity¶ In the 1980s, Costa Rica famously broke with the then-prevailing Latin American tendency to build a domestically oriented economy with high tariff walls by opening up to foreign trade and becoming the first country in Central America to join the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (the predecessor of the World Trade Organization). It became the largest exporter of merchandise in Central America in the years that followed. In the 1990s, the country embarked on yet another economic game changer when it successfully convinced the global electronics giant Intel to locate its $300 million semi­conductor plant, by painstakingly matching its investment climate to the company’s requirements. This investment attraction coup put Costa Rica on the map for investors from around the world. These days, Costa Rica is becoming one of the world’s most desirable locations for back office (shared) services operations, as well as medical-supply manufacturers. It’s important to think about how Costa Rica can continue to compete, not just in the region, but around the world. To that end, Embassy San Jose is working with private sector and government partners to address persistent challenges to business develop­ment, such as inadequate infrastructure, intellectual property enforcement, rising inequality, fiscal challenges, and bureaucratic inefficiencies, so that Costa Rica remains competitive. ¶ Embassy San Jose is also furthering this same Strategy goal of increasing prosperity through inclusive economic development by funding a range of education and social services for at-risk populations, including youth job training; leadership training for women and youth in the country’s underdeveloped Caribbean coastal region; education programs in English, math, science, and technology; and youth social empowerment training to combat school truancy rates, youth drug use, and involvement with gangs or drug trafficking organizations. As Costa Rica faces increasing challenges, our assistance can help improve Costa Rica’s capacity to keep the country on a secure and prosperous path.¶ Costa Rica is internationally recognized for its efforts to protect and conserve its biodiversity and natural resources. In 1970, Costa Rica began to protect its remaining wilderness areas, initially by forming a national park system based on that of the United States. Today, by fostering a strong system of governmental and nongovernmental organiza­tions, Costa Rica’s National Conservation Areas collectively protect over 25 percent of its territory and Costa Rica has made impressive gains in reforestation, with forest cover in over half of its territory. The country has proven to be a thriving laboratory for conservation and sustainable development, pioneering and exporting innovative conserva­tion tools such as Payment for Ecosystem Services, a financial incentive scheme that recognizes services that ecosystems provide when protected on private lands, taking conservation beyond the national park system. The country became an early leader in eco-tourism, showing the world that conservation can be combined successfully with economic development. In fact, a record one million Americans—more than any other nationality— visited this country in 2015.¶ Not surprisingly, Costa Rica continues to be an international leader in climate change mitigation and adaptation. The country played an active role in the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change negotiations and committed to reduce greenhouse gases by 44 percent by 2030. This year, Costa Rica expects to produce 98 percent or more of its electricity from renewable sources and to further diversify its clean energy matrix with more geothermal and wind power. As a regional exporter of clean electricity, Costa Rica is also helping its neighbors and playing an important role in Central America’s electricity integration process. The integration of clean and efficient technologies across Costa Rica’s economy, particularly in the transport and industrial sectors, is an important next step for Costa Rica to achieve its carbon neutrality goal and reinforce Costa Rica’s commitment to a clean energy economy. ¶ As part of our foreign policy goal of increasing environmental resilience, Embassy San Jose works alongside Costa Rican partners to mitigate and adapt to climate change by expanding green agricultural practices, improving water resources management, and re­duc­ing emissions. We are working with farmers and dairy producers to reduce the vulner­a­bility of their products to changes in climate, and to develop and share climate-smart agri­cul­tural practices. We have also increased our efforts to strengthen disaster response and prepar­ed­ness ahead of the strong El Niño forecast for 2016, and in response to recent droughts and floods caused by changing weather patterns. To cement these efforts, our Embassy has brought leading US climate change experts to Costa Rica to share cutting-edge technical expertise on environment and climate change issues with their local counterparts.

Bolivia

### Ecuador

#### Quick Background: Improving engagement; affs could explore environmental diplomacy, democratic resilience, or trade facilitation.​

#### Re-engaging Ecuador is key to check Russian trade crackdowns, Chinese encroachment, migration crises, & organized cartel efforts

Martínez-Fernández, 3-14-2024 (Andrés Martínez-Fernández, Senior Policy Analyst, Allison Center for National Security, "Joe Biden’s Botched Ecuador Policy," Heritage Foundation, https://www.heritage.org/americas/commentary/joe-bidens-botched-ecuador-policy, accessed on 4-23-2024)

Ecuador is in the midst of a dire security crisis as violent drug gangs wreak havoc on the once-peaceful Andean country, prompting a spike in migrant outflows to the United States as well as the consolidation of a new illicit narcotics hub in South America. The United States has responded to Ecuador’s rapid decline in stability by ramping up coordination and engagement with the government of President Daniel Noboa. However, a decision by the Biden administration to explicitly link support for Ecuador to the war in Ukraine has put Ecuador in an even more vulnerable position.

What happens in Ecuador does not stay in Ecuador. Drug trafficking organizations from across the globe have worked to solidify their hold in Ecuador and create a new narcotics trafficking center in South America, ramping up the flow of deadly illegal drugs into the United States. At the same time, the wave of violence in Ecuador is exacerbating the region’s migratory crisis, with a 368 percent increase in Ecuadorians arriving at the U.S. border from 2022 to 2023. Additionally, over the past several years, China and Russia have turned Ecuador into a critical political and economic foothold, making the country’s current crisis a unique opportunity for the United States to regain dwindling influence in its hemisphere.

All of this led the United States to rightly offer support to Ecuador in recent months as it engages in a perilous fight against violent drug traffickers. A planned weapons swap was a key pillar of the renewed effort by the United States to support Ecuador by empowering its underequipped security forces. Under the deal, the United States would have sent Ecuador $200 million in modern weaponry in exchange for Ecuador’s aging Soviet-era equipment, including Mi-8 and Mi-17 helicopters, BM-21 Grad multiple rocket launchers, and Strela-2 and Igla man-portable air defense systems.

The Biden administration planned to send these weapons to Ukraine and support the fight against Russia’s invasion. It is unclear how useful Soviet-era equipment dubbed as “junk” by Noboa would be to Ukraine. Ecuador was reportedly aware that the United States would send its weapons to Ukraine, but Noboa says he was caught off guard when this was made public by the Biden administration.

The Biden administration’s diplomatic missteps and tunnel vision have now put Ecuador in an even more precarious position as its government struggles to regain control from violent drug gangs. Predictably, Russia, a top trading partner for Ecuador, has retaliated against the small South American country by imposing a painful ban on a series of key agricultural imports from the small South American nation. Ecuador’s fragile economy cannot afford to sustain such a blow, particularly as Noboa works to fund a needed increase in security spending for the country. Unsurprisingly, Ecuador has called off the weapons swap with the United States, leaving it to contend with Russia’s punishing trade restrictions and a lack of new U.S. equipment.

In short, the Biden administration’s handling of this situation has been an unmitigated disaster. The effort has displayed a lack of seriousness from the Biden administration that plays into negative stereotypes about inconstant U.S. engagement in Latin America. The entire episode, from the country’s security crisis to the collapse of the weapons deal, exhibits the troubling consequences of U.S. inattention to its hemisphere. As conflicts much further away absorb Washington’s attention, the Biden administration has stood by as counternarcotics capabilities are actively dismantled by governments from Mexico to Colombia, flooding our hemisphere and countries like Ecuador with criminality.

Ecuador’s decision to call off the weapons deal also shows how a lack of U.S. engagement has given Moscow the power to set the terms of U.S. cooperation with its neighbors and otherwise willing partners. Ecuador remains economically beholden to Russia in part because the United States has refused to move on a trade agreement with the country in recent years. And Russia’s influence in the region dwindles in comparison to China’s. Washington’s number one adversary has taken full advantage of the U.S. absence from Latin America. If U.S.-China tensions do boil over on the other side of the Pacific, Beijing will leverage its regional influence in much the same way Moscow has done in Ecuador, but on a much larger and more dangerous level.

It is not too late to enact a course correction. Washington should handle crises in the Western Hemisphere with the seriousness and attention they deserve. In the case of Ecuador, the United States must ensure that its support for Ukraine does not come at the cost of confronting threats to security and stability in its own hemisphere. To this end, congressional oversight and pressure should be brought to bear. Going forward, a new U.S. administration must work to ensure that neither Moscow nor Beijing are in a position to veto U.S. engagement with our neighbors.

### Guatemala

#### Quick Background: Strained relations amid migration policy pressures; affs could explore anti-corruption measures, judicial reforms, or economic development initiatives.

#### [1] Affirmative Evidence

#### Sustained diplomacy can consolidate reforms, foreign intervention previously helped the Guatemalan Government

SAIS Review of International Affairs, 2025 The SAIS Review of International Affairs is an academic journal of international relations. Founded in 1956, the journal is based at the Paul H. Nitze School of Advanced International Studies, a graduate school of Johns Hopkins University in Washington, D.C.. “Diplomacy for Democracy: Why Venezuela Did Not Defy the Odds like Guatemala,” SAIS review of International affairs, POLICY & POLITICS, SOUTH AMERICA, 03-02-25, https://saisreview.sais.jhu.edu/diplomacy-for-democracy-why-venezuela-did-not-defy-the-odds-like-guatemala/, Haroon]

On January 15, 2024, after months of a tumultuous post-election political and democratic crisis that placed Guatemala at the top of the political agenda in the Americas, Bernardo Arévalo was sworn in as president of Central America’s largest economy. Basic democratic principles prevailed in Guatemala as the presidential candidate of Movimiento Semilla, the small underdog party that campaigned around anti-corruption policies, shocked the establishment with its surprise win. Almost exactly a year after the resolution of the Guatemalan election crisis brought an end to attempts to block Arévalo from power, a less promising scenario for regional democracy unfolds in Venezuela. The winner of the Venezuelan 2024 presidential election, the opposition coalition Plataforma Unitaria Democrática (PUD) candidate Edmundo González, was not sworn into the Miraflores Palace on January 10, 2025. González had been in exile for months in Europe amid fears for his safety, and his attempt to reenter Venezuela failed after a tour of the Americas, where he visited various Heads of State, as 2025 began. On the eve of the transition of power ceremony, María Corina Machado, the popular opposition leader banned from running for office and whom González replaced on the PUD presidential ticket, faced arbitrary detention after leading a peaceful rally. The level of international pressure exerted from the European Union (EU), the United States, and the Organization of American States (OAS) on the authorities attempting to overturn election results in Guatemala and Venezuela had a significant effect on the transition-of-power outcome. The international response varied mainly because of the costs associated with defending democracy in a fragile democracy versus defending democracy in an authoritarian regime. Even though the context in these post-election crises differed, there is some correspondence between the process that led Arévalo to the presidency on January 15, 2024, and the one leading up to the Venezuelan transfer of power on January 10, 2025. These cases are examples of presidential election crises in which there were anti-status quo winners, concerted efforts from national authorities and establishment elites to overturn the results, and observable responses from the international community. Decisive opposition wins met with concerted efforts to overturn the election Arévalo won Guatemala’s runoff election on August 20, 2023, with 60% of the vote, per official figures from the Supreme Electoral Tribunal (TSE, for its Spanish acronym). After Semilla’s surprising first-round election result, the Office of the Attorney General—known as the Public Ministry (Ministerio Público, MP)—spearheaded a campaign to delegitimize the election outcome and prevent Semilla’s candidate from contesting the ballotage[1] and, later, from taking office.[2] The Attorney General María Consuelo Porras and the Chief of the Special Prosecutor’s Office Against Impunity, Rafael Curruchiche, pursued an investigation to block Semilla, alleging irregularities in the party’s registration process back in 2018, as well as individual criminal prosecutions against Arévalo and Vice-President-elect Karin Herrera. The United States, since May 2022, has sanctioned[3] Porras for obstructing and undermining “anticorruption investigations in Guatemala to protect her political allies and gain undue political favor.” Clashes intensified between institutions involving the TSE, the MP, the Guatemalan Congress, and the Courts. Among the outcomes[4], Semilla was suspended as a political party, its representatives in Congress were declared independent, and four TSE magistrates were stripped of their immunity to be prosecuted for various charges. Images of armed raids on the TSE, during which the MP even seized ballot boxes, shocked the international community and generated widespread condemnation. Thousands of Guatemalans went out to the streets to protest the legal and political attempts to overturn the election results by members of the political and economic elite—colloquially known as the ‘Pact of the Corrupt.’[5] Following months of upheaval, in December 2023 the Constitutional Court ruled[6] that the elected candidates had to take office as planned on January 14, 2024. In what was seen as an uphill battle against Guatemala’s elite, who have historically maintained control over the economic and political spheres, Arévalo and Guatemala thus defied the odds.[7] The situation in Venezuela mirrored some aspects of the Guatemalan case. Since the pre-electoral period, it was evident that the ruling regime had no intention to honor its international commitment to electoral safeguards and guarantees under the October 2023 Barbados Agreement,[8] which was reached with the support of Norway’s mediation efforts. Seasoned political opposition leader Machado won the PUD primary election by a landslide in October 2023, but the Supreme Court (Tribunal Supremo de Justicia, TSJ), which is under the firm grasp of Nicolás Maduro’s regime, banned[9] her from running for office. González took her place as presidential candidate and won the July 28 election with over 60% of the vote, according to official tally sheets made public by the opposition. However, the regime-controlled National Electoral Council (Consejo Nacional Electoral, CNE) announced instead that Maduro had won the election, with no supporting evidence or disaggregated results. Thousands of Venezuelans went out to the streets to protest, and the Maduro regime responded with brutal repression, consistent with its decade-long record and evidence of human rights violations. In an effort to eliminate the opposition to Maduro, the regime intensified politically-motivated human rights violations, especially after the elections. In its report from September 17, 2024, the United Nations (UN) Fact-Finding Mission determined[10] that the protests and the regime’s repressive response “marked a new milestone in the deterioration of the rule of law. The main public authorities abandoned all semblance of independence and openly deferred to the executive.” Two distinct regimes An obvious difference between Guatemala and Venezuela is the type of regime. Guatemala is a democracy, albeit flawed, while Venezuela is an authoritarian regime. According to the Democracy Index[11] published by The Economist Intelligence Unit, from 2015 to 2023, Guatemala was consistently categorized as a ‘hybrid regime,’ and so was Venezuela from 2015 to 2016. However, from 2017 to 2023, Venezuela was characterized as authoritarian. Furthermore, Freedom House’s Freedom of the World methodology consistently considered Guatemala from 2015 to 2024 as ‘Partly Free.’ The same measurement places Venezuela in the ‘Partly Free’ category from 2015 to 2016, but since 2017 it has been classified as ‘Not Free.’ Among the countries of the Western Hemisphere that the Democracy Index report covers, four are considered authoritarian: Haiti, Nicaragua, Cuba, and Venezuela. The same result is observed in the 2024 Freedom of the World report, as these four countries are characterized as ‘Not Free.’ The context, recent political history, and governance challenges of Guatemala and Venezuela are also dissimilar. While Guatemala is indeed the largest economy in Central America, it does not hold the world’s largest oil reserves. That distinction belongs to Venezuela, which is also endowed other abundant natural resources, making it a strategic political, geopolitical, and economic hub that attract powerful state and non-state actors, who operate within both legal and illicit spheres. The differences in regime and relative power of Venezuela and Guatemala help explain the diverging responses by the international democratic community to their post-election crises; Guatemala’s democracy enjoyed strong international support, while Venezuela’s situation elicited a more polarized and fragmented global reaction. International community responses The EU, the United States, and the Inter-American community, through the OAS, responded distinctly to these two cases when domestic authorities and elites attempted to prevent a president-elect from assuming power. For example, the average number of OAS Permanent Council meetings addressing the post-electoral crisis in Guatemala in 2023 was two per month, which was double the ratio of convocations dedicated to discussing the situation in Venezuela in 2024. The number of resolutions and declarations regarding the situation in Guatemala was three (September 1, November 15, and December 12, 2023), while for Venezuela there was only one resolution approved on August 16, 2024, in the aftermath of the elections after a failed attempt to pass a resolution on July 31 in the same year. None of the resolutions regarding Guatemala failed to pass: the November 15 resolution passed with 20 votes in favor and the December 12 resolution passed with 29 votes.[12] The resolutions and declaration strongly condemned the attempts by the MP and mandated the General Secretariat of the OAS (GS/OAS) to deploy diplomatic missions with representatives from the Permanent Council and the Inter-American Human Rights Commission. On the other hand, in the July 31st vote that urged Maduro to release the electoral records, there were not enough votes[13] to approve draft resolution CP/doc. 6032 (17 in favor, 11 abstentions, and 5 absent). The Permanent Council eventually approved a resolution (CP/Res. 1261) on August 16[14] but by consensus, rather than a roll call vote. This resolution did not include a mandate to deploy a good offices mission from OAS representatives as in the case of Guatemala. In one of the most noticeable displays of double standards, Mexico participated in all the Permanent Council meetings regarding the situation in Guatemala and took part in the good offices mission to Guatemala City in the Fall 2023, but did not show up to vote on July 31, 2024, when the Venezuelan election crisis was escalating and unfolding. The OAS has no coercive power, but an Inter-American community that is aligned is stronger than a fragmented and polarized membership. Furthermore, the average word count of the operative clauses in comparison to the word count of footnotes is greater in the Guatemala resolutions than in the Venezuela resolution. In the case of the resolution of August 2024 regarding Venezuela, for every operative clause word, there were 2.83 footnote words. In contrast, the average ratio for operative clause words to footnote words in the case of Guatemalan 2023 resolutions and declarations, was 1 to 0.20. Member States are known to employ footnotes to explain their vote, whether in favor, against, or abstention; this is especially common when a justification or excuse is deemed as politically necessary, or, in other words, when the political costs of voting in a particular way are high. Footnotes can be interpreted as a saving-face device when there is a controversial vote, to communicate a political and diplomatic message and have it formally stated on record. The deployment of professional electoral observation missions in Guatemala from the OAS and the European External Action Service[15] (EEAS) played a key role in ensuring that Arévalo assumed the presidency. These electoral observation missions, based on the fieldwork and presence of more than 200 observers in all 22 departments of the country, validated Arévalo’s election victory and defended democratic principles against the attempts to delegitimize the results. In Venezuela, neither the OAS nor the EEAS were present in the country before, during and after the election. The OAS was not invited, and the Maduro regime revoked the invitation it had extended to the EEAS in May 2024, defaulting on its commitments under the Barbados Agreement. The Carter Center[16] deployed a technical electoral observation mission with 17 experts and observers in four cities. Despite the limited number of polling centers visited, the Carter Center could not “verify or corroborate the results of the election,” and stated that the electoral process “did not meet international standards of electoral integrity at any of its stages.” In terms of sanctions imposed during the electoral crisis, the EU and the United States sent clear signals of increased pressure to Guatemalan authorities, while their approach to Venezuela oscillated between tightening and relaxing sanctions. Both the United States and the EU increased targeted sanctions during the Guatemalan electoral crisis, especially after November 30, when the Guatemalan Congress voted to strip immunity from TSE magistrates, a clear pattern of increased pressure.[17] In December 2023, the U.S. Treasury Department imposed Global Magnitsky Act-related sanctions on Luis Miguel Martínez, a close presidential collaborator, and the U.S. Department of State[18] revoked hundreds of visas, including from 100 Guatemalan lawmakers. As previously stated, Attorney General Porras had already been designated for corruption since 2022. Given the campaign to overturn election results, the European Council adopted[19] targeted financial and travel sanctions on five Public Ministry authorities. The pattern of sanctions[20] in the Venezuelan case is not straightforward, but it is, at a minimum, a story of mixed signals between expanding and easing sanctions. To incentivize the Maduro Regime to ensure a free and fair electoral process as agreed in the Barbados Agreement, the United States and the EU took a number of measures to temporarily lift sanctions during the election season, including a six-month general license [21] from the United States government for transactions in gold and hydrocarbon sectors. The United States government revoked the gold sector license (License 43 involving Minerven) in January 2024 and did not renew the oil sector general license (License 44) in the following April. The EU eased sanctions after the signing of the October agreement, as a concession to Maduro in exchange for the regime’s promise to hold a free and fair election in 2024. Despite the regime’s failure to fulfill its obligations, the EU initially tried to induce its cooperation by limiting the extension of restrictive measures such as travel bans and asset freezes of 54 individuals [22] to only 6 months instead of the standard 12 months. However, following the disputes over the election’s fairness, the EU joined other countries in applying new sanctions, extending restrictive measures through January 10, 2026, and adding 15 more individuals to the sanctions list. Additionally, the United States and the EU appeared more aligned in the Guatemalan case than in the Venezuelan crisis. While the United States government recognized González as the president-elect, the EU did not recognize him as the winner of the election.[23] The international community lifted pressure from the Maduro regime a priori without a guarantee except for the regime’s promise of conducting a free and fair election. The United States and the EU sent a comprehensive, clear signal to Guatemala, contrasting the mixed signals sent the Maduro regime. Varying costs of defending democracy While assertive and aligned diplomatic efforts from the international community supported Arévalo and a peaceful transition of power in Guatemala, the response to the Venezuelan 2024 election crisis was less assertive and coordinated. The variation in responses to these crises is partly due to the costs of defending democracy when stakes are high and dependent on the asymmetrical balance of power between the international community and the country in question. The cost of exerting extensive and intense diplomatic pressure on Guatemalan authorities, in a fragile democracy, is less than the cost of doing so on the Maduro regime, a consolidated authoritarian system. These two cases of an election crisis in Latin America show that staunch defense for democracy from international actors weakens as political, geopolitical, and individual costs increase. The power relation between the international community and Guatemala is asymmetrical, in favor of the former. In contrast, the power relation between the international community and Venezuela is symmetrical, often appearing in favor of the latter given its blatant indifference towards violating the “political rights for all” and “electoral guarantees for all” negotiated commitments stemming from the 2023 Barbados Agreement. The ex-ante concessions and easing of sanctions to the regime, despite evidence of intentional and systematic meddling with the electoral process, are signs of a more balanced power equation between international actors and the regime. The cost for international actors, in terms of publicly displaying a moral adherence to democratic principles and international norms, is relatively low in a small country with limited capacity to resist and retaliate or with no tangible support from international allies with hard and soft power. The cost of putting maximum diplomatic pressure on a larger state is high, given the transnational economic interests in the oil, gold, and other sectors, and given the regime’s proven record of adopting—with the counsel and support of its fellow international authoritarian allies—intimidating and deadly tactics to silence internal and external foes. If the international community responds strongly to a situation in Guatemala, there are limited economic losses for foreign actors from exerting such pressure. However, if the international community strongly urges and forces the adoption of measures on Venezuelan authorities, there are significant economic and geopolitical interests at stake for foreign individuals, businesses, and organizations. There are also additional costs associated with interfering with the self-serving interests that other state and non-state actors have in perpetuating the Maduro regime, such as Iran, Russia, Cuba, Hezbollah, and drug cartels. In this sense, the Guatemalan election crisis presented the opportunity for low-hanging fruit, a rare moment of international coordination and alignment, and democratic success in modern times. The Venezuelan election crisis, however, has not provided such a chance given the high costs associated with vested interests and the menacing nature of the Venezuelan regime and its allies. Moreover, while Guatemala has kept an open door to scrutiny and support from the democratic international community, the Venezuelan regime has not. Since the return to democracy in the 1990s, Guatemala has experienced several political crises. Regardless, Guatemala has welcomed and engaged with the international community and organizations in domestic affairs. This was not only the case during the civil war period and the path leading to the 1996 Peace Accords, but notably in recent times through the implementation of a unique UN-designed experiment of supranational justice against impunity and corruption, the International Commission against Impunity in Guatemala (CICIG), which resulted, among other consequences, in the arrest of a former president and vice president due to corruption crimes. Although recently Guatemala had been more reticent[24] to welcome international presence, its bargaining power vis-à-vis hefty actors like the United States remains restricted.

#### U.S.‑government and multilateral engagement locks in gain for Guatemala trade investment

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Guatemala’s geographic proximity to the United States and Mexico gives it an advantage when trying to lure North American businesses seeking to shorten and strengthen their supply chain routes. The country, which has the United States as its largest trading partner, has the potential to leverage the nearshoring movement and attract businesses seeking alternative hubs to Mexico, especially as the Guatemalan government continues to make efforts to enhance its competitiveness, promote investment opportunities, and work on reforms to support economic growth.

Although it will not replace its northern neighbor’s established presence in the nearshoring movement, Guatemala is attracting foreign direct investment (FDI). Guatemala has the largest economy in Central America (its GDP in 2023 was greater than 11 individual U.S. states), with consistent growth above the regional average driven by a robust private sector. More than 200 U.S. and other foreign firms have active investments in Guatemala, benefitting from the U.S. Dominican Republic-Central America Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA-DR), under which the United States has a trade surplus with Guatemala.

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Investor concerns about Mexico’s judicial reform and the country’s process of electing judges by popular vote raise questions regarding the country’s rule of law. This, in addition to the Trump administration’s 20 percent tariffs on China and threatened 25 percent tariffs on Mexico, means that Guatemala could be seen as an attractive alternative for nearshoring and investment, if it can successfully promote itself and its advantages while at the same time addressing current challenges.

Government Efforts to Promote Investment

The Guatemalan government was an early mover in trying to take advantage of the nascent nearshoring phenomenon. In 2020, in partnership with the private sector, it launched a nation-wide, comprehensive, 10-year plan called Guatemala No Se Detiene, or Guatemala Moving Forward, aimed at significantly increasing foreign investment in the country. The plan outlines Guatemala’s investment advantages, citing its macroeconomic stability, solid economic growth trajectory, and stable risk ratings; its 15 free trade agreements with more than 40 countries; the availability of young and qualified labor, with 11.8 million people of working age; reliable and renewable energy; and free trade zones with enticing incentives that facilitate production and export of goods and services, among other attractive features. Through this plan, the government and the private sector believe that Guatemala can become a regional hub in the manufacturing of pharmaceuticals, medical equipment, toys, and electronics, as well as in business process and information technology outsourcing, by attracting foreign anchor companies in these sectors.

The government and the private sector also recognize that there are structural challenges that need to be addressed for the plan to become a reality. These include making progress in three key areas: human capital, the business climate, and infrastructure. Developing targeted, sectoral training programs, improving high schoolers’ level of English before they come into the labor force, and aligning educational curricula with the labor demand in the country will all help strengthen the country’s human capital. Improving the business climate will require reducing clearance times in import and export customs processes, having non-double taxation agreements with countries that are priority markets, and maintaining a clear long-term minimum wage policy that is aligned with job creation and investment attraction efforts. Improving the business climate will also involve facilitating the efficient granting of construction permits from different government agencies, a process that had improved with the introduction of a single window portal under a 2021 anti-red-tape law, but more recently has once again faced slow-downs. In addition, while the country adopted a bankruptcy law in 2022, there are currently no regulations in place to apply the law. Finally, not only do the country’s road and port infrastructures need to be further developed, but areas of the country with existing competitive infrastructure must also be promoted as sites ideally suited to attract investments. In a 2024 report, the government described an increase in FDI from $1.44 billion to $1.55 billion between 2022 and 2023 as a result of implementing some of the initiatives of Guatemala No Se Detiene.

Guatemala can become a regional hub in the manufacturing of pharmaceuticals, medical equipment, toys, and electronics, as well as in business process and information technology outsourcing.

This progress also rests heavily on three incentive programs that have been in place for many years. The first is the 1989 Law for the Promotion and Development of Export Activities and Maquilas, which is intended to encourage the production of goods destined for countries outside Central America, as well as to regulate export activity. The law mainly benefits the apparel and textile sector and services exporters. The government granted investors in these two sectors a 10-year income tax exemption along with certain other tax benefits. The second program is the Free Trade Zone Law from 1989, amended in 2021, which encourages and regulates the establishment of free trade zones (FTZs) in order to promote national development by strengthening foreign trade, promoting new national and foreign investment options, transferring technology to Guatemala, and generating employment. The benefits for businesses operating in the FTZs include a 10-year exemption from income tax payments, a 5-year property tax exemption, and no taxes or customs duties on imported machinery, equipment, tools, or materials used to build the zone’s infrastructure, buildings, and facilities, nor on the fossil fuels used to generate electricity for the zone. Finally, there is also a separate class of free trade zone, known as special economic development zones or ZDEEPs, which have similar tax benefits as FTZs but have no limitation on the type of economic activity that can take place within their boundaries.

In addition to these long-standing legal incentives, the administration of President Bernardo Arévalo is actively courting international businesses and promoting Guatemala as a nearshoring destination. In April 2024, his administration created the National and Foreign Investment Attraction Agency, under the Ministry of Economy, whose responsibilities include formulating and executing investment policies. Its focus is on stimulating economic and social development through the generation of employment, which not only contributes to the country’s growth, but also helps to reduce the main driver of migration. The agency was also initially tasked with simplifying the administrative procedures for establishing businesses, but this now rests with the Ministry of Economy’s National Competitiveness Program, or PRONACOM. According to the 2023 Ibero-American Index of Bureaucracy, opening a small business in Guatemala requires an average of 4,870 hours, equivalent to 203 days, to complete the necessary procedures. In contrast, El Salvador takes significantly less time, with the process averaging just 1,474 hours, or 66 days.

In September 2024, the Arévalo administration launched its Trade Promotion Plan, an economic diplomacy plan that covers not only the U.S. market but also the global economy. The plan is a global strategy that seeks to further position Guatemala as an attractive destination for foreign investment. Then in December 2024, the Ministry of Economy presented its National Trade Facilitation Plan 2024–2028, which aims to streamline foreign trade procedures, reduce logistics costs and operational times, and foster cooperation with the business sector to achieve national economic development. Under the plan, the government will digitize and centralize bureaucratic processes for foreign trade in a single electronic portal; adopt modern technology to upgrade ports, airports, and border crossings; introduce smart customs and a system for advance declaration of goods; adopt electronic signature and data protection measures; and support the integration of micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs) into global supply chains. Early in 2025, Guatemala’s Vice Minister of Integration and External Commerce, Héctor Marroquín Mora, said that his ministry was working on various economic and commercial development initiatives, including creating a productive innovation fund to support MSMEs.

Guatemala has also been busy trying to grow its markets by pursuing free trade negotiations with the European Free Trade Association (EFTA), South Korea, Peru, and Canada. In February 2020, Guatemala signed a protocol of accession to the EFTA, which includes Switzerland, Norway, Iceland, and Liechtenstein. As one of the last acts of the Giammattei administration in January 2024, the country signed a protocol of accession to the South Korea and Central America free trade agreement, which the other Central American countries had signed in 2019. In November 2024, Peruvian and Guatemalan officials met to negotiate a trade protocol to allow their 2011 free trade agreement to come into effect. Moreover, with respect to Canada, Guatemala has pursued an on-again-off-again free trade agreement for over 20 years without success. In the interim, it has relied on a Generalized System of Preferences with Canada, which expired on January 1, 2025, with the business community sounding alarm bells that this change would severely impact the $142 million in exports (as of 2023) that flow to Canada.

Strategic Sectors of the Economy for Nearshoring

To capitalize on nearshoring opportunities, Guatemala needs to perform a sector-by-sector analysis, identifying and nurturing industries where it holds a comparative advantage while steering clear of investments in sectors that may not provide long-term benefits. Some of the sectors it should prioritize are textiles, IT, business process outsourcing, mining, and auto parts production.

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Textiles

With more than 500 companies in operation, Guatemala already has a strong textile industry. As a key component of its economy, the textile sector represents up to 14.2 percent of the country’s total exports and 8.9 percent of its GDP. Guatemala can leverage trade agreements with the United States to enhance the sector’s growth, especially as the country has already taken steps to establish itself as a key supplier to U.S. markets. In early 2023, Protela-Colombia committed to invest $45 million in the construction of a vertically integrated textile manufacturing facility in Guatemala to supply fabric for garment manufacturers in Central America; the facility is expected to directly employ 400 people. The Spanish textile business group NEXTIL evaluated multiple destinations in Central America for its new production plant before selecting Guatemala due to its proximity, stability, commercial conditions, infrastructure, and government support. With an investment of $40 million, the company opened a 130,000 square foot production plant in Fraijanes, Guatemala, in late 2024. This and another facility operated by the company are expected to create 1,300 direct jobs and 3,000 indirect jobs. Additionally, the South Korean company and garment manufacturer Hansae is investing approximately $300 million in a new sustainable manufacturing complex in Guatemala, while the Imperial Group is investing $80 million in the textile industry. Hansae’s investment includes the creation of an all-in-one, vertically integrated, sustainable manufacturing facility that streamlines the production processes of yarn, fabric, dyeing, and sewing under one roof. Located in the Michatoya Pacífico free trade zone (see below) near the main Guatemalan port at Puerto Quetzal, this facility is emblematic of Guatemala’s nearshoring potential.

Recently announced 20 percent U.S. tariffs on Chinese products will increase the prices of Asian garments, as would the threatened 25 percent tariffs on Mexican goods, enabling the Guatemala textile industry to further increase its competitiveness in the U.S. market. This could be an added incentive to move production to emerging textile manufacturing hubs like Guatemala.

Information Technology

Guatemala’s growing tech sector represents a promising area for investment. Concentrated mainly in Guatemala City, the country’s small but dynamic tech ecosystem has started attracting attention from investors. Promising opportunities exist in e-commerce, financial technologies, and digital services. High digital connectivity in the capital provides a solid foundation for the sector to grow, and the presence of tech talent in the city positions Guatemala to become an innovation hub. ECDB, an e-commerce data analysis company, estimates that by the end of 2024, e-commerce in Guatemala will reach $381 million, with an annual growth rate of 9.7 percent until 2028. This growth is expected to create more opportunities in sectors such as fintech, e-commerce, and digital services.

A major engine of this growth is Campus Tec, a technological innovation center that brings together entrepreneurs and companies to promote the development of new technologies. The campus houses almost 200 small high-tech companies in an IT park, the first of its kind in the region. Software development outsourcing is gaining traction as Guatemalan firms focus on staffing skilled engineering positions to support U.S.-based companies. Guatemala is emerging as a hub for tech startups, exemplified by ventures like Tu Potrero, which focuses on digitizing the livestock industry, and Sento, which analyzes call center data to enhance decision-making and improve customer experiences. These startups reflect the growing entrepreneurial spirit in the country, and are complemented by regional programs like the DINAMICA II Initiative, which aims to promote business and private sector development in Central America and the Dominican Republic.

In furthering the tech sector, Guatemala seeks to capitalize on its recognition of Taiwan, the largest manufacturer of chips worldwide, to establish a toehold in the semiconductor industry. In late 2024, it was reported that the Guatemalan government was in discussions with its Taiwanese counterparts to conduct a study evaluating Guatemala’s infrastructure, universities, and economic environment to see if the country could support semiconductor packaging, with the potential for future expansion into testing and assembly. The results of the study are expected in six-to-twelve months; that is, late 2025. However, developing the semiconductor industry in Guatemala would require significant investments in infrastructure and workforce development in this specialized field. Some of the initial funding could come from the International Technology Security and Innovation Fund, commonly known as the ITSI Fund, which was established under the U.S. CHIPS+ Act to ensure semiconductor supply chain security and diversification, though Guatemala was not among the first group of four countries from Latin America selected to receive a grant.

Pharmaceuticals

The pharmaceutical industry in Guatemala has grown significantly in recent years, accelerating even more after the Covid-19 pandemic sparked greater interest in the production of specialized medications and more complex pharmaceutical products directly in Guatemala. This has led to the establishment of a number of modern production facilities owned by local and international companies. Today, Guatemala is home to 55 pharmaceutical manufacturing laboratories, including such internationally known companies as the German company Bayer and the Spanish company Exeltis Insud Pharma. In 2022, the industry exported almost $275 million in pharmaceutical products to the rest of Central America, Mexico, and some South American countries. The industry employs 70,000 people in Guatemala, with a highly skilled talent pool including pharmaceutical chemists, biologists, chemists, and laboratory specialists, representing the largest specialized pharmaceutical workforce in Central America.

The industry now has its sights set on entering the U.S. market, even though the country’s regulatory system still needs to be improved. The Guatemalan Exporters Association (AGEXPORT), a private nonprofit entity that represents, promotes, and develops nontraditional exports of Guatemalan companies, has created an “Export Pharma to the USA” program. The initiative is helping companies prepare and adapt products and labeling according to U.S. regulations so that they can obtain necessary approvals, such as registration with the Food and Drug Administration. Given the United States’ $602 billion pharma market in 2023 and an expected market of 1 trillion by 2033, there is considerable room for growth of properly tested, proven, and licensed Guatemalan pharma exports to the United States.

Business Process Outsourcing (BPO)

The business process outsourcing sector generates around 192,500 direct and indirect jobs in Guatemala, offering services such as telemarketing, collections, data feeding, customer service, and the outsourcing of financial and administrative services. Leading multinational companies such as AT&T, Citibank, 3M, Alorica, [24]7.ai, Walmart, and Dell are using call centers in Guatemala. With strong telecommunications networks and a BPO market value of $700 million, businesses can save up to 70 percent in labor costs by outsourcing to Guatemala. The country also boasts a bilingual workforce, strengthened by many migrant returnees from the United States, which is useful for many callers in North America. In addition, jobs in the sector are appealing as they offer salaries that are 60 percent higher than minimum wage. Guatemala’s location in the Central Standard Time Zone facilitates optimal communication for call center agents, clientele, and U.S.-based businesses. Over the past five years, the BPO industry has grown 17 percent, and it holds tremendous potential for further employment generation, especially given the country’s large youthful population.

Mining

Given China’s near monopolistic control of many critical minerals and its willingness to impose export bans on some of the most sensitive minerals, nearshoring the production and refining of these materials is a vital national security interest for the United States and its allies. Guatemala’s mining sector has immense potential despite currently contributing little to the country’s GDP. In the early 2010s, flexible laws and policies combined with rich deposits drew metal mining investment to Guatemala, positioning the country as “one of the lowest-cost gold producers in Latin America.” In 2023, there were 335 approved mining concessions, with Guatemala mainly exporting gold, silver, nickel, lead, and zinc; the country was the world’s sixth-largest exporter of ferro-nickel in 2020. There are investment opportunities in copper, antimony, and chromium; the country also has deposits of uranium and cobalt. Guatemala, however, lags behind other Latin American countries with regard to mining due to inadequate infrastructure, lack of specialized labor, and significant opposition from environmental activists, local communities, and indigenous groups. In 2017, Guatemala’s highest court ordered production at the Escobal mine, one of the largest silver mines in the world, to cease pending consultation processes with indigenous peoples. Similarly, in 2023, the Inter-American Court of Human Rights ordered an immediate stop to mining activities at the Fenix nickel mine because the government had violated indigenous rights by permitting the mine on tribal land almost two decades earlier. Both mines remain closed as of early 2025. The Arévalo administration has also stopped at least four mining projects, including by invalidating impact assessment studies alleging irregularities. There are currently several bills under consideration in the Guatemalan congress which would impose a moratorium on new mining concessions to allow the government time to enact new mining laws and to design a policy for the sustainable exploitation of mineral resources and proper prior-consultation processes. This development, if successful, could unlock the potential of the Guatemalan mining sector, providing the United States and other buyers with an alternative source of critical minerals.

Auto Parts

Given its proximity to Mexico, and Mexico’s deeply integrated automobile manufacturing sector under the United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement (USMCA), Guatemala is an emerging automobile parts manufacturing location, despite not previously having any footprint in this sector. In June 2022, Yazaki North America, part of the Yazaki Group, a Japanese automotive component maker which produces wiring harnesses, power distribution and control products, sensors, and hybrid and electric vehicle products, announced it was building a pilot factory in Guatemala with a $10 million dollar investment. Located in the department (province) of San Marcos, the facility opened in February 2023 and will eventually employ 1,000 people. This is the first of several facilities Yazaki plans to establish in CAFTA-DR countries, and it could be a model or anchor for other related auto parts manufacturing companies to invest in Guatemala.

As with semiconductors, Guatemala may be able to lean into its relationship with Taiwain to attract Taiwanese auto parts manufacturers. This is especially so after comments by Secretary of State Marco Rubio at a press conference in Guatemala City on February 5, 2025, in which he indicated that the United States would do all it can to facilitate more Taiwanese investment in Guatemala. The Taiwanese aftermarket auto parts sector dominates global supply chains with a 90 percent market share, and the country is increasingly entering the original equipment manufacturer (OEM) space. Parts manufactured in Guatemala with Taiwanese investments and then integrated into the North American automobile supply chain system could begin to ameliorate the concerns about Mexico being a “back door” for Chinese auto part makers seeking to circumvent strict tariffs imposed by the United States.

Reasons to Invest in Guatemala

When making their business decisions, companies should consider several significant attributes of Guatemala, including the country’s proximity to Mexico and the United States, its young population, cheap and renewable electricity, and the existence of free trade zones. In addition to these attractive features, there is a strong political consensus on both the right and left of the Guatemalan political spectrum on the need to have a robust private sector, unlike in neighboring Honduras, where the government has attacked the private sector, discouraging investment in the country. Moreover, the U.S. Chamber of Commerce has expressed concerns over Mexico’s constitutional and legal reforms, especially the elimination of independent regulatory agencies, which could undermine the guarantees of protection for business operations in Mexico. These concerns may lead to some investors choosing Guatemala over its neighbors.

Geographic Proximity

Guatemala’s proximity to major economies, such as the United States and Canada, offers it significant advantages. Commercial ships sailing from Guatemala’s Caribbean Sea ports can quickly reach the major U.S. ports on the eastern seaboard, such as Miami, Savannah, Baltimore, and Philadelphia. Container shipments from the port of Santo Tomás de Castilla on the Caribbean, for instance, can reach Miami in as little as three days, Savannah in four, and Philadelphia in seven. This proximity optimizes logistics, minimizes transportation costs, and facilitates operational synchronization (thanks to time zone alignment). The county’s relatively compact geography and its Inter-Oceanic Highway allow for the movement of goods between both of its coasts. Furthermore, Guatemala’s port at Puerto Quetzal (Empresa Portuaria Quetzal) on the Pacific Ocean has a container terminal that is the largest facility between the mega port of Lázaro Cardenas in México and the Panama Canal. The Puerto Quetzal port is an important destination in the maritime trade routes linking South America to ports in Mexico, California (e.g., Long Beach, Los Angeles, and the port of Hueneme), and Asia.

Young Population

Guatemala has the largest population proportion of youth in Latin America. With almost half of its population under the age of 19, Guatemalan youth offer the potential for a vibrant workforce and a strong human capital base in the coming years. This demographic dividend could greatly enhance the labor market and drive innovation with the right educational and professional investments from the government and the private sector through technical schools, universities, and institutions such as INTECAP, an autonomous government agency funded by the private sector and dedicated to the development of human talent and national productivity. However, with 2.7 million children and adolescents out of school in 2023, a large percentage of Guatemala’s population has not been equipped with essential basic education and job skills.

Renewable and Reliable Energy

Guatemala is rich in natural resources, affording it clean energy generation. As of 2021, the country produced 71 percent of its energy from renewable sources—mainly via hydro-energy and bio-energy sources—and has a surplus that allows it to export to neighboring Central American countries and Mexico. The Guatemalan Association of Renewable Energies (AGER) has calculated that the country has the potential to integrate an additional 3,700 megawatts of renewable energy into Guatemala’s electricity grid between 2024 and 2040, more than doubling the country’s current electrical generation. The use of renewable energy for the production of consumer products provides marketing opportunities for environmentally conscious customers and allows firms pathways to meet ambitious ESG goals. Guatemala’s electricity is also cheaper than in the Northern Triangle countries and Nicaragua, but more expensive than in Costa Rica, Panama, and especially Mexico.

Despite a reliable supply, there are increasing demands on the Guatemalan grid at the same time that new generating capacity has remained stagnant in recent years, largely due to a lack of new investment in electricity-generation projects and local and indigenous opposition to new hydroelectric plants. In early 2025, the National Electric Energy Commission authorized the connection of new generation projects to the national grid totaling 42 megawatts, consisting of eight renewable projects and one natural gas–based plant. While this is good news, additional new investments are needed, especially in stable energy sources. Long-term power-purchasing agreements, which have been resisted by industry in Guatemala, are needed to guarantee price stability and consistent demand, and to make larger projects financially viable.

Free Trade Zones

Guatemala’s economic strategy includes a focus on developing industrial parks in FTZs and ZDEEPs. By providing a concentrated environment for businesses, these areas attract both domestic and foreign companies with appealing incentives such as the substantial tax breaks mentioned above, expedited customs procedures, and infrastructure supporting domestic and international operations. ZDEEPs are intended as sites for manufacturing, assembly, packaging, handling and distribution, and storage of a range of products. These two types of free trade zones also foster technological advancements and modernization. Specifically, when global companies establish operations in these zones, they contribute goods, finances, best practices, and innovative technologies.

Today there are five FTZs, all located in the department of Guatemala, which house 128 companies that offer more than 3,000 job opportunities. There are also 23 ZDEEPs concentrated in the departments of Escuintla, San Marcos, Zacapa, and Izabal. Five of these ZDEEPs—Puerta del Istmo, Michatoya Pacífico, Puma 1 (which is dedicated to providing hydrocarbon fuels), Zona Libre Quetzal, and Miel Verde—are fully operational. Twelve others, including the largest, Synergy Park (which is also the largest in Central America), have been approved by the governing body (the Industry and Commerce Free Trade Zone Santo Tomas de Castilla, or ZOLIC) but are awaiting final approval from the country’s tax authority. The remaining FTZs are still in the process of being established.

Nearshoring and Investment Challenges

Corruption

The International Commission Against Impunity in Guatemala (CICIG) was established in 2007 as a UN-backed anti-corruption body with the mission to investigate and dismantle criminal networks within state institutions, which had emerged as a consequence of Guatemala’s Civil War (1960–1996). Despite the CICIG successfully exposing several corruption scandals, the administrations of Presidents Otto Perez Molina, Jimmy Morales, and Alejandro Giammattei were likely some of the most corrupt in history, according to the founder of Acción Ciudadana, the Guatemala chapter of Transparency International. The year 2017 saw the crystallization of an alliance between presidents, members of congress, and corrupt businessmen seeking impunity, known as the Pacto de los Corruptos, or Pact of the Corrupt, when members of congress amended the Criminal Code to protect themselves from accusations of illicit electoral financing and corruption. The CICIG faced numerous attacks from these and other powerful interests and ultimately ceased operations in September 2019 when its mandate was not renewed by President Morales.

President Arévalo campaigned on an anti-corruption platform, and in the months since his victory in 2023, the Pact of the Corrupt made multiple attempts to derail his assumption of office. In particular, Attorney General María Consuleo Porras, some judges, and members of congress worked to harass Arévalo’s political party Semilla with spurious charges, lifted immunity from prosecution for the magistrates of the Electoral Tribunal who had certified the election, and attempted to overturn the electoral results. In response, the United States imposed visa restrictions on nearly 300 Guatemalan congressmen and business leaders, while the Organization of American States (OAS), other international organizations, and much of civil society raised mounting cries to respect the outcome of the election. Consuelo Porras herself had already been sanctioned in 2022 by the Biden administration because she had “repeatedly obstructed and undermined anti-corruption investigations in Guatemala to protect her political allies and gain undue political favor.” She benefits from a 2016 law prohibiting the president from firing the attorney general, and thus remains a powerful thorn in Arévalo’s side, with numerous open investigations against the president. Consuelo Porras is also using her office as a tool of repression, persecuting political opponents, prosecutors who have only done their job, independent judges, and journalists, while also blocking justice for ordinary Guatemalan citizens. Investigating and prosecuting corruption cases is the sole purview Attorney General Consuleo Porras, who has systematically refused to do so.

Despite these headwinds, President Arévalo has spent his first year in power trying to advance his anti-corruption platform, exposing corruption via executive bodies such as the National Commission Against Corruption, the Solicitor General’s Office, tax authorities, and key ministries. However, given the president’s party’s small numbers in congress, there is the risk that the lack of the needed congressional support will result in the return to old practices of corruption. Nevertheless, after a 12-year consecutive decline in Transparency International’s (TI) Corruption Perceptions Index, attributed to three successive administrations aligned with corrupt practices, President Arévalo has managed to improve the country’s corruption perception. TI’s 2024 index, released on February 11, 2025, shows that Guatemala improved by two points because of new citizen participation channels and the digitalization of public functions, the latter meant to eliminate red tape but also reduce opportunities for corruption.

Public Safety and Organized Crime

The Northern Triangle of Central America has witnessed some of the highest homicide rates in the world, driven in large measure by gang violence. In Guatemala, most criminal activities revolve around robbery, property theft, and extortion, with the majority of these crimes occurring in the department of Guatemala. These crimes are increasing in frequency. While overall crime rates have increased in recent years, murders in the country have been steadily decreasing from a high of 46 per 100,000 inhabitants in 2009 to 16.1 per 100,000 inhabitants in 2024, lower than Mexico’s rate of 23.2 per 100,000, and quite a bit lower than in some U.S. cities.

Extortion is a particular problem that affects individuals and businesses alike and remains significantly underreported. One report showed that only 5 out of 10 cases of business extortion and 6 out of 10 cases of home extortion are reported. This crime is also getting worse. Between 2013 and 2021, extortion rates more than doubled in the country, and, in 2024, reported cases rose by 39 percent over the previous year. Of course, this doesn’t necessarily mean that extortion is skyrocketing. Rather, these numbers could simply reflect greater confidence in reporting the crime. An extensive study by the organization Global Financial Integrity, completed in 2022, revealed that proceeds from extortion against individuals are estimated at $40–57 million a year in Guatemala. The country is also plagued by organized crime, with InSight Crime describing Guatemala’s criminal organizations as “among the most sophisticated in Central America.” The drug trade and migrant smuggling form a significant part of organized criminal activity, especially in the Mexican border regions. The Mexican Sinaloa Cartel and the Jalisco New Generation are also expanding their presence in Guatemala. A final problem directly affecting commerce, which occurs throughout Central America and is a particular problem in Mexico, is cargo theft; criminal groups in Guatemala use signal jammers to block truck-borne GPS tracking systems and operator cell phones prior to assaulting cargo vehicles.

Infrastructure Development

Guatemala has Central America’s highest logistics costs and important deficits in terms of the quality of its road infrastructure. According to the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), between 2012 and 2017, logistics costs—measured as the percentage of a product’s final value—increased from 23 to 29 percent and represented 40 percent of the overall costs for small and medium-sized enterprises. There are a total of 17,440 kilometers of roads in the country, of which 7,420 kilometers are paved and 9,440 kilometers are unpaved dirt roads. Guatemala currently ranks at 134 out of 141 countries in road connectivity, highlighting the urgent need for transportation improvements.

Guatemala’s main highways include the Pan-American Highway (CA-1), connecting it to Mexico and El Salvador; the Interoceanic Highway (CA-9), from the port at Puerto Barrios to the port at Puerto Quetzal; and the Costanera Highway (CA-2) along the Pacific coast. The Pan-American Highway is key for regional commerce with El Salvador and Honduras, while the Interoceanic Highway is the main artery connecting the center of the country with both coasts. It connects the country’s industrial areas with the port at Puerto Quetzal on the Pacific Ocean as well as the ports of Santo Tomas de Castilla and Puerto Barrios on the Caribbean, linking Guatemala to U.S. and European markets. In late 2022, the IDB approved a $175 million infrastructure project to improve the CA-9 road corridor that will significantly benefit the northeastern agricultural region, the source of most of the country’s exports. In addition, the Guatemala No Se Detiene plan features 40 initiatives to improve transportation infrastructure. One key aspect is the plan to expand the road network to 37,952 kilometers over the next 15 years, under a law approved in November 2024 that prioritizes the main roads linking the Salvadoran and Mexican borders and the Interoceanic Highway. A month later, the Guatemalan Congress approved the Priority Road Infrastructure Law, which will regulate the contracting process for road projects by providing clear funding mechanisms for roads that are directly relevant for international trade by introducing new methods to increase the certainty of payment to suppliers, as well as by improving how construction, repairs, and maintenance of the country’s road network are undertaken.

Officials have also been turning their attention to port infrastructure and operations as there are severe bottlenecks in the process, largely due to long queues for ships to dock. A project completed in 2024, undertaken with funding and support from the Washington D.C.–based Global Alliance for Trade Facilitation, sought to modernize port procedures for the arrival and departure of vessels in Guatemala. The project aimed to promote trade by introducing a digital single-window system, automating the documentation procedures involved at the country’s four main cargo ports and creating greater uniformity and efficiency in line with international standards. The digital project also strengthens transparency and security processes in international trade. Port and shipping infrastructure are also being modernized. APM Terminals upgraded the port of Puerto Quetzal in 2017, after investing $180 million to raise the terminal capacity to 340,000 TEU (twenty-foot equivalent unit, used to measure vessel capacity), making the port the largest in the country. In June 2023, the port announced plans for a $1 billion investment over the next 25 years to enhance and enlarge the port in a series of phases. The port is looking for investors to finance these plans. In 2011, the port of Santo Tomás de Castilla, located in Izabal, added new berths to accommodate an increase in seaborne traffic and to reduce loading and unloading times. Under Guatemala No Se Detiene, the port of Santo Tomás de Castilla, as well as the Champerico port, located in the department of Retalhuleu on the Pacific Ocean, will also undergo expansions.

#### Guatemala needs Judicial Independence, US and EU can expedite this with support

Hassan, 2025 Tirana Hassan is the former Executive Director of Human Rights Watch, a leading international human rights organization. she served as Human Rights Watch’s Chief Programs Officer Her career includes roles at Amnesty International, and she has worked at the United Nations and other nongovernmental organizations on the frontlines of human rights protection, focusing on justice, accountability, and the defense of the world’s most marginalized populations around the world. “Guatemala Events of 2024” Human Rights watch, 01-17-25, <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2025/country-chapters/guatemala>, HH]

Judicial Independence and Corruption

The lack of judicial independence remains a critical issue in Guatemala, undermining the rule of law and threatening human rights protections. It stems from systemic problems in the judicial selection process, including non-transparent nomination procedures, political meddling, and undue influence from corrupt actors. The judiciary often fails to hold powerful interests accountable, instead serving to protect them.

In September, two “nomination committees,” formed by law school deans, judges, and bar association representatives, submitted to Congress a list of candidates for all 13 Supreme Court and 156 Court of Appeals positions for the 2024-2029 term—a critical opportunity to bolster judicial independence in the country. In October, Congress appointed new judges to the Supreme Court and Courts of Appeals. Many had been under criminal investigation for alleged influence peddling in previous judicial selection processes.

In March, President Arévalo asked the Organization of American States (OAS) to send an observation mission to monitor the justices’ selection process. In September, the OAS mission published a preliminary report noting conflicts of interest, the nomination of candidates reported to be involved in corruption or human rights abuses, and inadequate vetting procedures.

Arbitrary Criminal Prosecutions

Under Porras, the Attorney General’s Office has for years orchestrated spurious criminal prosecutions against justice officials, human rights defenders, anti-corruption activists, and officials of the Arévalo administration. In 2023, Porras’s office conducted bogus criminal investigations aimed at preventing President Arévalo from taking office.

Prosecutors have also asked the Supreme Court to lift President Arévalo’s immunity from criminal prosecution and have sought to proscribe the ruling party, Movimiento Semilla.

In July, Virginia Laparra, a former anti-corruption prosecutor, fled Guatemala after nearly two years imprisoned on spurious charges. Laparra had been under house arrest since January. Her prosecution was widely seen as retaliation for her work on high-profile corruption cases against public officials and organized crime.

Former anti-corruption prosecutor Stuardo Campo remained in prison at time of writing, on charges of “abuse of authority” and “breach of duties,” among others. The hearings in his case have been postponed multiple times, undermining his right to due process.

According to the nongovernmental organization (NGO) Unidad de Protección a Defensoras y Defensores de Derechos Humanos de Guatemala (UDEFEGUA), at least 91 people fled into exile due to criminal prosecution, threats, or harassment since 2022. These included 44 legal professionals and 26 human rights defenders.

Civic Space

UDEFEGUA documented over 9,000 instances of aggression—including criminalization, harassment, defamation, stigmatization, threats, intimidation, and violence—against human rights defenders, journalists, organizations, and communities working to defend human rights, the highest recorded number to date.

The Attorney General’s Office and a section of the judiciary have created a hostile environment for the exercise of freedom of expression and the press. Journalists face arbitrary detention, restrictions on news coverage, and online harassment. According to the NGO Journalists’ Observatory, at least 25 journalists fled the country in the last few years.

In late December, journalist César Leiva was shot to death in the department of Jutiapa and journalist Gleymer Villeda was killed in Izabal department. Three other journalists were murdered in 2023. Impunity for crimes against the press, particularly targeting those investigating public interest issues like corruption and human rights violations, remains the norm.

UDEFEGUA reported that, between March 2023 and August 2024, at least 18 human rights defenders were murdered in Guatemala. In June, José Domingo, a lawyer and human rights defender, was murdered. Domingo worked closely with the United Farmworkers Committee (CUC), one of the country’s most prominent peasant organizations. He was known for his advocacy on behalf of farmworkers and Indigenous groups, providing legal support to these communities in their struggles for land rights and better working conditions. Another CUC leader, Gustavo Yaxón, was injured in the same attack and died from the injuries a few days later.

In November, a Guatemalan appeals court ordered journalist José Rubén Zamora back to prison, overturning an October court decision that had granted him house arrest after determining his two-year pre-trial detention was excessive. Zamora, 68, founder of El Periódico was initially arrested in July 2022 on money laundering charges and sentenced to six years in prison. In October 2023, an appeals court overturned the verdict, ordering a retrial. Prior to his transfer to house arrest, several UN experts had raised concerns about his detention conditions. At time of writing, his retrial was pending.

In March, the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention said Zamora’s detention was arbitrary, and called for his immediate release.

Economic, Social and Cultural Rights

High levels of poverty and inequality, structural discrimination, and corruption limit access to fundamental rights, especially for groups that have historically faced exclusion, including Indigenous peoples as well as Afro-descendant and rural communities. According to the official figures, 56 percent of the population was living in poverty in 2023, including 16 percent in extreme poverty, as defined by the national poverty line.

Acute and chronic malnutrition affect children at alarming rates. As of October, over 25,000 cases of acute malnutrition in children were reported by the government. By October, reported cases were significantly higher than what was typically seen at this time of year in 2021-2023 (18,500 cases on average). According to government figures, chronic malnutrition affects 46.5 percent of children under five years old nationwide and according to the World Bank, Guatemala has one of the highest such rates globally.

Between January and October, 278 children under five died in cases associated with malnutrition. The Arévalo administration launched the “Mano a Mano” Intersectoral Initiative, aiming to reduce chronic malnutrition by ten percentage points during its four-year term.

The Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) reported an increase in forced evictions and land conflicts in 2023, primarily affecting Indigenous communities. In July, the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) expressed concern about the lack of mechanisms for recognizing and titling ancestral lands, allowing for the advancement of hydroelectric, mining and oil company, and monoculture projects without free, prior and informed consultation. Indigenous leaders defending their land and environment face criminalization, harassment, and threats. According to media reports, the evictions that have been carried out have often involved abuses by police and private security agents, resulting in the destruction of homes and property, forced displacement, and other ESCR violations for the affected communities.

In December, the Inter-American Court of Human Rights ruled that Guatemala violated multiple rights of the Indigenous Maya Q’eqchi’ people in the El Estor municipality, Izabal state, including by failing to properly title their lands and conduct adequate prior consultation regarding mining activities affecting their territory.

Migrants and Asylum Seekers

Guatemala serves as a country of origin, destination, transit, and return for migrants and asylum seekers. In 2023, Guatemala experienced a high influx of migrants, with over one million people entering the country. The majority of these people were from Venezuela and Honduras.

In June 2023, Guatemala and the United States launched “safe mobility offices” to facilitate legal pathways for Guatemalans to enter the US, including family reunification and temporary work visas. In May, the program was expanded to include Hondurans, Salvadorans, and Nicaraguans present in Guatemala.

In September, Guatemala welcomed 135 Nicaraguan political prisoners, whom the Nicaraguan government released and expelled as part of an agreement with the US and Guatemala. The prisoners will stay in Guatemala temporarily, where they will be able to apply for resettlement in the US or elsewhere.

Public Safety

Guatemala grapples with organized crime, drug trafficking, and institutional weaknesses in the justice system.

The homicide rate, which peaked in 2009 at 46 per 100,000 people, has since declined steadily, reaching 16.1 per 100,000 in 2023. During the first half of 2024, there was a seven percent decrease in the homicide rate in the country compared to the same period the previous year, according to government data. There are also other significant challenges, including high levels of human trafficking, extortion, and violence against women.

The 2023 National Survey of Household Quality and Well-being (ENCABIH) revealed that 48 percent of women have suffered some type of gender-based violence at least once in their lifetime. In the first half of 2024, civil society groups reported 206 violent deaths of women, with 44 percent classified as femicides. Impunity in cases of violence against women remains the norm.

Sexual Violence Against Girls

Pregnancy during adolescence and early parenthood affects thousands of girls in Guatemala. The Observatory for Sexual and Reproductive Rights (OSAR) reported 37,190 pregnancies among adolescents and girls ages 10 to 19 between January and August 2024, including 1,298 among girls ages 10 to 14. Under Guatemalan criminal law, all pregnancies among girls under age 14 are considered the result of sexual violence.

Access to maternal health care for pregnant girls is hindered by both inadequate healthcare goods and services and physical, economic, and discriminatory barriers. In rural areas, some health centers lack the necessary supplies, including prenatal vitamins, to properly care for pregnant girls. Girls and their families travel long distances, sometimes for hours or even days, to reach healthcare facilities where they can receive necessary medical treatment, further depleting many households’ already-limited financial resources.

Girls who experience pregnancies as a result of sexual violence often encounter discriminatory treatment from healthcare professionals. In some cases, during and after pregnancy and childbirth, girls do not receive specialized care commensurate with their age.

Pregnancies under the age of 14 carry significant risks to girls’ physical and mental health and put girls’ lives at risk. In Guatemala, abortion is criminalized, except when the life of the pregnant woman, girl, or person is in danger, and penalties vary from one to twelve years in prison. Most medical professionals interpret this exception to include only cases where death would be immediate or imminent. Safe and legal abortion for girls under 14, whose pregnancies are a result of sexual violence—and inherently put their lives at risk because of age—remains unavailable.

Gender and Sexuality

Guatemala does not allow same-sex marriage or legal gender recognition for transgender people, and lacks comprehensive anti-LGBT discrimination legislation.

In June, Guatemala’s Constitutional Court called on authorities to uphold “spiritual and moral values” and for participants to observe “good morals” during the annual Pride Parade.

Sanctions

In January, the European Union established a dedicated individual sanctions regime and sanctioned five individuals for undermining democracy and the rule of law before and following the 2023 presidential election.

Also in January, the US State Department imposed visa restrictions on former President Alejandro Giammattei and three of his children, citing his involvement in “significant corruption.” The State Department has imposed visa restrictions on Attorney General Porras, former President Giammattei, and their families, citing corruption and rule of law concerns. In December 2023, it also restricted visas for nearly three hundred Guatemalans, including over one hundred congressmembers, for undermining democracy during the presidential transition.

#### EU works with and strengthens Diplomatic Foreign Engagement with Guatemala

European Union External action, 2025 European External Action Service, in coordination with the European Union institutions, addresses EU foreign policy priorities, including civilian and military planning and crisis response. “EU Special Representative for Human Rights visits Guatemala, Strategic Communications, Guatemala City, 02-20-25, h https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/eu-special-representative-human-rights-visits-guatemala\_en, HH]

The EU Special Representative for Human Rights (EUSR), Ambassador Olof Skoog, carried out a three-day visit to Guatemala (February 17-19). The Special Representative contributes to the implementation of the EU’s policy on human rights worldwide as well as to promoting compliance with international humanitarian law and supporting international criminal justice. His visit forms part of the European Union’s longstanding investment in democracy, human rights and sustainable development in Guatemala, utilising all the instruments at its disposal including political dialogue, trade, development cooperation, electoral observation as well as individual restrictive measures. During his visit, the EU Special Representative met with government officials, including the President of the Republic Bernardo Arévalo, State institutions, indigenous representatives, civil society, human rights defenders, media and the private sector.

Ambassador Skoog acknowledged the government’s dedication to democratic governance and a positive human rights agenda with special attention to social and economic rights. This includes the right to education and health, in order to address the country’s structural inequality. In this context, the EU Special Representative welcomed ongoing efforts to advance a national dialogue with the indigenous communities, and with other sectors of the Guatemalan society, as an important step towards inclusive governance. The EUSR expressed his appreciation for Guatemala’s commitment to and close collaboration with the international and regional human rights mechanisms, including visits and engagements with the UN and Inter-American Commission special procedures. In this regard, the EUSR encouraged Guatemala to consider advancing towards a ratification of the Escazú Agreement on Access to Information, Public Participation and Justice in Environmental Matters in Latin America and the Caribbean.

The need for structural engagement and consultation with indigenous peoples, who represent almost half of the country’s population, was also confirmed during the EU Special Representative’s meeting with indigenous leaders from all over Guatemala in the city of Solalá. The EU expressed its commitment to promoting inclusive and sustainable development that benefits all. The EU Special Representative highlighted the need to establish national mechanisms that ensure that affected communities are consulted and reap the benefits of commercial activities in their territories. In this regard, the EU supports the efforts to develop a National Action Plan for Business and Human Rights and to comply with EU regulations on corporate sustainable development, forced labour and deforestation. Moreover, in the context of the Global Gateway Investment Agenda, the EU mobilises investments in favour of a circular economy, green transition and digital transformation.

At the same time, Ambassador Skoog reiterated the EU’s deep concern that the situation for human rights defenders, and in particular those defending land and the environment, continues to be highly dangerous. Justice often remains inaccessible for those facing threats, violent attacks and criminalisation for defending their rights. In this context, the EU Special Representative welcomed the government efforts to advance the adoption of a National Policy for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders. Simultaneously, the protection of human rights is the responsibility of all powers of the State, and fighting impunity requires a transparent and impartial justice system that generates trust.

The EUSR expressed the EU’s deep concern over the deterioration of rule of law in the country, and in particular the persistent instrumentalisation of the justice system for the persecution or intimidation of public officials, democratically-elected authorities, civil society, media and judicial operators. Ambassador Skoog met first hand with individuals subject of spurious and long drawn judicial processes as well as arbitrary detention, targeted for their activities as journalists, prosecutors, lawyers and university students.

In this context, the individual restrictive measures adopted by the Council of the European Union in February 2024, directly targeting individuals responsible for undermining democracy and the rule of law, have been extended for one more year. In his meeting with the Human Rights Ombudsman’s Office, the EUSR inquired about the activities of this institution, on the basis of its responsibility for the monitoring of state institutions’ actions in accordance with human rights commitments.

Ambassador Skoog reaffirmed the EU’s strong commitment to supporting inclusive and sustainable development in Guatemala, which indispensably includes consolidating democratic governance, strengthening the rule of law and protecting human rights.

As stated by Mr. Skoog: “The EU has been a consistent partner to all sectors of Guatemalan society invested in the promotion of human rights, the rule of law and democracy. This includes support to human rights defenders and civil society - often at risk - as well as private sector committed to investing in inclusive development and responsible business conduct. This support will continue. The EU recognises the significant efforts made by the government of President Arévalo and we are ready to work together to achieve tangible results. It is also clear that to this end, all State institutions will have to join this effort. ”

#### Advocate to increase foreign aid to Guatemala, El Salvador, and Honduras

Solis, 21 (Luis Guillermo, served as the 47th president of Costa Rica (2014–2018). He has written extensively on Latin America and co-chaired the UN Secretary-General’s High-Level Panel for the Economic Empowerment of Women. Solís was the interim director and a distinguished visiting professor at the Kimberly Green Latin American and Caribbean Center at Florida International University from 2018 to 2022, 3/10, “Can More U.S. Money Really Help Central America’s Northern Triangle?”, <https://americasquarterly.org/article/can-more-u-s-money-really-help-central-americas-northern-triangle/>) AJW

During his 2020 campaign, Joe Biden pledged to develop a comprehensive rescue plan for Central America’s Northern Triangle (Guatemala, El Salvador and Honduras). President Biden, who knows Latin and Central America better than all his predecessors, remains convinced that a new $4 billion regional initiative, to be disbursed over four years, will significantly deter migration flows by addressing their root causes. His administration is now working with the 117th Congress to achieve this objective.

Biden’s determination to take a proactive role in Central America is positive, and seldom has it been more urgent. After several years of gradually declining U.S. assistance, strongly conditioned by Donald Trump’s White House to force Northern Triangle governments to take actions against migrants, the region’s recovery became uncertain once more. Although there has been significant progress in reducing what had been among the world’s highest homicide rates in the mid-2010s, the Northern Triangle continues to be one of the poorest and most troubled regions of the hemisphere. Moreover, after being severely affected by the COVID-19 pandemic and the devastating impact of two category 5 hurricanes in November 2020, Central America’s frail productive structures have been shattered.

The whole region has suffered, including the countries of Costa Rica, Panama and Belize. On average, GDP in Central America may have plunged 6% in 2020, according to the International Monetary Fund, with only a partial 3.5% recovery expected this year (the IMF includes the Dominican Republic in this grouping). Likewise, unemployment is expected to soar well beyond 10% of the workforce in many countries — in a region where as many as 70% of workers are already underemployed. The number of people living in extreme poverty, those who barely survive with $1 a day or less, is expected to increase as well. The region’s already deplorable economic standing may well slip back a decade.

Giving more U.S. money to try to bring democracy and development to Central America is not a new idea, and historically it has had mixed results. For more than half a century, different administrations have provided enormous financial and technical aid with similar objectives. From John F. Kennedy and Lyndon B. Johnson’s Alliance for Progress in the 1960s, the Kissinger Commission on Central America (1984), to the more recent Central American Security Initiative (CARSI, 2014) and the Alliance for Prosperity and the Strategy for Engagement in Central America (updated in 2017), the U.S. has spent vast resources in an attempt to support the region’s development.

During the Cold War, this support included military aid to fight the spread of communism, and governments were often dictatorships with dire human rights records. Since 1990, most U.S. assistance has gone to NGOs and civil society organizations; this aid was designed to promote programs that further economic and agricultural development, combat violence and insecurity, empower youth and women and fight corruption and bad governance. Strengthening the rule of law and the administration of justice, moreover, was frequently at the core of some of these programs.

Between 2016 and 2021, the U.S. Congress appropriated more than $3.6 billion to fund the so-called Strategy for Engagement in Central America. Congress designated these resources toward bilateral assistance programs focused on human development (economic growth and social welfare) and programs intended to improve the quality of the justice sector, prevent violence and combat gangs and transnational organized crime. For 2021 alone, Congress appropriated $505.9 million in assistance to Central America as a whole. One conclusion is clear: In recent years, the U.S. has consistently attempted to contribute (with ups and downs depending on the political context) to improve the living conditions of the people and the strength of the institutions and political systems of Central America. Biden’s plan would roughly double the amount of annual assistance going forward.

Thus, the question to ask today is not whether Central America (all of it, not just the Northern Triangle) requires more money or not. Without a doubt it certainly does, and the region will continue in need of such funding for many years to come. Nor should the discussion be limited to the amount of funding that the U.S. should provide, significant as this may be. Rather, decision-makers in Washington D.C. should consider even more complicated, troublesome questions: Why, after so many decades of systematic support by the U.S. directed at Central America’s structural challenges, has the situation in the region not significantly improved for millions of its peoples? What factors have impeded and continue to obstruct the aspirations of Central Americans who endure the hardships of lives dominated by fear, dispossession, sickness, corruption and hunger?

And above all: How can the allotments of foreign aid be disbursed under the Biden administration to ensure that they produce the highest impact, greatest social returns and most transparent administration?

Learning to spend

A more detailed study of past aid efforts helps begin to answer these questions. Throughout Democrat and Republican administrations alike, institutions that generally control and oversee U.S.-funded programs abroad, like the Government Accountability Office (GAO), as well as technical agencies such as the Congressional Research Service or the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), and even highly respected liberal and conservative think tanks influential in Washington, D.C., have identified a series of factors that explain the feeble results of U.S. programs in Central America.

Some of these factors are to be found in the isthmus itself, deeply rooted in the region’s power structures. Others result from what those controlling institutions call “lack of comprehensive monitoring and evaluation plans,” “insufficient information,” and “weak project-level assessments.” One of the most troubling aspects of the way in which U.S. aid to Central America is administered is the high level of “unexpended monies resulting from unliquidated obligations,” sometimes accumulated over several fiscal periods. In plain language: U.S. agencies have often been unable to measure the real impact of U.S.-funded programs in the Northern Triangle, while the resources designated to implement the programs have often not even been used. That was either due to the incapacity of the local partners, or because Congress and the White House have withheld the funds until certifications of their correct use have been issued by the Central American governments or other national institutions. This situation leaves allotted, but unused, funds siting in the budget.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), for instance, allocated around $407 million to Central America between 2013 and 2018. Of this amount, about $249 million was disbursed. Yet, at the end of 2018 some $159 million remained as an “unobligated balance or unliquidated obligation.” The money was meant to provide school meals and nutritional programs for women, infants and children, training and technical assistance to improve agricultural productivity and expand markets and trade. It should have also been used to provide development assistance and emergency relief using local commodities.

It is up to the U.S. to provide answers and hopefully, solutions, to its own internal challenges hindering the real transformational capacity of the funds allocated to Central America. While inter-agency coordination efforts have improved through the years, they have been clearly insufficient. It is still necessary to streamline the priorities, budget execution, evaluation and follow-up procedures between and amongst the government agencies involved. Congress and the White House (National Security Council) must be brought into this dialogue even more, and so should U.S. embassies in the region. A frank, honest and detailed discussion of the current situation in Central America after its ransacking by COVID-19, extreme events, the worrisome political situations developing in El Salvador and Honduras, and the likelihood of the Ortega-Murillo dictatorship consolidating its rule in Nicaragua, are just some of the elements to consider in these inter-institutional policy conversations.

The bigger and deeper reasons for the limited impact of U.S. assistance, however, have to do with local factors in the four northernmost countries of Central America. Most particularly, with structural conditions which for almost 200 years have created undemocratic, unfair, repressive and opaque political systems, largely dominated by clientelism, authoritarian practices, state-sponsored violence and disrespect for the rule of law. These systems have produced very weak institutions, neglected the development of solid, public education and health frameworks, the economic and legal empowerment of women, ignored attending to the poor and extreme poor, or inhibited the existence of labor rights for the working population, particularly the indigenous and dwellers in rural areas.

On top of these factors, the existence of non-state violent actors, both common and transnational, dominating ample public spaces all the way from the “barrios” to the national territories is also a source of grave concern. So is the significant deterioration of citizens’ approval, adherence and support of democracy as the political system of choice. This relatively recent phenomenon, coupled with widespread corruption and questionable electoral practices, has exacerbated the region’s problems, and produced a steady and generalized deterioration of the governments’ credibility and legitimacy over the past two decades. In this context, the effectiveness of the newly announced Biden Initiative for the Central American Northern Triangle could be compromised once again.

Hence, it would be wise to review the record and emphasize those practices that have proven most effective. It is not possible to exclude national governments completely from the operational management of U.S. aid — that would risk, among other things, further erosion of their authority. But the path does seem to lie in including and emphasizing other, more reliable partners — particularly those from regional and national civil society organizations, as well as the private sector — to execute the funds. Recent comments by Biden administration officials suggest they are moving in this direction, and will also seek to condition funds to anti-corruption and other measures. The adoption of program areas that can provide sustainability beyond the short term is also key.

These include promoting the professional talents and the training of human resources (robust scholarship programs, for instance) and the strengthening of activities such as the ones Dr. Jill Biden has undertaken promoting STEM and STEAM programs for girls and young adult women. Support to enhance resilience before extreme events and the adaptation and mitigation of climate change should be a central part of this longer-term effort. The provision of drinking water and electricity produced by renewable energies could ease some of the pressures forcing campesinos to migrate, and simultaneously improving their health and nutrition. Equally important would be for the U.S. to provide political and financial support to uphold the rule of law through the reestablishment of multilaterally backed Justice Commissions such as CICIG. Conditional support to the Northern Triangle governments would also be justified upon the compliance with measurable progress indicators, particularly in what pertains the job markets, public security, fighting against corruption and health.

Another interesting way forward is the reactivation of the dialogue that the U.S., the European Union, Japan, South Korea and other multilateral donors successfully held on Central America in the 1990s. A comprehensive, well-coordinated assistance by the major contributors could have a positive and long-lasting impact in the region, helping align priority programs and projects, as well as focusing on key areas of interest. The return of multilateralism under Biden should facilitate such efforts — and prove very positive for other reasons as well. It is also worth asking to what extent Belize, Costa Rica and Panama should be included in both conversations about aid as well as aid itself, as part of the quest for a more stable and developed Central America.

There are no easy nor fast approaches to the Central American dilemma. Yet, one thing remains true: It is in the interest of the U.S. and the region to prevent the past from — once again — becoming prelude to the future.

#### Visa restrictions kill democracy and rule of law in Guatemala

**Salomon 23** [GISELA Salomon is a Miami-based reporter who covers Latin America and immigration affairs for The Associated Press. She was previously correspondent in Buenos Aires, Argentina, “The US is restricting visas for nearly 300 Guatemalan lawmakers, others for ‘undermining democracy’”12-11-2023, <https://apnews.com/article/guatemala-state-department-biden-visa-restrictions-democracy-34002cfb789b6f5a12324807336d4aa4> 4/10/2024 ] DelG

The Biden administration announced on Monday that it has imposed visa restrictions on nearly 300 Guatemalan lawmakers, private sector leaders and their families it accuses of “undermining democracy and the rule of law.” Guatemala faces mounting criticism by world leaders and watchdogs accusing it of attempts to block progressive President-elect Bernardo Arévalo from taking office in January. The victory of Arévalo and his Seed Movement party is seen as a threat to those who have long wielded power in Guatemala. The anti-corruption crusader has been a target for months, with arrests of party members, raids and repeated requests to lift his immunity so prosecutors can investigate him directly. The State Department in a statement condemned “ongoing anti-democratic actions” by prosecutors and other actors and noted “intent to delegitimize Guatemala’s free and fair elections and prevent the peaceful transition of power.” The State Department did not provide The Associated Press with the names of those subject to visa restrictions. In its statement, it said those individuals were “responsible for, or complicit in” political targeting of opposition, intimidation of peaceful protestors, raids, opening of ballot boxes and lifting of immunity of electoral magistrates who certified the election.

Last week, prosecutors alleged that minutes seized during a raid of electoral offices showed that results from the presidential runoff vote Arévalo won in August had irregularities and were therefore void. Arévalo accused the prosecution of seeking to undermine his ability to govern, and was quickly backed by a growing number of international entities such as the Organization of American States and the European Union, which had sent observers to monitor the election and confirmed that voting adhered to democratic standards. The visa restrictions imposed by the United States were likely prompted by a series of controversial congressional votes in November. One targeted four electoral magistrates, who later left the country. Another passed a budget that critics say would simultaneously handicap Arévalo in delivering on campaign promises while boosting funding for offices that have supported alleged democratic attacks. EU foreign policy chief Josep Borrell said Friday that the bloc was also contemplating sanctions on those attempting to reverse the vote. “These latest actions and statements of the Public Prosecutor’s Office of Guatemala represent an attempt at a coup d’etat, spearheaded by politically motivated prosecutors,” Borrell said in a statement. “They show contempt for the clear will of Guatemala’s citizens.”

#### [2] Negative Evidence---Case

#### US foreign policy impact shows intervention leads to harm

Trantos, 2024 Alexandria Trantos is a student at Stonehill College and a Senior Correspondent for the Organization of World Peace. “The Lasting Impact of U.S. Foreign Policy On Guatemala’s Struggle For A Strong Democracy” The Origination for World Peace, 04-10-25, https://theowp.org/reports/the-lasting-impact-of-u-s-foreign-policy-on-guatemalas-struggle-for-a-strong-democracy/, HH]

Following decades of governance by a vicious anti-communist military dictatorship, in 1985, Guatemala established a representative democracy. Despite the regime change, the country has continued to experience many social and political challenges, including corruption, high crime rates, and poverty. To fully understand the reasons for these issues, as well as the persistent barriers to democratic consolidation in Guatemala, it is necessary to analyze the long-term effects of U.S. foreign policy in the region, specifically the role of the 1954 CIA coup and the subsequent Guatemalan Civil War. Examining the history between the U.S. and Guatemala reveals that foreign companies and intervention weakened Guatemala’s institutional powers and inhibited efforts to bring about true democratic stability, which has left negative implications for the economic and social viability of indigenous Guatemalan communities today.

The hardships currently plaguing modern Guatemala have entrenched roots in past U.S. foreign policy decisions. Many Latin American governments, in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, were led by military dictators who established economic policies that facilitated and encouraged liberal foreign investments, especially from wealthy countries such as the U.S. An example of a successful Amerian-owned company that greatly benefitted from investments in Latin America, most prominently in Guatemala, was the United Fruit Company (UFCO), which mainly traded bananas. The UFCO quickly became a dominant and overwhelming force in the region, owning hundreds of thousands of acres of Guatemalan land. This land was not only used for banana plantations but also railways, telephone lines, post offices, and telegram services, all of which were used to ensure the maintenance of U.S. market control in the region. The pervasiveness of U.S. influence in the country rendered the UFCO a state within a state, where foreign interests reaped massive profits without making any meaningful contributions to the nation’s well-being. As a result, Guatemala became known by the derogatory term, “Banana Republic,” which was used to refer to poor and developing countries ruled by corrupt governments that relied heavily on the export of bananas

During 1945 and 1954, however, the UFCO experienced government opposition for the first time. Opposition arose when pro-democracy forces overthrew the dictator supported by the UFCO, Jorge Ubico, replacing him with Juan Jose Arévalo, a reformist who initiated moderate agrarian reforms aimed at restraining U.S. companies and bolstering the domestic economy along with other social initiatives in education, health, and infrastructure. Given the subservience of Arévalo’s predecessors, the U.S. was not supportive of Arévalo’s administration, leading the U.S.-backed army to attempt about thirty coups during his six years in office. Following his presidency, democratically elected Jacobo Arbenz continued Arévalo’s reforms on a larger scale through the implementation of social programs that prioritized income distribution and economic nationalism, with land reform being one of his primary goals. Arbenz viewed Guatemala’s unequal land distribution as the main impediment to economic development and strived to transfer this property to landless peasants to fuel domestic industries, and in turn, reduce the reliance on foreign corporations such as UFCO.

As tensions between Arbenz and the U.S. government grew stronger, the Eisenhower administration labeled him a communist and vied for his removal. To convince the American public, elites in Guatemala that supported the UFCO persuaded U.S. journalists and members of Congress to believe that the Guatemalan government was moving closer toward communism. In light of the Cold War, the belief that Guatemala had ties to the Soviet Union prompted the U.S. to utilize the newly created CIA to launch a concealed operation to overthrow him in 1954, also known as Operation Success. In doing so, the CIA began recruiting opposition forces in Guatemala to stage a coup and engaged in psychological warfare by promoting anti-Arbenz journalists, blocking government radio frequencies, and dropping leaflets containing false information about Arbenz. These efforts were designed to disguise the coup as a spontaneous popular uprising and mitigate suspicions of U.S. involvement. As a consequence of the coup, the CIA successfully dismantled democracy and helped bring military dictator Castillo Armas into power. In the meantime, the U.S. continued to assist Guatemala’s anti-communist leaders for the remainder of the Cold War.

With the removal of Arbenz, divisions between the U.S.-sponsored government and left-wing guerilla groups increasingly heightened. The civil war officially commenced when a group of armed insurgents conducted an unsuccessful uprising against military dictator, Ydígoras Fuentes, in an attempt to address land rights, economic marginalization, and human rights abuses. Although the attempt failed, it helped give rise to a loosely coordinated left-wing guerrilla movement that brought together rebel military officers, the Guatemalan Workers Party, and backing from student, worker, and peasant groups. Soon after this uprising, the war quickly intensified with the implementation of a counterinsurgency campaign, characterized by tactics such as arbitrary arrests, torture techniques, and paramilitary death squads as a way to suppress political opposition. Notably, these policies greatly targeted civilians, particularly Mayan communities, who were believed to be providing support to the guerilla movement. After 36 years of war and the subsequent deaths of 200,000 Guatemalans, largely propelled by U.S. funds, the Human Rights Office of the Archdiocese of Guatemala concluded that the military was guilty of genocide.

The long-term effects of U.S. foreign policy in Guatemala are not only evident in the catastrophic loss of lives due to the genocide but also in the production of weak institutions and lack of democratic stability currently affecting the country. For example, although Guatemala has held regular elections since the 1980s, organized crime and corruption have immensely impacted the functioning of the government. These issues have been difficult to address because the rule of law is overpowered by the influence of outside actors who tend to prioritize their own interests over the genuine pursuit of justice.

These conditions are partially tied to past U.S. foreign policy that instituted a militarized political culture through their support of authoritarian regimes and draconian counterinsurgency measures, which resulted in the erosion of trust in government, especially among Mayan communities. Furthermore, during this time, the U.S. often ignored the constant human rights abuses committed by the regimes they supported, producing an ineffective judicial system manipulated by powerful elites and foreign corporations. This sentiment has been expressed by René De León Schlotter, a member of Guatemala’s center-left Democrats, who stated, “The responsibility of the United States, although indirect, is very real and serious. With its policy of supporting dictatorships, the United States has collaborated in the strengthening of these regimes and burdened our people with debts, often for the most superfluous programs.”

In terms of Guatemala’s socioeconomic status, similar dynamics continue to hold true: the Mayan population is still disproportionately affected by poverty, discrimination, and economic inequalities. For instance, long-held grievances by the indigenous community including the failure to redistribute land, unfair wages, and dangerous working conditions have yet to be addressed. Considering that less than 1% of landowner corporations control 75% of the most fertile land in the country, Indigenous people are left with few job options, forcing them to seek work elsewhere, either through internal or external migration according to Minority Rights Group. Due to ineffective judicial institutions and self-interested leaders, the effects of the civil war remain unaddressed for many indigenous Guatemalans.

These social and economic conditions have affected how Mayans view and treat their country. This is important to note because citizens’ attitudes contribute a great deal in shaping the quality of the state, usually, more so than the rulers. A state’s legitimacy increases as its citizens view it as rightfully possessing and exercising political authority. Thus, nations with security, order, freedom, and general welfare tend to lead to more legitimate nations. Additionally, political determinants, such as corruption control and political stability can directly lead to more government support. In sum, legitimacy is based on how well a state equally fulfills its obligations to its people.

The case of Guatemala demonstrates how the repressive legacies of U.S. foreign policy have lived on to exacerbate instability and socioeconomic hardship in other countries, resulting in a weak state and entrenched levels of distrust in institutions, especially for indigenous communities. Although Guatemala faces a long path toward the attainment of a strong democracy, the recent election of Bernardo Arévalo and his advocacy for policies aimed at combatting corruption, poverty, and crime presents a crucial opportunity to interrupt the longstanding injustices the country has endured. To achieve meaningful social, political, and economic reforms it will be imperative that Arévalo prioritize the rights of indigenous communities and strengthen the legitimacy of state institutions.

#### U.S. intervention harms indigenous communities in Guatamala

Isacson, 2025 Adam Isacson has worked on defense, security, and peacebuilding in Latin America since 1994. He now directs WOLA’s Defense Oversight program, which monitors U.S. cooperation with Latin America’s security forces, as well as other security trends. “Soldiers Aren’t Border Police: the perils of using troops against migrants,” WOLA, 03-03-25, https://www.wola.org/analysis/soldiers-arent-border-police-the-perils-of-using-troops-against-migrants/, HH]

Soldiers are trained for combat. They exist to defend a state against aggression, or to keep order in extreme emergencies. Soldiers are not trained to be police, who are civilians charged with protecting and serving the population with minimal violence. They are not trained to be teachers, judges, or tax collectors. And soldiers are absolutely not trained to be migration agents.

Migrants are not “invaders,” as the Trump administration’s executive orders claim. They don’t have leaders, organization, or even common goals and reasons for fleeing, though most have humanitarian needs. Of those who have come to the U.S.-Mexico border since 2024, more than 40 percent are children, or parents with children. This is not a population demanding a response from combat-trained soldiers: not in the United States or anywhere else.

When governments make soldiers perform internal security missions involving long-term, non-emergency, open-ended interaction with civilians, especially vulnerable and trauma-affected civilians like migrants, the probability of human rights abuses skyrockets.

Long-term missions seeking to curb highly profitable illicit transactions—like cross-border drug or migrant smuggling—carry a high probability of corruption. This poses a threat to the integrity and capacity of military institutions, which are often difficult to hold accountable in the first place.

Using extremely harsh measures to control migration is a very political mission. Treating migrants like an “invasion” is a very political choice. If militaries become accustomed to taking on a politicized mission like this one, what happens when a president calls on them to carry out other politicized missions, like confronting peaceful protesters or labor movements? The migration mission sets a dangerous precedent.

Mexico

Mexico had already been undergoing a historic reversal in civil-military relations, conferring a long list of internal roles on its armed forces; WOLA has called it a “militarized transformation.” Its government transferred soldiers into a new military federal police force, the National Guard, giving it full power to police the country while placing it, first de facto and then officially, under the command of the Defense Ministry. Since its creation, that new branch of Mexico’s armed forces has participated heavily in migration enforcement, alongside other branches of Mexico’s military.

While WOLA has not seen evidence of direct U.S. training and equipping of Mexico’s National Guard, the Trump administration is aggressively supporting the Mexican government’s expansion of the military’s internal migration mission, as was also the case during Trump’s first term. In order to stave off a threat to impose tariffs at the beginning of February, President Claudia Sheinbaum agreed to deploy 10,000 additional National Guard personnel to Mexico’s northern border region, ostensibly to control migration and seize fentanyl.

The additional troops are now carrying out checkpoints, searches, roadblocks, and raids. In some areas, they are patrolling the quiet border jointly with U.S. Border Patrol in “mirrored” fashion. Soldiers are interacting with civilians, including migrants, more often than before.

Border Patrol and Mexican National Guard carry out “mirrored” patrol in Arizona. Source: Border Patrol Tucson Sector on Twitter.

This response further expands the military role in Mexico’s internal security, with all the risks that it entails for human rights, especially those of migrants, as well as corruption and civil-military relations.

The deployment, meanwhile, makes no strategic sense. It is difficult to interdict illicit synthetic drugs, which are very small in volume. The task badly vexes U.S. law enforcement inside the United States. To the extent that it is possible, these illicit substances are more likely to get interdicted at transit bottlenecks in Mexico’s interior than along a 2,000-mile-long border.

Migrants, meanwhile, must already run a gauntlet of patrols and checkpoints run by civilian and military forces and organized criminals as they cross Mexico, requiring most to pay smugglers and corrupt officials. There is no reason to expect that adding more National Guard personnel will make it harder for a smuggler to bring migrants to the border. Past experience indicates that it will just create an additional “cost of doing business” for smugglers.

By signaling that Mexico’s internal troop deployment appeased its demand for action to stave off tariffs, the Trump administration sent a strong message that this is the model of security and civil-military relations that the United States wants Latin American nations to follow in the 21st century. While the U.S. government has supported, and at times funded, the Mexican military’s role in counter-drug operations for decades, expanding this support to immigration enforcement is a major escalation of this model.

Guatemala

In Guatemala, too, the Trump administration is actively encouraging a big new military role in migration control. During Secretary of State Marco Rubio’s February 5 visit to the country, Guatemalan President Bernardo Arévalo announced that the U.S. government would be assisting the formation of new border task forces combining Guatemalan police and military personnel.

Guatemala’s Army inaugurates “Territorial Control and Borders” Task Force, Chiquimula, February 25, 2025. Source: Agencia Guatemalteca de Noticias (Guatemalan government news agency)

These will be charged with combating organized crime and interdicting drugs and smuggled migrants in Guatemala’s border regions. The first began operating along Guatemala’s border with El Salvador and Honduras on February 25.

This will expand the internal policing roles of a military with a serious history of human rights abuses, including what a Truth Commission reporting on Guatemala’s 1960-1996 armed conflict called genocide. Even in the gravest cases, accountability has been very difficult to achieve.

Guatemala’s Army meanwhile faces multiple allegations of involvement in corruption and drug trafficking, including some former officers’ confessions of assistance to criminal groups like Mexico’s Jalisco New Generation Cartel, which the Trump administration just added to the State Department’s list of foreign terrorist organizations.

Though much remains undone, Guatemala has taken important steps, especially during the past 15 years, to exert civilian control over the armed forces and to keep soldiers in the barracks by trimming internal security roles. Those steps built on the promise of the 1996 peace accord, which created a civilian police force and placed internal security more firmly under civilian control. This big new internal border role is a setback to this past progress.

It also appears likely to repeat the frustrating experience of the “Inter-Agency Task Forces” of the mid-2010s, military-police-prosecutor border units set up with U.S. support. These units ended up failing to operate effectively, misused U.S.-donated equipment against a UN-assisted anti-corruption body, and ultimately collapsed.

Texas

The United States, too, is seeing an expansion of internal military roles, with soldiers ever more involved in controlling migration at home. On February 15 and 19, U.S. Border Patrol deputized 590 Texas state National Guard personnel, essentially allowing them to enforce immigration law like Border Patrol agents. That means these National Guard personnel are now empowered to apprehend and, if necessary, to confront civilians whom they believe to be in the United States without authorization.

Border Patrol Chief Mike Banks (center, back to camera) deputizes National Guard personnel in south Texas. Source: Border Patrol Rio Grande Valley Sector on Twitter.

National Guard members are military personnel. They undergo the same training as do regular U.S. armed forces. If they are Army National Guard personnel, their uniforms bear “U.S. Army” tape.

Longstanding U.S. law—the Posse Comitatus Act of 1878—seeks to prevent exactly these kinds of long-term, open-ended internal missions involving regular contact and confrontation with civilians on U.S. soil. The risks of such missions for democratic civil-military relations are too great.

The National Guard mission at the border relies on one of the legal exceptions to the Posse Comitatus Act—the vaguely worded Sec. 502(f) of Title 32, U.S. Code—to use the National Guard in “support of operations or missions undertaken…at the request of the President or Secretary of Defense.”

There is no emergency to justify such a mission. In Border Patrol’s Rio Grande Valley Sector, where the first deputized soldiers are operating, 3,000 Border Patrol agents are apprehending just 50 migrants per day: a rate of 0.5 migrant apprehensions per agent per month.

WOLA and partners have already documented how frequently the Texas National Guard has been improperly using both lethal and non-lethal force against migrants, in many cases to deny them the legal right to seek asylum, and even denying water and first aid to families and children. WOLA called this aggressive use of soldiers on U.S. soil a “dangerous precedent” in 2024. This is a big step beyond.

If the Trump administration is permitted to declare an “invasion” to give soldiers a big open-ended role on U.S. soil at the border, we should fear the use of other emergency measures to use soldiers for other internal political purposes. This mission opens the possibility of big further distortions in the U.S. military’s role as we’ve known it.

Mass deportations

The use of military force against migrants goes beyond the National Guard. The Trump administration is calling on regular military forces as well. So far, 3,600 active-duty soldiers, marines, and Air Force personnel have been called to help guard a quiet border. That number is to increase soon to 9,000.

It’s so quiet that the border-wide number of troops is greater than the monthly number of apprehended migrants, estimated at 8,450 in February. Yet the troops deployed come “from some of the most experienced and highest readiness elite units in the Army,” noted Jennifer Kavanagh of Defense Priorities. The politicized push to rush troops to the border is idling personnel in whom the Defense Department has invested heavily.

Active-duty soldiers put up concertina wire near San Diego. Source: Border Patrol San Diego Sector on Twitter.

Military aircraft are carrying out deportation flights; the treatment of the migrants aboard, some of them families with children, has generated expressions of protest from nations including Brazil, Colombia, and India.

Military facilities, like Buckley Space Force Base in Colorado and Fort Bliss in El Paso, are being used as staging and transportation areas for the administration’s growing mass deportation campaign, and this is probably just the start. ICE does not have the personnel to carry out “mass deportation” on its own. We can expect to see more soldiers playing supporting roles in deporting people all over the U.S. interior. This may include active-duty military, through an invocation of the rarely used Insurrection Act of 1807.

Shackled migrants board a C-17 military aircraft being used to deport them. Source: CBP on Twitter.

More than 700 military personnel are expanding the Guantánamo Bay Naval Station to accommodate potentially as many as 30,000 migrants. The administration has still given no reason why it would take migrants—many with no criminal records at all, some of them asylum seekers—to an inaccessible base far from contact with attorneys or loved ones.

Using the military and the Guantánamo base exhibits a reckless disregard for costs at a time when the new administration is seeking to slash the federal government, including the Defense Department. Though it can only offer educated guesses because much data is classified, a Niskanen Center analysis estimated that Guantánamo detentions cost U.S. taxpayers well into the millions of dollars per inmate per year. “By comparison, the current cost of detention in ICE facilities on the U.S. mainland—estimated to accommodate approximately 41,000 individuals—is roughly $260 per migrant (adjusted for inflation) per day, or about $95,000 annually.”

Contributing to the logistics of mass deportation by running transportation and staging “camps” means playing non-combat roles with big human rights implications. Soldiers’ training offers little preparation for that. Potentially worse, involving the U.S. military in mass deportation is to involve our nation’s fighting force in a politicized internal mission.

The U.S. military—which prides itself on being apolitical—is being forced to lend itself to the current administration’s domestic political priorities. This threatens a historic break with more than a century of restraint in the United States’ democratic civil-military relations.

Conclusion

As the Trump administration expands and supports military roles in migration enforcement, both at home and throughout the Americas, some of its domestic efforts will run into judges who find these activities unconstitutional. But many efforts will not stop in the courts, especially those involving U.S. assistance and pressure on countries in Latin America.

These activities carry grave risks for human rights and democracy in both Latin America and in the United States. Expansion of military roles, using the excuse of migration and the false argument of an “invasion,” needs to stop as soon as possible, before it expands or comes to be seen as normal.

In the region, it threatens to accelerate the reversal of a key element of the region’s transitions from dictatorship to democracy going back to the 1980s, which saw the armed forces return to the barracks while states created civilian public security ministries and professional police forces. Both in the hemisphere and at home, it also promises to dilute armed forces’ focus on their core mission: defending their nations from aggression. Turning militaries into an all-purpose domestic tool blunts both their readiness and their morale.

The work to prevent it, then, can’t just be up to judges and litigators. It demands greater vigilance from members of Congress, journalists, and all citizens who value the military’s role in democracy. We must raise our voices and not look away.

#### Trump deportation policies sideline Guatemala social-justice agenda

Al Jazeera, 2025 Al Jazeera English is a 24-hour English-language news channel operating under Al Jazeera Media Network, which is partially funded Guatemala agrees to increase number of US deportation flights it acceptsEvents of 2024” Human Rights watch, 02-05-25, https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2025/2/5/guatemala-agrees-to-increase-number-of-us-deportation-flights-it-accepts, HH]

The Central American country of Guatemala has agreed to ramp up the number of deportation flights it receives from the United States, after a visit from Secretary of State Marco Rubio.

At a news conference on Wednesday, Guatemalan President Bernardo Arevalo also announced that his country would accept non-citizens sent from the US.

“We have agreed to increase by 40 percent the number of flights of deportees both of our nationality as well as deportees from other nationalities,” said Arevalo, who appeared jointly with Rubio.

This is not the first time Guatemala has accepted deportation flights from the US: It did so under the previous administration of US President Joe Biden as well.

But Trump, the current president, has campaigned heavily on stamping out irregular migration to the US, and since taking office on January 20, he has pressured countries around the region to join his efforts.

A Guatemalan official, speaking under condition of anonymity, told the news agency Reuters that, under Biden, the Central American country received about 14 deportation flights per day.

It is unclear how much that might increase under Trump.

But Reuters noted that the nearly 66,000 Guatemalans deported from the US in fiscal year 2024 was more than any single year during Trump’s first term, from 2017 to 2021.

Rubio visited Guatemala as part of his first trip as the US’s top diplomat.

He has been travelling the region to curry support for Trump’s anti-immigration push, passing through Panama, El Salvador and Costa Rica before reaching Guatemala. He is set to travel to the Dominican Republic next.

But while in Guatemala, he praised Arevalo for accepting non-citizens into Guatemala’s borders.

Prior to taking office, the Trump transition team had grappled with where to place non-citizens detained as part of immigration raids. Certain countries, like Venezuela and Cuba, have refused to participate in US deportation flights.

In December, for instance, news reports emerged that Trump planned to approach Caribbean countries, including the Bahamas, Grenada and Turks and Caicos, to accept migrants from other countries.

But the leadership of the island nations refused. “The Bahamas simply does not have the resources to accommodate such a request,” Bahamian Prime Minister Philip Davis said at the time.

On Wednesday, Rubio indicated the US would offer financial support to Guatemala so it could return non-citizens to their home countries.

He also praised Arevalo, saying the deportation-flight deal was “very important for us in terms of the migratory situation we’re facing”.

“His willingness to accept not just nationals but those from other nationalities as they seek to ultimately return to their own homelands is also important, and we’ve pledged our support with those efforts,” Rubio said.

President Arevalo, for his part, indicated that the question of accepting migrants with criminal records was not discussed.

A day before, the president of El Salvador, Nayib Bukele, offered to jail any violent offenders the US sends his way — whether they be migrants or US citizens.

However, even officials in the Trump administration have expressed scepticism about the legality of that offer.

Rubio publicly thanked Bukele for his offer but acknowledged the legal barriers. “We have a Constitution,” he said of the US.

Nevertheless, the US on Tuesday began sending undocumented immigrants to its military base in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, the site of a detention centre criticised for alleged human rights abuses.

An estimated 11 million undocumented people live in the US as of 2022, many serving vital roles in their communities.

#### [3] Negative Evidence---Aid Corruption DA

#### Guatemala Foreign aid Misallocated

Virsi, 2025 Nicholas Virzi is dean of the ASTRA Institute for Leadership and Governance. He holds a doctorate in international relations from the University of Salamanca.” Impurity Observer, 02-03-25, [https://impunityobserver.com/2025/02/03/guatemala-is-uniquely-positioned-to-work-with-marco-rubio/](https://impunityobserver.com/2025/02/03/guatemala-is-uniquely-positioned-to-work-with-marco-rubio/?utm_source=chatgpt.com) , HH]

Marco Rubio’s visit on February 4–5 will be important for the bilateral relationship between Guatemala and the United States. On the top of the agenda will be illegal immigration, narcotics trafficking, and China’s growing influence in the region.

Unlike Colombia and Honduras, whose governments are fundamentally anti-American, Guatemala has the best position to negotiate successfully with Secretary of State Rubio. After all, the government of Guatemala (GOG) has maintained its traditional support for Israel and Taiwan, unlike other countries in the region.

Guatemala and the United States have many common interests, especially under the Donald Trump administration’s new foreign-policy focus. In particular, US interests align with those of the formal private sector and the GOG. The private sector has been an advocate of closer ties with the United States, as opposed to China, and the GOG has followed suit.

Guatemala needs more US foreign direct investment (FDI), concentrated in infrastructure, as well as better framing and messaging regarding the Guatemalan brand. Thanks in great part to attacks by the US State Department (DOS), Guatemala—and its private sector, in particular—has been posited as the poster child of corruption on the world stage. According to the World Bank, whose president is typically placed by the United States, Guatemala scores worse on control of corruption than failed states such as Afghanistan. In light of these US-led attacks, US FDI to Guatemala has declined by 37 percent in the last five years, while FDI from the rest of world to Guatemala has increased by 68 percent.

Foreign aid is also misallocated in Guatemala. Social media is rife with criticism of USAID’s mistakes (or sabotage). Guatemala is the case study of ill-spent USAID funds taken from the US taxpayer. Should USAID continue to exist, Guatemala should ask for a redirection of funds: away from political areas and towards economic and humanitarian areas.

Cutting all USAID programs equally would be counterproductive. Those like the Regional Disaster Assistance Program in Latin America should be kept. Disasters such as floods, hurricanes, and famines spur illegal immigration. That said, programs with a political bent—and no established results regarding development and illegal immigration—should be eliminated.

Guatemala has remained the United States’ number-one advocate in Latin America. US-Guatemala cooperation on military, security, and drug-interdiction matters is the best in the region. DOS officials involved in sensitive drug-interdiction matters can attest to the cooperation and good faith shown by the Guatemalan Attorney General’s Office over the last few years.

Guatemala’s fidelity to the common interests shared with the United States notwithstanding, Guatemala has not seen reciprocation in trade and FDI. China, meanwhile, has become the second most important country for Guatemalan imports and is in the top 10 of Guatemala’s export destinations, based on the dollar value of trade.

US-Guatemala relations, therefore, need a reset. The US-Guatemala reset should occur under an integrated framework involving Guatemala’s government and formal private sector, working in tandem with the US government.

The time is now. The United States already has various nearshoring/friendshoring laws on the books, sponsored by congressional representatives Mark Green (R-TN, the Nearshoring Act) and María Elvira Salazar (R-FL, the Americas Act). Under both initiatives, the following fact stands out: Guatemala is a friend and near the United States.

Guatemala boasts not only the best country-risk ratings in the region but direct maritime access to all US ports on both coasts as well as the Gulf of America. Guatemala also has a favorable political climate for US FDI, constantly advocated by a strongly US-friendly private sector. In light of the substantial trade complementarities between the United States and Guatemala, US imports from Mexico and Colombia, in particular, can be substituted by Guatemala.

The great challenge to national competitiveness in Guatemala remains its sub-par infrastructure. More infrastructure investment is needed. Guatemala has had some advancements in this area, such as its Priority Infrastructure Law of 2024, and there are reforms to public-private partnerships that are currently on the table. With help from the US government, the legal framework for infrastructure development in Guatemala could become world-class. More US involvement is needed in this key area. It would be a win-win for the United States and Guatemala if US investment and aid specifically funded infrastructure projects involving roads, ports, and airports.

Greater infrastructure investment by the United States in Guatemala would also combat China’s Belt-and-Road Initiative, which has been displacing US influence worldwide. An even greater hit would be if the US government backed much-needed reforms in public procurement in Guatemala with regards to infrastructure investment.

When offering solutions to countries like Guatemala, the United States should present itself as a role model: a country with tax exemptions for investment and a history of economic growth based on the imperative of industrialization.

In return for prioritizing infrastructure investment and technical assistance to Guatemala, the United States stands to gain:

less illegal immigration from Guatemala (and elsewhere but passing through);

a rejection of the Belt-and-Road Initiative;

private-sector support for US military bases and US control of ports and airports;

even greater cooperation with security and drug-interdiction;

supply-chain resilience.

The United States needs to recognize that Guatemala is the best US ally in the region. The Guatemalan government and the formal private sector can now utilize this unique opportunity.

#### [4] Negative Evidence---Kritik

#### US involvement in Guatemala to this point has been a colonial history that has propped up oligarchy and escalated impoverishment and traumatizing civil wars

**Ferrell 21** [Catherine Nolan-Ferrell, associate professor of history at UTSA, originally appeared in The Washington Post. “Past U.S. policies have made life worse for Guatemalans” 6-22-2021, <https://www.utsa.edu/today/2021/06/story/nolan-ferrell-past-policies-made-life-worse-for-guatemalans.html> 4/10/2024]DelG

Vice President Harris recently met with Guatemalan President Alejandro Giammattei and Mexican President Andrés Manuel López Obrador to discuss ways to stem the migration of people to the United States. Harris has acknowledged the complex factors causing migration, including climate change’s impact on declining agricultural production and high rates of crime and violence. “Guatemalans migrate because the possibilities to live and work in their own country have been eliminated. U.S. policy helped make this happen.” Harris also identified corruption as key. “No matter how much effort we put in — on curbing violence, on providing disaster relief, on tackling food insecurity … we will not make significant progress if corruption in the region persists.” Harris rightly notes that multiple causes are driving migration to the United States, but blaming the current corruption and violence actually distracts from the long-standing historical and structural factors fueling Guatemalans’ desire to leave their country. It also obscures the role that U.S. policy has played in sustaining this crisis. For decades, impoverished urban workers and Indigenous Mayan campesinos have struggled to subsist in a nation that refuses to protect basic human rights and denies them full citizenship. U.S. support of Guatemala’s oligarchy has only worsened living conditions and exacerbated migration. During the mid-20th century, Guatemalans tried to bring more economic opportunity and political equality for all. From 1944 to 1954, the country experienced “Ten Years of Spring” after the people ousted a dictator and enjoyed democratic elections. Reform-minded governments passed laws that guaranteed a minimum wage, established a 45-hour workweek and secured freedom of the press. In rural areas, the 1945 constitution prohibited forced-labor practices commonly used by elites to obtain free or inexpensive labor during the coffee harvest. Subsequent reforms supported the redistribution of idle land to rural communities that had their land stripped from them during the 19th century. This brief democratic interlude ended under the Eisenhower administration. Secretary of State John Foster Dulles and CIA Director Allen Dulles had economic interests in the Boston-based United Fruit. (UFCo). The fruit company owned vast amounts of uncultivated land that would have been subject to the agrarian reform regulations passed by the Guatemalan government. Instead, UFCo paid a public relations firm to convince Congress that the Guatemalan government was pro-Soviet. The result was a CIA-sponsored coup in 1954 that ousted the democratically elected government. After the coup, Guatemala experienced a string of military governments that collaborated with the country’s small elite class to protect their economic, social and political privileges. However, impulses for a more equitable society reemerged in the 1960s and 1970s. Mayan communities formed rural cooperatives and agrarian leagues designed to improve living standards. After the Catholic Church’s Vatican II reforms from 1962 to 1965, local churches expanded education and leadership opportunities to ordinary parishioners, and the church became a hub for social justice activism. These community-based civil organizations made small gains in social reforms, but they lacked sufficient power to challenge the oligarchy’s resistance to substantive change. Instead, Guatemalan elites charged that social reformers were Cuban-inspired communists that threatened U.S. interests — and sought to crush them. As the conflict intensified through the 1970s, business leaders and elites increasingly supported the military’s efforts to control social unrest by “extralegal” tactics, including death squads and forced disappearances. Declassified U.S. documents show that the United States provided military hardware and counterinsurgency training to Guatemalan military and police in this effort, leading to the indiscriminate use of force and violence. In March 1982, Gen. Efraín Ríos Montt led a coup against the then-military president. Ríos Montt promised to end government corruption, revitalize the economy and defeat the insurgency. In reality, Ríos Montt unleashed a genocide against the Maya population. More than 200,000 people were killed or disappeared and 1.5 million were displaced from their homes, including about 200,000 who became refugees in Mexico. Eighty-three percent of the victims of violence were Maya. The Commission for Historical Clarification (CEH in Spanish) identified the military as responsible for 93 percent of the abuses. Guatemalan migration to the United States grew during the violence. However, the Reagan administration refused to acknowledge the migrants as refugees. People fleeing from the Central American wars in Guatemala and El Salvador were automatically listed as “economic migrants” because their governments enjoyed strong U.S. support. To acknowledge them as refugees would have required the United States to admit that it was supporting repressive governments. Instead, Guatemalans and Salvadorans became undocumented immigrants in the United States, the same country that supported the violence that forced them to flee.

Many of the young men who came to this country found work in the construction, agriculture and service industries. Some formed gangs for protection from the tough neighborhoods of eastern and central Los Angeles. Barrio 18 and Mara Salvatrucha 13 emerged in Los Angeles during the 1980s. By the early 1990s, California’s “tough on crime” policies ensnared young people, including immigrants, in systems of incarceration that fueled gang membership. The Clinton administration’s harsh immigration reform laws in 1996 mandated deportation for immigrants who were convicted of minor crimes such as traffic violations or marijuana possession. In Los Angeles, Immigration and Naturalization Service agents rounded up Latin American immigrants, looking for any criminal activity that could be used to justify deportation. Guatemalan people who had long resided in the United States were deported to a nation that had few resources or institutions to integrate them into society.

Essentially, the United States deported gang culture back to Central America. This set the stage for increasing instability and violence over the past 20 years. For the past half-century, wars have left Guatemalans traumatized, economically fragile and deeply divided. And these socioeconomic inequalities persist. Mayan campesinos continue to be treated as second-class citizens and lack sufficient land to meet their basic needs. Urban working classes continue to struggle to earn a living wage. The alliance between the traditional oligarchy and military remains strong. Efforts to implement reforms do exist. In 2006, civil society organizations pushed the government and the United Nations to establish the International Commission against Impunity in Guatemala (CICIG). The CICIG worked to support Guatemala’s nascent judicial institutions on cases of corruption, illicit security organizations and organized crime. Although the judiciary had significant successes, including corruption investigations against three former presidents and the conviction of a vice president, the judicial system remains marred by mass impunity and corruption permeates all levels of society. Impunity and corruption have eroded people’s faith in government institutions, a situation best highlighted by the trial of Ríos Montt. Although he was convicted of genocide and crimes against humanity in May 2013, Ríos Montt’s conviction was annulled based on procedural irregularities. On May 19, the Guatemalan attorney general’s office dropped one of the corruption charges against former president Otto Pérez Molina. Instead, it turned against two officials who had helped to build the case. These recent cases highlight the strength of an intransigent elite willing to undermine the rule of law to maintain power. Migration from Guatemala is directly tied to this history of genocidal violence and impunity. Guatemalans migrate because the possibilities to live and work in their own country have been eliminated. U.S. policy helped make this happen. The Biden-Harris administration needs to recognize how U.S. policy has contributed to this exodus to avoid making similar mistakes.

#### Guatemalan communities perceive international aid as perpetuating neocolonial dynamics.

Raynoso, 2025 Lucas Reynoso is a journalist at EL PAÍS in the Bogotá newsroom. “Between neocolonialism and resistance: Guatemalans negotiating with international cooperation” El Pais, 04-10-25, https://elpais.com/planeta-futuro/2025-04-11/entre-el-neocolonialismo-y-la-resistencia-los-guatemaltecos-que-negocian-con-la-cooperacion-internacional.html? com , HH]

Benjamín Son Turnil, a 76-year-old Quiché Mayan indigenous person, is blunt in his criticism of international cooperation. “Colonialism is still very present, only now there are a variety of forms and sometimes it's not very noticeable,” he says in Totonicapán, a city of about 100,000 inhabitants in western Guatemala. He believes that receiving international resources is a right of his community due to the inequalities inherited from centuries of plunder that enriched Europe. That's why he admits that it bothers him that some funds replicate dynamics of domination and are sometimes conditioned on agendas and priorities defined in donor countries, without local participation. “The colonizer treats the colonized as ignorant,” he affirms. But he doesn't feel like a victim. He proudly recounts that the Western Association for Rural Development Cooperation (CDRO), founded in the 1980s, now has abundant resources, employs more than 200 people, and selects international partners who respect it: “We have generated our own room for maneuver.”

International cooperation permeates an important part of Guatemalan history over the last three decades. The 1996 peace accords brought 36 years of internal armed conflict to a close, and expectations of a time of reconstruction and growth arose. Millions of dollars in resources were used for matters as varied as the construction of a new judicial system, the vindication of Mayan identity, and the consolidation of independent media. At first glance, Guatemala has become a country of cooperation: an abundance of international NGO offices in wealthy neighborhoods of the capital, countless programs with varying success, and memories of governments that publicly confronted these foreign actors. However, local civil society tells a different story, one in which it asserts its own capabilities and its ability to operate within the rules of the game.

Daniel Pascual, a 52-year-old peasant leader, has a vision similar to Son Turnil's. He is the coordinator of the Peasant Unity Committee (CUC), an organization formed in 1978 to defend the rights of agricultural workers and which today has about 25 employees. On the one hand, he points out that the funds they receive "are not a donation" because state agencies and international NGOs "impose" the priorities and "decide what they are for." He also laments that they shy away from politically sensitive issues that the CUC sees as priorities for producing substantial long-term changes. “If we talk about agrarian reform, we're communists, and no agency will give us money,” he explains. On the other hand, he emphasizes that the CUC knows which partners to work with: “We choose; we're not just looking to grab anything. We work with those who are most supportive and understand us best. That's why we don't have huge funds.”

After the 1996 peace accords, impositions abounded. Son Turnil has an uncomfortable memory of those years. During a meeting for a women's project, he found it “aberrant” that some donors questioned the salary policy of CDRO, his community organization, and demanded higher wages for the workers they would hire under the new program. “I told them they were going to break the salary scale and that this would create a huge inequality between us and the rest of our employees,” says Son Turnil, who still works for the organization as an advisor to the board of directors. “The gringa told me no, that they had to be the salaries they were saying, for the dignity and empowerment of women. So I told her, fine, there wouldn't be a project then. And I left.”

In Guatemala City, Pascual also recounts traumatic moments. She says that in the early 2000s, the CUC received funding from the United States government, through a US NGO, for the exhumation of the remains of comrades massacred during the armed conflict—more than 200,000 people were killed in Guatemala between 1960 and 1996, according to the UN. The project included books in which peasant communities told their stories. According to Pascual, the donors rejected mentions of Washington's role in the 1954 coup against President Jacobo Árbenz and in the escalation of violence during the armed conflict. The CUC then faced a dilemma: withdraw these funds or run out of funds to finish removing the bodies.

**This article has been google translated.**

### Panama

#### Quick Background: Heightened tensions over canal control; affs could explore sovereignty respect, infrastructure investment, or maritime security cooperation.​

#### Infrastructure & technological cooperation with Panama is key to push back against Chinese expansion & growing spheres of influence

Smith, 2023 (Victoria Smith, Researcher at ORB International. M.A. from The Citadel in International Politics and Military Affairs., "Soft Power In Panama," ORB International, https://orb-international.com/soft-power-in-panama/, accessed on 4-23-2024)

Last Friday, September 29, marked the one-year anniversary of Ambassador Mari Carmen Aponte’s confirmation to serve as the United States’ premier diplomat in Panama. Prior to her confirmation, the United States did not have an ambassador to Panama since Amb. John Feeley resigned in early 2018. The gap between U.S. ambassadors came at a pivotal moment for Panamanian foreign relations: just the year before, then-President Juan Carlos Varela officially switched diplomatic relations from the Republic of China in Taipei to the People’s Republic of China in Beijing1. Since then, China has increased its presence by taking advantage of economic opportunities in the country, now competing with Japan as the second-largest user of the Panama Canal after the United States2. In the midst of this shifting geopolitical landscape, ORB conducted a wave of research in June of this year to better understand how Panamanians feel about the direction of their country’s relations with foreign powers.

China Gaining Ground

While data gathered in June of 2023 shows that Panamanians have more favorable feelings for the United States (80%) over China (57%), Chinese economic power challenges the United States’ historical hegemony in the region as Beijing has undertaken highly visible infrastructure projects throughout the country. Qualitative interviews reveal that some Panamanians embrace China’s challenge to U.S. influence. One focus group discussion participant from Panama City noted: “The Americans had us under their control for three governments, thinking they had everything secured in their backyard. When the Chinese arrived, they brought healthy competition.” This notion is backed up by quantitative data, which shows over half (58%) of Panamanians believe the U.S. feels entitled to Panama as a foreign partner.

A bar graph with red and blue rectangles

Description automatically generated

Yet, any warm feelings Panamanians may have towards China over the U.S. appear to be based almost solely on the economic, infrastructural, and technological benefits China offers. Panamanians remain wary of China’s politics and feel culturally more aligned with the United States: more than half of respondents (57%) said the U.S. is a natural ally to Panama due to cultural similarities, compared to less than a third saying the same of China (29%).

Other Foreign Influences

However, China is not the only Asian economic power to gain influence in Panama. Quantitative data shows that Panamanians value Japan nearly to the same extent as they do China; there is less than a 10-percentage point difference in Panamanian opinions of their country’s relationship with either of the East Asian powers. Favorable opinions of both countries are virtually the same.

A graph of different colored bars

Description automatically generated

Qualitative research also shows that Panamanians value economic relations with Japan and South Korea for the very reasons that China outcompetes the United States in Panama: infrastructure and technology. When asked to list projects by foreign countries, focus group participants frequently referenced construction of a new metro line involving Japanese and South Korea funds, and a South Korean natural gas plant. Discussions also pointed to Panamanians having more positive beliefs about Japanese and South Korean culture and society than China, which suffered from negative perceptions regarding communism and authoritarianism.

The Balancing Act

Though U.S. engagement with Panama in recent years has not been as strong as it once was, the U.S. maintains its favorable position in the country. Continued diplomatic efforts could help to retake some of the ground lost during the years of the ambassadorial gap.

### Suriname

#### Quick Background: Low engagement, Recently emerging oil producer; potential affs in energy cooperation, sustainable development. However, very slim scholarship focusing on Suriname

#### US diplomacy with Suriname sets the stage for strategic partnerships for energy development in the age of climate change

CMC, 5-23-2022 (CMC, "Suriname Calls For Strategic Partnership With United States," Loop News, https://caribbean.loopnews.com/content/suriname-calls-strategic-partnership-united-states, accessed on 4-23-2024)

Foreign Affairs Minister Albert Ramdin says that after 46 years of diplomatic relations between Suriname and the United States, it is time for a strategic partnership between both countries.

Speaking during a recent bilateral dialogue with a delegation from the United States, Ramdin said the talks were “useful” and were held at a time when global and regional developments are taking place.

In referring to the situation in Eastern Europe, which shows that Europe is heavily dependent on energy from Russia, he said the partnership is needed to reduce the risks of energy supply.

“Energy is critical in our future relationship with the US,” Ramdin argued.

Also attending the meeting were US Ambassador Karen Williams and US Deputy Assistant Secretary of State, Barbara Feinstein.

In her comments, Feinstein said the relationship between the US and Suriname “are closer than ever,” She also said that Washington is looking forward to deepening cooperation in the context of Suriname’s chairmanship of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) in a few weeks.

For her part, Williams called the bilateral dialogue an extraordinary opportunity to evaluate the cooperative relationship. The diplomat told reporters that representatives discussed the progress made in bilateral cooperation, including humanitarian aid, trade relations, exchange programs, security and judicial cooperation, as well as diplomatic engagement.

According to Williams, good progress has been made in implementing the work plan drawn up during last year’s bilateral dialogue. She mentioned the support that Washington has given Suriname in getting funds for its economic restructuring plan from the International Monetary Fund (IMF), as well as vaccine donations from the US to Suriname.

“As for the next step, we are looking at deepening the bilateral dialogue process so that we will hold coordination meetings at technical level over the next year, so that what we have planned so far can even expand. We also look forward to President Santokhi attending the Summit of the Americas in a few weeks, which will give you more opportunity to talk about expanding the relationship,” said Ambassador Williams. The fact that Washington has sent two top officials to Suriname for the consultations emphasizes the importance that the American government attaches to the relationship with Suriname.

With regard to energy cooperation, the diplomat states that the US also wants to support Suriname.

“We are committed to our climate change objectives, and I know that Suriname is as well. So, I think in the context of -at least what the US government is concerned- in the context of the offshore oil and so forth US interest is in supporting Suriname in that mean that the endeavour is fruitful and productive for Suriname but at the same time respects the climate change challenges. There are other renewable energy opportunities out there as well and there are companies potentially in doing that and we will help them try to make connections with the private businesses, the Surinamese.

According to Ramdin – “We have a very good relationship with the US. It is not just a political relationship; it is an equal relationship in which we certainly benefit from the cooperation in different areas.” The minister mentions sectors such as education, health care and business. “We see many more American companies taking an interest in Suriname and there are so many other areas in which we can collaborate and work together.”

He said an overview of the areas of cooperation will be presented shortly, according to the minister and the ambassador.

### Uruguay

#### Quick Background: Low-profile friendly state; affs might explore digital diplomacy or strategic trade. However, literature is not robust.

#### Increased US engagement with Uruguay is key to check China fill in, establish free trade, & promote private-public advancements in tech and vaccine production

Runde, 4-15-2022 (Daniel F. Runde, Daniel F. Runde is a senior vice president and William A. Schreyer chair in Global Analysis at CSIS. He previously worked for the U.S. Agency for International Development, the World Bank Group, and in investment banking, with experience in Africa, Asia, Europe, Latin America and the Middle East., "Us Should Forge Deeper Partnership With Uruguay," Hill, https://thehill.com/opinion/international/3269504-us-should-forge-deeper-partnership-with-uruguay/, accessed on 4-23-2024)

Uruguay is a good news story in a region plagued by social, economic and political challenges. A small country of 3.5 million people, Uruguay is the leading democratic country in Latin America, according to the latest ranking by The Economist. Uruguay also enjoys high scores for respecting its population’s political rights and civil liberties. The United States is Uruguay’s fourth largest trading partner, mainly involving agricultural purchases. The country is currently led by a moderate government that could get more attention from the Biden administration. China is engaging more aggressively in Latin American and is ready to meet the needs of many countries: digital connectivity, vaccine supply, trade and — possibly — security. If the United States does not find better ways to engage with the region, even with small but vibrant economies like Uruguay, China will fill the void.

Historically, Uruguay’s open trade policies have largely helped it develop one of the most stable and advanced economies in the region. Uruguay scores very high on the economic freedom score, well above the global and regional average (i.e. it is ranked 5th among 32 countries in the Americas region). As a result, the country boasts the largest middle class in Latin America, accounting for 60 percent of its population.

The election in 2020 of President Luis Lacalle Pou of the center-right National Party was a welcome change and a needed political shift after more than a decade of tired, left-leaning governments. His administration brought more energy to regional challenges, for example, when he publicly denounced the governments of Cuba, Nicaragua, and Venezuela for their authoritarianism during the 2021 Summit of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC). His criticism of the Cuban leader, Miguel Díaz-Canel, went viral. President Lacalle Pou’s courageous stand puts him in the first ranks of democratic leaders not just in the Western Hemisphere but also in the world. Uruguay is an increasingly engaged global player in international affairs, for example ranking in the top 20 contributing states to the United Nations peacekeeping force.

Within the region, Uruguay is a founding member of the Latin American trade bloc, MERCOSUR (i.e the Southern Common Market). Uruguay is looking for ways to reshape MERCOSUR and develop new partnerships including with the United States. Despite being a founding member of MERCOSUR, the bloc’s protectionist policies and lack of value-added supply chains have made it hard for any impactful trade agreements outside of MERCOSUR. This has resulted in Uruguay demonstrating interest in pursuing economic relationships outside the bloc.

Among such engagements stands China, which has become Uruguay’s top buyer of goods. Uruguay also joined the Belt-and-Road initiative in 2018, with the promise of completing projects like water ports, highways, and railroad infrastructure. Chinese companies have been involved in petroleum, mining, and agriculture. Uruguay has been negotiating a TFA with China since 2021, but a bilateral trade agreement would go against MERCOSUR’s current rules. Uruguay is looking for ways to renegotiate MERCOSUR’s rule regarding bilateral trade restrictions; if successful, Uruguay could become the “front door” of economic integration between China and the four Mercosur economies, allowing China’s influence in the region to potentially increase.

Like many of its Latin neighbors, Uruguay’s economy was significantly hit by the COVID-19 pandemic, with its GDP contracting 6.1 percent in 2020. Partly due to an effective vaccination campaign, its economy bounced back in 2021, registering 4.4 percent growth in 2021; however, half of Uruguay’s vaccines came from China, partially because China was willing to move quickly to offer them. With help from China and the West, Uruguay achieved an 82 percent vaccination rate.

There are many areas of opportunity where Uruguay and United States could pursue a deeper economic engagement. Technology is one such sector. The United States has purchased Uruguayan IT services, buying $655 million of Uruguayan IT exports in 2019. Financial technology or FinTech industries have proliferated during the pandemic. Uruguay’s emerging technology sector is going to be a big part of the country’s future.

Another sector that has good potential is pharmaceuticals. Uruguay has a highly qualified workforce, excellent infrastructure and a strong intellectual property rights regime. Uruguay should be a major pharmaceutical hub and could be a country that the world turns to produce massive amounts of high-quality vaccines to confront a future global pandemic (yes, sadly, there will be another one at some point). This could be an area for public-private partnership.

Uruguay is a politically and financially stable country, creating a safe, and low-risk climate for foreign investment. As such, more than 120 U.S. owned companies operate in Uruguay. Uruguay and the United States also have signed several mutual agreements including the Open Skies Agreement, the Science and Technology Agreement, a Customs Mutual Assistance Agreement, and a Memorandum of Understanding Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency. The latest TIFA agreement between Uruguay and the United States included discussions on high labor standards and the importance of environmental protections – Uruguay affirmed improving trade facilitation, regulatory practices, anti-corruption, and digital trade.

Uruguay has the stability, marketability, and credibility to be a global value chain contributor in the context of “near shoring” or “allied shoring.”

Given the lack of a free trade agreement with the United States, Uruguay is not in the first tier of countries that is mentioned in discussions about near shoring. Uruguay’s current arrangements with MERCOSUR are getting in the way. Sooner or later, the issues with MERCOSUR will be addressed.

Like Ecuador, Uruguay would like a free trade agreement with the United States; however, the Biden administration has not expressed interest in pursuing such a deal anytime soon. Republicans — in partnership with free-trade Democrats and Democrats who care about the hemisphere — should work together to ensure that Uruguay and Ecuador join the short list of countries that the Biden administration is contemplating for free trade agreements during its first term.

# Critical Ground

## Top Level

### \*\*\*Gilderhus

#### In 1996, Mark Gilderhus wrote a literature review of the most relevant critical scholarship surrounding the US/Latin America relationship. Each of these books is heavily cited to this day by more current critical scholarship. This section does a line by line of the books referenced in this article and identifies in green highlighting references for current critical theory articles citing those works.

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### Example AFF – Maroonage

#### We believe the Latin America topic presents a unique opportunity for critical teams to engage, across differing levels of topic engagement.

#### The prior Latin America paper submitted identified one possible K affirmative. We are including that here: An example could be the affirmative drawing ties between the legacy of maroonages linked between the US and countries such as Brazil as an alternative means of organizing that criticizes current democratic structures in both places and alternatively affirming the proliferation of maroon communities as a form of true democracy.

Blesdoe’17 (Ph.D. Geography, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 2016 M.A. Geography, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 2013. “Marronage as a Past and Present Geography in the Americas” pgs. 34-47. 2017 <https://muse.jhu.edu/article/650801/pdf>) NAE

In Brazil, maroon communities were called “quilombos,” a word of African origin that came to have significance across the whole of South America’s largest colony. The ubiquity of quilombos was the result of the fact that slavery in Brazil extended throughout the entirety of the colonial and national territory (Moura 1993, p 5–6). Found wherever there was slavery, quilombos represented some of the greatest fears held by the slave-holding elites of Brazilian society (Fiabani 2005). The reality of quilombo communities was so formidable that a 19th century Brazilian slave owner described the settlements as “a plague spread to every corner and without remedy. . .[where] neither adventurers nor discoverers could penetrate” (Moura 1993, p 5 my translation). This quote evidences one of the central features of quilombos—the ability for these communities to defend themselves against systemic, racist violence. The “adventurers” and “discoverers” mentioned in the quote were those actors whose activities led to the usurpation of indigenous lands and the enslavement of Blacks in the mines and plantations of pre-abolition Brazil. That quilombos were spaces that prevented the spread of these relations is indicative of the significance that quilombos had for the oppressed sectors of society. Quilombos provided an alternative to the brutality and domination that typified pre-abolition Brazil. That quilombos were so common further meant that “the black maroon, the quilombola, therefore, appeared as a signal of permanent rebelliousness against the system that enslaved him [sic]” (Moura 1993, p 11 my translation). While quilombos were widespread across the Brazilian landscape, they were all unique in their composition, spatial extent, and subsistence practices. Mountain ranges, swamps, forests, and arid plains all comprised quilombo topographies, while Clóvis Moura names seven “fundamental” types of quilombos: agricultural, extractivist, mercantile, mining, pastoral, service, and predatory settlements (Moura 1993, p 32–33). Nevertheless, it is true that some quilombos remain more famous than others, even in the present. Specifically, Palmares is generally held up as the quintessential quilombo. Palmares, located in the present-day states of Alagoas and Pernambuco, was founded somewhere between 1600 and 1606, lasted until 1695, and is estimated to have had upwards of twenty-thousand inhabitants at its peak (Kent 1965, p 173). Aside from its longevity and high number of members, Palmares is famous for its military prowess and ultimately tragic end. Facing constant aggressions from both Dutch and Portuguese militaries, the people of Palmares were forced to constantly defend their territory, such that from 1672–1694, the quilombo was facing a Portuguese military expedition every fifteen months. In 1695, Palmares was defeated by a Portuguese force of six thousand soldiers who laid siege to the quilombo for forty-two days, thus ending the existence of the famous community (Kent 1965, p 162). Despite the variability present among the different quilombos, what remained constant throughout all of them was the intransigent insistence on living life free from the violence and domination that typified slave society. By bringing together runaway slaves, free Blacks, indigenous peoples, and poor whites, quilombos created territories that were fundamentally at odds with the hierarchies created in Western society and imposed on the Brazilian landscape. These communities showed that the most oppressed components of Brazilian society were both willing and able to create ways of life that rejected the violent ordering to which Brazilian elites sought to subject the masses. In short, what all quilombolas sought was a radical break with dominant Brazilian society and the creation of a new way of relating to the world. By demonstrating that the “invisible” sectors of society could create viable territories, quilombos ushered in some of Brazil’s first Black Geographies. During the late 20th century, Black Brazilian activists drew on this legacy of struggle to articulate their dissatisfaction with the ingrained racism of Brazilian society, to demand explicit rights in the new Constitution of 1988, and to create a common language of territorial struggle among the oppressed sectors of society (Covin 2006). marronage’s significance in 20th century brazil In the late 1970s and 1980s, the Brazilian Black Movement—a coalition of disparate social movements and activists— mobilized against the country’s Military Dictatorship, which had seized power in a 1964 coup d’état. The Military Dictatorship prided itself on the idea of the Racial Democracy—the notion that Brazil was a land of racial tolerance and harmony.3 The government sought to propagate this notion to the extent that it forbade discussion of race or racial inequality under penalty of sedition (Alberto 2011, p 249). Despite the government’s insistence on domestically and internationally projecting the image of a racially harmonious nation, Brazil’s Black Movement sought to address the realities of racial violence in the country. In their efforts to create momentum behind their demand that Brazil, as a nation, confront its systemic racism, the Black Movement drew on figures of Black struggle to whom Brazilians could look and with whom they could identify. The Movement attempted to unite Black Brazilians behind a common identity rooted in the memory of slavery and resistance to its continuing effects (Rios 2012, p 55). Rejecting the fallacy of the Racial Democracy, which they saw as serving to silence discourse on racial inequality, this movement argued that Brazil remained steeped in racism. The Movement demonstrated these problems by pointing to the empirical violence faced by Afro-Brazilians, such as police harassment, access to and treatment within the workplace, access to education, and political representation. Not content to simply critique the problems faced by Black Brazilians, the Black Movement sought to celebrate Black struggle and highlight both the potential for, and reality of, Black political subjectivity. They drew on the spatial figure of Palmares—Brazil’s most famous quilombo— to re-define Brazilian history and who they considered true national heroes. By acknowledging Palmares as a quilombo community and historical figures like Zumbi (Palmares’ last leader) and Luiza Mahim (a Muslim slave leader and participant in the famous 1835 Malê Revolt) as Black heroes, the Black Movement celebrated territories and individuals that lived and died fighting anti-Black violence (Rios 2012, p 53–54). By commemorating the struggles of those that gave their lives fighting racial domination and constructing autonomous Black spaces, the Movement demonstrated the continued relevance of Black resistance and creativity amidst a racist society. Like Palmares, Zumbi, and Luiza Mahim, the Black Movement argued that Black Brazilians needed to continually fight the racist elements of society. Quilombos and quilombo leaders provided a legacy on which Black Brazilians could draw nearly a century after slavery had been abolished. A new kind of national Black identity was formed in Brazil during this time. This identity at once called attention to the inherent racism of the Racial Democracy and Brazilian society and created a language around which Blacks from all around Brazil could organize. Brazil’s Black Movement used a variety of methods and media through which to defend and valorize Black life. From the “black protests,” which sought to take back public space and make the lived realities of Afro-Brazilians visible to the country (Rios 2012, p 43), to the focus on rural Black communities who evidenced unique forms of subsistence and governance (French 2006, p 341), to the demand that the newly emerging Brazilian government recognize the legacies of structural racism in the country, Brazil’s Black Movement of the late 20th century made Black life a central issue in Brazilian society. Abdias do Nascimento—a leading figure in the Black Movement—named this approach “quilombismo,” which he defined as the “erection of a society founded on justice, equality and respect for all human beings; on freedom; a society whose intrinsic ature makes economic or racial exploitation impossible” (Nascimento 1980b, p 160). For Nascimento, quilombismo took account of the violence and destruction done in the name of progress and modernity and rooted itself in the liberation of those peoples that suffered as a result of this devastation (Nascimento 1980b, p 148). In short, quilombismo signified creating spaces of life and freedom through the active agency of those considered subhuman. 20th century quilombismo was the continuation of the Black Geographies initiated centuries prior. This required paying attention to the plight of indigenous groups as well as recognizing that Brazil defined itself on de-valorizing the country’s African heritage (Nascimento 1980b, p 141–142). Above all, this meant establishing spaces and subjectivities that not only celebrated, but propagated Black life. Through the organizing efforts of the Black Movement and placing the language of quilombismo in national discourse, the idea of the quilombo came to have significant effects for Brazilian Blacks as Brazil transitioned to civilian rule.

### Example AFF – Indigenous World Engagement

#### The United States has a long history of violent conquest, genocide, and mass displacement that pushed Latin America and its people to a realm of subservience and erasure. US-Latin American relations are fractured by a past and present of colonization and imperialist ambition.

#### From the countless “broken treaties” and wars waged, to the waving of Thomas Jefferson’s pen which unilaterally robbed subjects of their homes and will to life. Attempts at diplomatic engagement only further US soft power within the region – as the Western Man’s desire to be “Save” and “Fix that which is broken” is sutured in the fabric of their paradigm

Sophie **Mackin 22**, Media Analyst at Teneo who graduated from Bates College receiving a bachelor’s in political science and government, “Evaluating the Role of Race in Foreign Policymaking: U.S. Public Diplomacy in Latin America during Kennedy’s Alliance for Progress”, Scholarly Communication and Research at Bates – Honors Thesus, May 2, 2022, 4/2/24, AND?

This thesis examines how racial assumptions influenced **U.S. public diplomacy in Latin America** during the Alliance for Progress program in the early 1960s. **As a soft power mechanism**, public diplomacy aims to shape the mindsets of a targeted group by appealing to their cultural values and creating a receptive environment to promote certain ideas. However, **the** identities and **beliefs of** the **policymakers** behind this work often **define the methods** they choose **and the impact they** can **have**. This thesis thus grapples with the question of how the U.S. balances its formal foreign policy positions with more informal forces, such as **race, identity, and culture**, that **are woven into institutions and public thought**. I analyzed internal documents from the United States Information Agency (USIA) archives as well as memorandums from the Kennedy administration and Department of State to gain insight into the assumptions motivating foreign policy decisions in Latin America. Then, I evaluated ten USIA films to compare their themes with those in the internal correspondences and research. Although overt expressions of white supremacy are no longer present in these sources, I found that ideas about modernization and the exceptionalism of the U.S. model, which are still inherently tied to whiteness, remain. I argue that this framing is a response to the movements to rearticulate racial identity domestically and internationally during the 1960s. **These findings show** that **while U.S. foreign policy shifts as cultural norms evolve, core institutions of U.S. identity have withstood these changes**. RACE & U.S.-LATIN AMERICAN RELATIONS Race, Rhetoric, & U.S. Domestic Policy regarding Latinx Immigrants Peter Brimelow wrote in his book Alien Nation that “race is destiny in American politics,” and he believed that “any change in the racial balance must obviously be fraught with consequences for the survival and success of the American nation.”53 Overtly racist thinkers like Brimelow have been espousing these ideas about preserving whiteness in the United States and associating whiteness with success since America’s inception. Nativism and fearful attitudes toward immigrants are outcomes of this pervasive white supremacy. As one of the closest 52 Gordon, "Racing U.S. Foreign Policy," 14-15. 53 Peter Brimelow, Alien Nation: Common Sense About America's Immigration Disaster, New York, NY: Random House, 1995: 264. 26 neighbors to the United States, Latin America, particularly Mexico, is consistently incorporated into domestic discourse about immigrant “invasion,” and when the border is discussed using the terms like “controlling” the “swarms” of migrants, people are almost always referring to the southern border with Mexico as opposed to the border with Canada, a distinction that is driven by racism. During the Cold War in the 1980s, surveys of public opinion about immigration in **the U.S. rated** mainly **Europeans as “good for this country,”** **while those “bad for this country”** were Cubans, Haitians, Puerto Ricans, Vietnamese, Koreans, and Mexicans.54 Ongoing domestic discourse about Latin Americans fueled this narrative that they were “bad for this country.” For example, nativists have argued that “Latino and black immigrants are, at least in the short run, putting some downward pressure on the distribution of intelligence.”55 Latinx immigrants and migrants in the U.S. were frequently associated with qualities such as laziness, indolence, tendencies for drug and alcohol abuse, disease, inability to assimilate, “primitiveness,” and animalistic characteristics. This racialized rhetoric has been weaponized throughout history and utilized often in the context of immigration debates about whether or not Latinx people were deserving of citizenship and resources. These beliefs have been so prevalent among the U.S. politicians and the broader public that they have defined the U.S.-Latin American relationship from a foreign policy standpoint. Latinx immigrants posed a unique challenge for the U.S. racial hierarchical system, as they did not neatly fall into a specific racial category. The treatment of Mexicans in the U.S. is perhaps the most well-documented example for the context of the trajectory of Latinx racial categorization, given the proximity of Mexico to the U.S. and their complicated relationship 54 Charles Jaret, “Troubled by Newcomers: Anti-Immigrant Attitudes and Action during Two Eras of Mass Immigration to the United States,” Journal of American Ethnic History 18, no. 3 (1999): 13. 55 Richard J. Herrnstein and Charles Murray. The Bell Curve. New York, NY: Free Press, 1994: 360-361. 27 throughout history. After the annexation of northern regions of Mexico in the mid-nineteenth century, this issue came to light almost immediately. The U.S. government did not create a category for the Mexican people who now lived in U.S. territory, so sociocultural as well as legal and political confusion was the result. Mexicans were sometimes seen as white, but because of their indigenous ancestry, they were not classified as “Caucasian.” Most Mexicans were still subject to segregationist laws and excluded from “white” spaces.56 Eventually, border states began to make their own laws to specifically target Mexicans, labeling them as indigenous and denying them rights. By the twentieth century, the question of the “race” of Mexicans in the United States became a topic of frequent discussion, as Mexican workers were exploited for their labor, particularly during the wartime eras. The U.S. Commission on Immigration in 1911 described Mexicans as “notoriously indolent and unprogressive in all matters of education and culture” and fit only for “the lowest grade of nonassimilable native-born races.” The report also noted that their usefulness as laborers was “much impaired by [their] lack of ambition and [their] proneness to the constant use of intoxicating liquor.”57 Senator Dillingham’s report on the Commission even went so far as to say that when “Mexican laborers come into contact with native or with European immigrants, they are looked upon as inferiors… thus, it is evident that in the case of the Mexican he is less desirable as a citizen.”58 Mexicans **were racialized through this type of discourse, classified as inferior and placed on the lower rungs of the racial hierarchy**. 56 Martha Menchaca, “Chicano Indianism: A Historical Account of Racial Repression in the United States,” American Ethnologist 20, no. 3 (1993): 596. 57 U.S. Commission on Immigration. “Immigrants in industries: Part 25: Japanese and other immigrant races in the Pacific Coast and Rocky Mountain States: Agriculture.” Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1911: 59, 94, 110. 58 William Paul Dillingham, “Report of the Immigration Commission, vol. 1.” Washington DC: Government Printing Office, 1911: 6901-691. 28 The 1924 Immigration Act, though it did not restrict Mexican immigration, also invited much debate about the role and cultural perception of Mexicans in the United States. During a 1928 congressional hearing on Western Hemisphere immigration, a member of the Committee on Immigration and Naturalization claimed that Mexicans’ “minds run to nothing higher than animal functions – eat, sleep, and sexual debauchery” and ranted about their “filthy children with faces plastered with flies, disease, lice, human filth, stench, promiscuous fornication, bastardy, lounging, apathetic peons and lazy squaws, beans and dried chili, liquor, general squalor, and envy and hatred of the gringo.”59 In addition to the blatant racism in statements like these, fear of racial mixture was a driving factor of these characterizations, and the racists and nativists in Congress were concerned with the possibility of dwindling racial purity.60 Mexicans, and Latin Americans in general, may not have had a clear racial categorization or designation on the U.S. hierarchy, but regardless, they were never considered to be purely “white,” and that was a threat. As another example at the Western Hemisphere immigration hearings, California representative John Garner also read a letter sent to him by eugenicist C.M. Goethe who spells out this fear of racial mixture and its supposed threat to American prosperity. Goethe wrote, “Does our failure to restrict Mexican immigration spell the downfall of our Republic? Athens could not maintain the brilliancy of the Golden Age of Pericles when hybridization of her citizenry began. Rome fell when the old patrician families lost their race consciousness and interbred with servile stocks.”61 While this is an extreme example, this type of racist rhetoric that associated the loss of civilization with racial mixture was not uncommon.62 For this reason, 59 Roy L. Garis, "Mexican Immigration: A Report by Roy L. Garis for the Information of Congress." Western Hemisphere Immigration, Committee on Immigration and Naturalization, 71st Congress 2d session, 1930: 436. 60 Leobardo F. Estrada, “Chicanos in the United States: A History of Exploitation and Resistance,” Daedalus 110, no. 2 (1981): 116. 61 Garis, "Mexican Immigration: A Report by Roy L. Garis for the Information of Congress," 165. 62 Natalia Molina, “The power of racial scripts: What the history of Mexican immigration to the United States teaches us about relational notions of race,” Latino Studies 8, no. 2 (2010): 164. 29 domestic conversations about Mexicans and Mexican-Americans were often geared toward birth rates and reproduction during the first half of the twentieth century.63 By the 1950s and the beginning stages of the Cold War, racism and nativism reached new heights as international tensions rose and fears of the “other” mounted. In 1954, “Operation Wetback” was launched, and the militarized U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service used its resources to organize mass arrests of Mexicans by working with state and local law enforcement. “Mexican looking” people were targeted in this effort, and racial profiling was institutionally accepted. As a result of “Operation Wetback,” 3.8 million Mexicans and MexicanAmericans were apprehended and deported over the next five years.64 The 1960s, however, marked a turning point in terms of the rhetoric about race and immigration in the U.S. as the Civil Rights Movement took form. The Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965 was a product of the mass organizing for civil rights and the effort to dismantle the racialized national origins quota system instituted in the 1924 Act. The 1965 Act eliminated those quotas and created an equal distribution system for visas with no more than seven percent given to any nation in a given year.65 The 1965 Act was successful in diversifying the immigrant population in the U.S., but Elizabeth Keyes argues that this legislation introduced new rhetoric of “worthiness,” which undermines the goals of equality. “The criteria for worthiness that dominate today’s rhetoric of reform are, I argue, race-blind in name only,” Keyes explains. The rhetoric of worthiness excludes the group that Keyes calls the “super undocumented,” many of whom are Latinx. The new racialized narrative became that if you 63 Molina, “The power of racial scripts: What the history of Mexican immigration to the United States teaches us about relational notions of race,” 165. 64 Estrada, “Chicanos in the United States: A History of Exploitation and Resistance,” 120. 65 Elizabeth Keyes, "Race and Immigration, Then and Now: How to Shift to Worthiness Undermines the 1965 Immigration Law's Civil Rights Goals," Howard Law Journal 57, no. 3 ( 2014): 906. 30 didn’t have documentation, it was the result of your personal failings and your undeservingness or unworthiness of citizenship.66 Race & U.S. Foreign Policy toward Latin America The **racist discourse** present **domestically toward** ~~Latinx~~ **[Latine]** immigrants and workers **has carried over to U.S. foreign policy approaches toward Latin America**. **Racism and paternalistic ideals have largely characterized the U.S. mindset toward Latin America since the days of colonialism.** The accounts of colonists, as well as merchants and diplomats, from the early nineteenth century speak to the legacy of racial stereotypes and subordination of Latin America. Michael Hunt describes the stereotypes associated with Latinos as belonging to four primary categories: servility, misrule, lethargy, and bigotry.67 Importantly, “the darker the complexion of the people in question, the sharper was the attack,” Hunt explained.68 During this era, Latin males were seen as superstitious, obstinate, lazy, cowardly, vain, pretentious, dishonest, unclean, impractical, and corrupt, while Latin women were seen as damsels in distress that could be saved and introduced to civilized life.69 By the mid to late nineteenth century, the U.S. image of Latin America had morphed, transforming elements of previous racist and sexist thinking into a more outright paternalism: the Latino as the Black child. These images aimed to justify foreign policy decisions like the continued use of the Monroe Doctrine, dubbing the Western hemisphere as the United States’ sphere of interest, as well as U.S. domination of Cuba and Puerto Rico in later years.70 66 Keyes, "Race and Immigration, Then and Now: How to Shift to Worthiness Undermines the 1965 Immigration Law's Civil Rights Goals," 926. 67 Hunt, Ideology and U.S. Foreign Policy, 59. 68 Ibid. 69 Hunt, Ideology and U.S. Foreign Policy, 59-60. 70 Hunt, Ideology and U.S. Foreign Policy, 61. 31 Similar to the ways that domestic discourse about Latin Americans emphasized primitive, animalistic qualities and an overall lack of “civilization,” Fredrick Pike argues that **the issue of “civilization” has been at the core of the U.S.-Latin American relationship**. **U.S.** citizens **see themselves as** “prime exemplars of all that it means to be civilized” and **leaders in moral, spiritual, and cultural advancement**, **while Latin Americans are “trapped in a primitive state of nature**, the victims rather than the masters of nature.”71 The child, therefore, became a metaphor for this gap in civilization. Pike argues that the construction of this civilization mindset toward Latin America stemmed in part from the threat of racial mixing, but also the myth of the frontier. The frontier image was used to draw a line between those who belonged to the U.S. identity and those who did not, such as Mexicans and indigenous people; beyond the “frontier” was seen as undeveloped, unmastered, and essentially, uncivilized wilderness. This distinction led to a plethora of racial stereotypes and rhetoric of “savagery.”72 According to historian Frederick Jackson Turner, the frontier is the meeting point between savagery and civilization. Even to this day, for many people, hearing the word “frontier” brings to mind Turner, who read his famous “frontier thesis” at a meeting of the American Historical Association in 1893. Turner’s frontier thesis fostered further sentiments of American exceptionalism and encouraged continued territorial expansion. “The peculiarity of American institutions is, the fact that they have been compelled to adapt themselves to the changes of an expanding people to the changes involved in crossing a continent, in winning a wilderness, and in developing at each area of this progress out of the primitive economic and political conditions of the frontier into the complexity of city life,” he writes.73 The primitiveness 71 Fredrick B. Pike, The United States and Latin America: Myths and Stereotypes of Civilization and Nature, Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1992: xiii. 72 Pike, The United States and Latin America: Myths and Stereotypes of Civilization and Nature, 111. 73 Frederick Jackson Turner, 1893, “The Significance of the Frontier in American History.” National Humanities Center, 1. 32 of the lands beyond the frontier is consistently emphasized in his speech. Turner encourages those at the meeting to pursue “continuous touch with the simplicity of primitive society” and “furnish the forces dominating American character.”74 Ultimately, Turner’s assertions are representative of U.S. identity, its tradition of celebrating white male territorial conquest, and the idea that expansion was an essential element of societal progress. Between 1845 and 1854, the United States acquired Mexico’s northern frontier, and the four bordering states, California, Arizona, New Mexico, and Texas, gained large numbers of Mexican residents. After the Mexican-American War, the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo was meant to guarantee political rights to Mexicans in these ceded territories, but ultimately, American legislators refused to grant Mexicans full citizenship, violating the treaty.75 In the period that followed, there was much debate within state legislatures and courts about the rights that Mexicans would be afforded. In California, legislators at their constitutional convention in 1849 concluded that Mexicans would be given the right to vote if they were “white,” but did not define what it meant to be a “white Mexican.” Local entities were tasked with interpreting that category on a circumstantial basis, leaving significant room for discrimination and inequality.76 By the 1890s, the United States was grappling with how to articulate its justifications for expansionism in Latin America and what its role there would be. As the twentieth century began, U.S. foreign policymakers were faced with the tension between previous strategies of land grabbing, race exterminating, and annexing, and newer approaches to domination through naval base placement, overseas investment, and “moral” reform.77 Because the U.S. majority viewed 74 Turner, “The Significance of the Frontier in American History,” 2. 75 Menchaca, “Chicano Indianism: A Historical Account of Racial Repression in the United States,” 584. 76 Menchaca, “Chicano Indianism: A Historical Account of Racial Repression in the United States,” 589. 77 Jules R. Benjamin, “The Framework of U.S. Relations with Latin America in the Twentieth Century: An Interpretive Essay,” Diplomatic History 11, no. 2 (1987): 94. 33 Latin Americans as backward, lawless, and rebellious, policymakers shifted their focus to ways they could “Americanize” or “civilize” these populations.78 **The racism embedded in U.S. assumptions about Latin America ultimately propelled the implementation of a foreign policy that utilized both military force as well as economic manipulation to reach expansionist goals in the region.** Into the twentieth century and the first World War, the narrative of American greatness and superiority was bolstered even more, with a growing motivation to export the U.S. model abroad. The U.S. had become the center of global capitalism and a leader in modern industrialization after World War I. The U.S. was pouring resources into Latin America to expand its influence and address the cycle of hostility and instability that their frequent armed interventions in the region caused.79 The high costs of this approach, however, eventually prompted President Coolidge to ease the militarized interpretation of the Monroe Doctrine and instead “leave those countries as undisturbed as possible to work out their own salvation.”80 Odd Arne Westad discusses how themes of “ungratefulness” and “wasted opportunities” characterized early twentieth-century U.S. views of Latin America. This rhetoric emulates the domestic rhetoric that associated Mexicans in the U.S. with laziness and unwillingness to work hard. U.S. leaders were frustrated that these Latin American countries weren’t following suit with the American model; in the eyes of Washington, Latin American leaders were neglecting the offer of “liberty and progress” that the U.S. could provide.81 In the mid-1920s, a State Department instructor even told new envoys to Latin American nations that the responses they 78 Benjamin, “The Framework of U.S. Relations with Latin America in the Twentieth Century: An Interpretive Essay,” 95. 79 Michael H. Hunt, The American Ascendancy: How the United States Gained and Wielded Global Dominance, Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 2007: 106. 80 Hunt, The American Ascendancy: How the United States Gained and Wielded Global Dominance, 107. 81 Odd Arne Westad, The Global Cold War, Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2007: 23. 34 were receiving to U.S. intervention was “only to be expected in a world where gratitude is rarely accorded to the teacher, the doctor, or the policeman, and we have been all three. But it may be that in time they will come to see the United States with different eyes, and to have for her something of respect and affection with which a man regards the instructor of his youth and a child looks upon the parent who has molded his character.”82 By the 1950s, the “good neighbor” mindset toward Latin America was starting to fade, and the U.S. focused on supporting military regimes, conducting covert CIA operations, and deploying large numbers of U.S. forces in Latin America. By the time President Kennedy took office in 1961, he realized that the covert operation approach used by his predecessors was ineffective, and he proposed the “Alliance of Progress,” which was the first U.S.-funded development program to prevent the spread of communism in the Third World.83 The Alliance of Progress was dedicated to what Kennedy described as the hemisphere’s common mission and involved funding inter-American organizations to address social goals in Latin America such as combating disease and poverty, supporting free-trade, as well as improving existing aid programs.84 In the spring of 1961, Kennedy’s adviser Arthur Schlesinger reported that the administration’s goal was to facilitate a middle class revolution in Latin America through economic modernization and “necessities of modern technical society as constitutional government, honest public administration, a responsible party system, a rational land system, an efficient system of taxation.”85 Notably, Westad points out that the underlying reasoning behind 82 Lars Schoultz, Beneath the United States: A History of US Policy Toward Latin America, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998: 386. 83 Hunt, The American Ascendancy: How the United States Gained and Wielded Global Dominance, 212. 84 Michael Dunne, “Kennedy's Alliance for Progress: countering revolution in Latin America,” International Affairs 89, no. 6 (2013): 1319. 85 Westad, The Global Cold War, 35. 35 **this mindset is clearly the U.S. belief that in order for Latin America to develop, it has to replicate American systems.**

#### The fracturing continues, as the State’s neoliberal imperatives zaps Latin America of their resources and land. From coercive tactics in Cuba and Venezuela to prop up US Capital, to the destruction of social structures that provided crucial aid for Latin American citizens – Every action by the US is coded in the desire for the commodification of the subjugated

William **Chao 22**, Fordham University Graduate in International Studies – IR and Affairs, “Consequences of U.S. Intervention in Socialist Latin America”, Fordham Research Commons Senior Theses, pg. 2-3, 17-25, May, 21, 2022, https://research.library.fordham.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1094&context=international\_senior, 4/11/24, AND?

This thesis seeks to show the harmful effects of contemporary interventionist attempts by the United States on socialist Latin American countries such as Cuba and Venezuela. **The U**nited **S**tates **continues to meddle with the politics and economies of various countries with the goal of establishing a new government that is favorable to** the **capitalist practices** of the United States. By looking at two key moments: the Covid-19 outbreak in Cuba and the aftermath of the 2018 Venezuelan presidential elections, it becomes clear to see the damage done by **harsh embargoes** **and U.S. support** of use **for military violence against the socialist governments.** Chao 3 II. Introduction The year is 1962, Cuban president and communist revolutionary Fidel Castro, stands before one million Cubans at the main square in the capital Havana, to address the future of the nation in the aftermath of the Bay of Pigs invasion and economic blockade from the United States. He defiantly states: “No nation in Latin America is weak because each forms part of a family of 200 million brothers, who suffer the same miseries, who harbor the same sentiments, who have the same enemy, who dream about the same better future.”1 His speech encapsulates the sentiments of every Latin American nation that has been exploited by the interventionism of the United States. Almost sixty years later, many Latin American nations are still fighting against the imperialist tactics of the United States government, with Cuba and Venezuela being the most vocal about their anti-imperialist stance. As a result, both nations have been labeled terrorist states and subject to harsh sanctions and US backed insurrections. The constant political and social instability fueled by the United States has greatly affected the lives of citizens as it fuels the scarcity of essential resources such as food, medicine, and a steady source of income. It also forces the socialist governments of Cuba and Venezuela to focus on stabilizing their nations instead of building upon their well renowned social programs. Currently, US interventionist tactics have exacerbated the humanitarian crisis in both Cuba and Venezuela. Demonstrations in Cuba have emerged because the embargo has limited access to supplies needed to combat and treat covid-19. In Venezuela, the United States continues to dispute the results of the last presidential election while refusing to acknowledge the socialist president, Nicolas Maduro. Additionally, the US has backed coup attempts from 1 Castro, Fidel. 1962. “Second Declaration of Havana” Chao 4 opposition leaders in Venezuela such as Juan Guaido to weaken the rule of the socialist party, only causing more unrest in the area. This thesis seeks to showcase the disastrous consequences of contemporary imperialist tactics of intervention from the United States such as sanctions and backing coups. **These tactics harm the potential prosperity of Latin America**. 1. Dictatorship’s Alliance with the U.S. Venezuela is a country rich in oil that has captured the attention of U.S. politicians and corporations since the early 20th century. This South American country had a history of being ruled by dictators for decades going all the way back to fabled national hero, Simon Bolivar. 30 The discovery of oil in 1914 completely changed Venezuela’s economy and gave financial leverage to the brutal dictators. The United States supported the rule of one such dictator, Juan Vicente Gomez, who allowed US oil companies to write Venezuela’s petroleum legislation in 1921. Various state officials in the United States invested in or were employed by oil corporations, creating a need to expand the US sphere of influence to protect their capital.31 Companies like Exxon, Standard Oil, and Gulf dominated Venezuelan politics by advocating for 31 Garry, Crude Interventions, 168 30 Bushnell, The Last Dictatorship, 65 29 Chomsky, A History of the Cuban Revolution, 89 28 McPherson, A Short History of U.S., 149,152 Chao 18 politicians who were friendly to U.S. corporate interests. U.S. corporations also derailed any efforts to redistribute profits from the oil industry back into Venezuela. They also took measures to prevent oil from being nationalized and limit the power of OPEC; a coalition of oil-rich countries who would determine the price for their oil instead of western capitalists.32 The fluctuating price of oil from the 1970-1980s left the Venezuelan economy in ruins as the nation kept accruing more debt. Loans from the IMF and World Bank were spent on improving oil refineries while 43.9% of the population was living under the poverty line by the end of the 1980s.33 The neoliberal economic reforms along with a decrease in the standard of living angered thousands of Venezuelan citizens who would take to the streets of the capital, Caracas in a protest known as the Caracazo in 1989. This movement spread throughout Venezuela before the government stepped in and put down protestors, with a reported 287 deaths.34 While the uprising was unsuccessful, it gave way for a popular military major to bring social and economic change to the struggling nation. 2. The Chavez Era After years of economic stagnation, Hugo Chavez rose to popularity with a strong anti-imperialist stance and leftist policies such as wealth redistribution to the poor. After leading an unsuccessful coup against the Venezuelan government in 1992, he was imprisoned which garnered him nationwide popularity and recognition. His left-wing policies and educational background in public universities helped him gain support from the lower to middle class citizens, eventually leading to his election as president in 1998.35 The Chavez administration implemented a multitude of economic and government reforms to address the needs of the 35 Garry, 176-177 34 Garry, 175 33 Garry, 174 32 Garry, 171-172 Chao 19 Venezuelan people. These new reforms would reduce poverty in half and raise the country’s GDP after years of economic stagnation.36 The implementation of left-wing policies did not excite everyone, especially the upper classes in Venezuela who profited from the privatization of Venezuelan oil. Powerful politicians and businessmen like Pedro Carmona (CEO of Fedecamaras) and Nestor Gonzalez (Army General) pressured the socialist party to reverse their policies while they secretly supported right-wing parties. Opposition groups also used private Venezuelan and U.S. news corporations to portray Chavez as a tyrant looking to consolidate more power. 37 These tactics rallied protestors to force Chavez to resign and on April 11, 2002, began marching towards the presidential palace. Opposition groups would be met by Chavez supporters who had learned of their plans to attempt a coup. Fearing another deadly catastrophe such as the Caracazo in the 90’s, Chavez sent military guards to calm the situation. The protestors ignored the military’s demands to turn away and instead kept pushing towards the palace, ultimately leading to 10 deaths and dozens injured.38 The pushback from US media and opposition politicians provided the perfect opportunity to oust Chavez as president. One day later, on April 12, an armed group composed of sects of the Venezuelan military led by Pedro Carmona stormed the presidential palace and held Chavez captive. Carmona’s forces allegedly found a resignation letter signed by Chavez, which allowed him and his men to assume power. 39 The way Carmona took power made many Venezuelans citizens and politicians skeptical as he forbade any pro-Chavez message from being published and dismissed members of parliament with members 39 Garry, 184 38 Garry, Crude Interventions, 183-184 37 Emersberger, 82. 36 Emersberger, Extraordinary Threat: The US Empire, the Media and 20 Years of Coup Attempts in Venezuela, 60-61 Chao 20 of his conservative party. 40 In addition, many of Chavez’ supporters could not believe he stepped down that easily and had a feeling that his “letter of resignation” was forged. In response, supporters and military officials loyal to Chavez organized around the presidential palace and forced his release, allowing him to be reinstated as president on April 14. The aftermath of the two-day long coup saw Chavez asking questions about US involvement in trying to overthrow him. He saw that the two main proponents of fueling opposition groups was the involvement of private/foreign media as well as the United States meeting with resistance leaders such as Carmona before the attempted coup.41 In YEAR, the US State Department denounced any involvement in the coup but acknowledged they had met with opposition leaders and supported their cause.42 3. Destabilizing the Maduro Regime After serving his country for 14 years, Hugo Chavez passed away on March 5, 2013. Before his passing, he had selected Nicolas Maduro as his successor to become party leader in the upcoming 2013 presidential election. This endorsement helped propel him into the presidency as he narrowly defeated Henrique Capriles by 1.8% of the votes.43 Capriles and US media would contest the legitimacy of the elections despite the head of the National Electoral Council in Venezuela coming out to show the transparency in the electoral process with no substantial evidence of election interference.44 The United States also hoped to pressure other nations to not recognize the 2013 elections, but the wave of left-wing governments arising in South America at that time such as Evo Morales in Bolivia and Rafael Correa in Ecuador backed 44 Emersburg, 111-112 43 Emersburg, 111 42 Emersburg, 86 41 Garry, 186 40 Emersburg, 77 Chao 21 Maduro as president. Despite the failed attempts from the United States and Capriles to overthrow the socialist party, the influence of the United States in international politics and media pressured NGOs and other international organizations to portray Venezuela as a nation becoming increasingly authoritarian.45 This false notion propagated by western NGOs and nonprofits allowed the US to place economic sanctions on Venezuela without significant backlash from the international community. In turn, it crippled the Venezuelan economy which was already facing economic instability in the wake of oil prices collapsing. Over the years leading up to the still contested 2018 presidential elections, the United States tightened these sanctions to stir up social unrest to remove Maduro through nationwide protests or in the upcoming election cycle.46 Case Studies A. Cuba during the Covid Era 1. Repercussions of the Economic Blockade Since the signing of the US economic embargo on Cuba by President Eisenhower in 1960, the ruling Cuban communist government has emphasized the importance of economic self-reliance, especially in the wake of the collapse of their former biggest trading partner, the USSR.47 Maintaining a self-reliant economy and mode of production is quite the lofty goal for a small island country that is barred from trading with the United States and any country that has economic or political relations with the US. This left the Soviet Union as the only nation that openly trades with the Cuban government. However, after the collapse of the Soviet Union and 47 Chomsky, A History of the Cuban Revolution, 157. 46 Emersburg, 143 45 Emersburg, 123 Chao 22 its communist satellites in Eastern Europe, Cuba was left with no economic trading partners which created a shortage of resources. Columbia University researchers found that in 1997 access to food, medicine, and other essential commodities became hard to come by for the average to lower income Cuban citizen.48 Lack of economic trading partners and high social spending exhausted the Cuban economy and forced the communist party to find new ways to diversify their financial income. Some of the ways the Cuban government managed to accomplish this is by introducing small amounts of private property ownership, implementation of the US dollar, private businesses, foreign investment, and by refocusing their strategy to promote the resources Cuba has to offer. 49 Tourism would soon become the crux of the economy as the government promoted the island’s natural beauty, low cost of medical supplies, and eased travel restrictions of U.S. citizens. Although the economic reforms brought upon by the Cuban government eased some of the economic troubles the nation was experiencing, it also came along with its fair amount of problems. The introduction of private property and private businesses exacerbated the economic and racial inequalities that Afro-Cubans faced. The Cuban revolution sought to overthrow racial biases and discrimination that were seen in past dictatorships such as under Bautista in the late 1950’s, however, these biases were reinstated through the hiring processes of foreign companies investing in Cuba. The influence of these practices has even affected the way the communist government views racial discrimination. Despite the original goal of the revolution, the Cuban government has given positions to white Cubans to appease investors and tourists.50 Racial discrimination is only one area in which foreign investments began affecting the day-to-day 50 Chomsky, 165. 49 Chomsky, A History of the Cuban Revolution, 155-157. 48 Napier, “The Cuban Embargo”, 61. Chao 23 behaviors of the Cuban people as well as Cuban society. **Introducing capitalist practices would lead to an unequal distribution of wealth, something that the revolution criticized under the Bautista regime**. A survey taken in 2000 found that in the private sector in Cuba, light-skinned/white Cubans were more likely to be paid in American dollars compared to Afro-Cubans.51 One consequence of this is the commodification of Afro-Cuban culture within the tourism industry. For example, many cultural aspects of Afro-Cuban culture such as music and dance attracted audiences during the 1990’s when Cuba’s borders were opened to tourists, but never raised the attention of the Cuban government to the increasingly growing racial disparities within the country. Many Afro-Cubans are still relegated to self-employment service jobs such as performance or sex work instead of jobs in the private or government sector. 52 They are forced to commodify their images, bodies, and culture for a foreign clientele that view the Afro-Cuban population as nothing more than a product. The adoption of small amounts of capitalist practices has also hurt the livelihood of many Cubans. For one, it undermined many of the social programs and opportunities laid out by the communist party. Initiatives like the Literacy Campaign and access to state education up to the university level were implemented to ensure that Cuba would be one of the most educated nations in Latin America. Yet, the privatization of certain sectors of the economy such as transportation and hospitality has encouraged citizens to seek jobs in these fields rather than pursue an education to receive a higher salary. 53 Chomsky notes that many Cubans find it more economically viable to become a taxi driver than to become a brain surgeon as they would be paid directly in US dollars from tourists instead of the national currency. 54 The growing tourism 54 Chomsky, 158-159. 53 Garcia, The Cuban Economy, 33. 52 Minority Rights, “Afro-Cubans”. 51 Chomsky, 165. Chao 24 industry also shifted the attention of the government to provide the best experience for visitors over Cuban citizens. Soon enough, Cubans were being treated like second class citizens by the communist government in their own country. The various fields of tourism such as health and medical tourism meant that resources were allocated with foreigners in mind, restricting access to essential treatments from citizens. This divide was most prevalent in laws created by the government concerning relations between Cubans and foreigners. Citizens were banned from entering new hotels and could be punished for being seen interacting with Americans and other tourists.55

#### The Aff is an assault upon hegemonic epistemologies which erase Latine knowledge by forcing the US to critically reevaluate its own subject position, and relationality to Latine culture and forms of knowledge to produce a path of engagement that is built upon collective solidarity that challenges both internal and external colonization.

Ada María **Isasi-Días and** Eduardo **Mendieta 22**, (Ada María Isasi-Díaz was a Cuban-American theologian who served as professor emerita of ethics and theology at Drew University in Madison, New Jersey. As a Hispanic theologian, she was an innovator of Hispanic theology in general and specifically of mujerista theology + Eduardo Mendieta is a Colombian-born Professor of Philosophy at Penn State University, and former acting director of the Rock Ethics Institute. Mendieta's research focuses on Ethics, Political Philosophy, Latinx philosophy, Latin American Philosophy, Critical Theory, Philosophy of Race, and Feminist Philosophy.) “Decolonizing Epistemologies: Latina/o Theology and Philosophy”, Fordham University Press, 2022, file:///Users/culturalsage/Downloads/Ada%20Mar%C3%ADa%20Isasi-D%C3%ADaz%20(editor)\_%20Eduardo%20Mendieta%20(editor)%20-%20Decolonizing%20Epistemologies\_%20Latina\_o%20Theology%20and%20Philosophy%20(2022,%20Fordham%20University%20Press)%20[10.1515\_9780823291366]%20-%20libgen.li.pdf, 4/11/24, AND?

DECOLONIZING EPISTEMOLOGIES Introduction: Freeing Subjugated Knowledge ADA MARI´A ISASI-DI´A Z AND EDUARDO M ENDI ETA Sitting in crowded bleachers amid a sea of Asian faces, our little group stood out like a sore thumb. Two of us were Latinas, one quite pale from a northern Spain ancestry, the other one with a dark cafe´ con leche skin that speaks of her African roots. The third in our group was tall and thin with that light copper skin hue that, together with her sari, indicated her Southern Asian roots. The circus in Shanghai was simply fascinating; we were spectators, but we also were part of the spectacle. Our different phenotypes drew the attention of all those around us, and as we watched and enjoyed the feats of the acrobats, we were watched intensely. It was toward the end of our two-week tour of China, and by then we were somewhat accustomed to the stares and murmuring of the people in the streets when they noticed us. As the lights went on, signaling intermission, we immediately saw them. Across from us, on the other side of the round, sunken stage, there were two men, obviously non-Asians, moving quickly down from the bleachers and walking in our direction. They jostled their way through the crowd, and in no time they were standing before us, greeting us with ample smiles, as if we were long-lost relatives. They were Cuban men who had been sent to work in China and had been in Shanghai for almost a year. ‘‘We could not believe it when we saw you,’’ they said in Spanish, as we effusively shook hands. When we replied also in Spanish, they burst out laughing! ‘‘What luck we have had to find people who look like us among the millions who live in this city,’’ the older one of them said. Our visit was short, for in no time the lights dimmed, and, being 2 ada mar´ı a isasi - d´ı az and eduardo mendieta part of a group with a tight schedule, we could not make plans to see them later. During the music that served as the introduction to the second part of the show, we translated for our friend from Pakistan what the men had said and to explain to her who they were. That night the three of us sat on our beds and talked about what had happened. Myriam helped us with her questions to debrief what it had meant for the two of us Latinas to meet the Cuban men. We reflected on the joy of being recognized, on how it provided us with an affirming sense of self. We spoke about how, for a few minutes, the fact that we were different became of paramount importance, providing us with an opportunity to make contact with others. For once we had experienced being different as good and positive, leading to recognition and appreciation. That we, as Latinas/os living in the United States, are different is most of the time ignored or considered by others to be at best a burden, at worst a threat. Our religions, languages, and cultural practices are perceived to be too different from what is considered the fundamental culture of this nation, commonly referred to as the American Way of Life. We are treated as a problem, although we have been part of the territory occupied by the United States since before the arrival of the European settlers. Today anti-immigration feelings have been fanned to such extremes that about twenty of the states are ready to pass laws that allow for open discrimination against Latinas/os and other immigrant groups. Immigrants today in the United States are seen as a threat. That the majority of us Latinas/os came to live in this country obliged by circumstances in which most of the time the U.S. government has had a hand, or were crossed by the border after the United States took one-third of northern Mexico or appropriated Puerto Rico, means nothing to the dominant group. The fact that in the twenty-first century the movement of peoples across national borders is an intrinsic element of globalization, which is promoted and sustained by the economic system of the United States and other first world countries, is ignored or considered irrelevant in the United States. That the violence in Mexico that spills into the United States is the result of the use of drugs in the United States and that the vast majority of weapons used by the drug cartel come from this side of the border are never taken into consideration; the media never refer to these facts. No one ever mentions the responsibility the U.S. . f r e e i n g s u b j u ga t e d k n o w l e d ge 3 economic system bears for the present economic difficulties being experienced around the world, difficulties that fuel immigration with or without the required documents. The racism that has characterized U.S. society has expanded into what Linda Martı´n Alcoff calls in her essay in this book ‘‘ethnoracism.’’ Institutionalized discrimination was effectively battled in the 1960s, but today in the United States it again raises its head, this time finding a broader target: immigrants at large. The racialization of Latinas/os is at the base of our being marginalized, of being considered incapable of having anything to contribute to society. Our only possibility of survival seems to be to Americanize ourselves, to diminish ourselves, and in the process deprive the United States of the richness that our diversity can contribute to this nation. The dominant society seems to be incapable of decentralizing itself and welcoming the voices of others—a society that itself is formed of immigrants who violently took this land from First Nation peoples, Puerto Ricans, Mexicans, native Hawaiians, and native Alaskans. Faced with this reality, ~~Latina and Latino~~ [**Latine] scholars, as a corrective to the inability of the dominant group to open spaces for and to listen to minoritized and racialized voices, have insisted on privileging epistemologically and hermeneutically experiences and understandings of** ~~Latinas/os~~ [**Latines**] Such insistence, though praised, has met with widespread resistance from the dominant group. Latina/o thinkers, philosophers, and theologians have articulated a critical self-reflexivity that begins with an avowed and explicit identification of the locus of our knowledge and whose understandings we privilege, thus making evident where knowledge is being produced. Latina/o thinkers, aware of the ways in which the dominant society is ignorant of our experiences and ways of understanding, have a rich insight into how such self-ignorance affects us and affects the larger society. **The dominant group**, in contrast, being **blind to its own privilege**, has **created an epistemic hegemony**: an epistemic hegemony that makes it possible for those in the dominant group to ignore or disavow their epistemic privilege. Little or **no effort has been made to facilitate and encourage the elaboration of knowledge that does not use the dominant episteme**, that is, the dominant system of understanding and the ideas that emerge from the experience of the dominant group. **The center continues to hold; it continues to exclude** ~~Latina/o~~ [Latine] epistemology and hermeneutics and, therefore, it continues to oppress. . 4 ada mar´ı a isasi - d´ı az and eduardo mendieta In the fall of 2008, the Drew University Transdisciplinary Theological Colloquium focused on opening a space for marginalized and derogated voices to take center stage, for suppressed knowledge to see the light of day. The colloquium set out to challenge the dominant episteme, not by engaging it—to do so only reinforces it—but by creating a scholarly space that invited Latina/o scholars to elaborate the central elements for a different episteme focused on contributing to the flourishing not only of Latina/o life but of all life. The colloquium focused on and pursued Latina/o knowledge by fostering speaking a different language from the one spoken by the dominant systems of knowledge. The invitation to the colloquium challenged Latina/o scholars to unleash the knowledge that we have—subjugated knowledge—that we whisper at the edges of the academy and society. The colloquium was thought and lived as a safe space of knowing differently and one in which Latinas/os could be agents/subjects in a different way than is authorized by the dominant academic world. The colloquium aimed to go beyond what is considered possible within the reigning understandings and perceptions of knowledge; it facilitated the elaboration of knowledge in terms of the needs of oppressed Latinas/os, the majority of whom are poor. The colloquium, conceived as a revolutionary praxis, rooted its rationale and criteria in the need to unequivocally promote the flourishing of all life—el buen vivir, as Indigenous People of Latin America call it—rather than rooting them in the rules that govern present-day political, social, economic, and religious discourse. A search for our own Latina/o building blocks that make it possible to free subjugated knowledges in order to construct a life-giving episteme—that is what this colloquium set out to be. The organizers of the colloquium deliberately orchestrated a dialogue among Latina/o philosophers and theologians, for many of us are convinced that these two areas of knowledge and expertise, philosophy and theology, need to be in dialogue with each other. Latina/o philosophy must take into consideration the importance of religion for our communities, importance that is easily observable in the multiple manifestations of popular religion, in the role that churches play in Latina/o barrios (as they have in the past for other immigrant groups), and in the fact that the only sustained growth in U.S. churches comes from Latinas/os. Just as philosophy must consider theology, so too Latina/o theology must . freeing subjugated knowledge 5 continue the centuries-old tradition of taking into consideration the discourses of our Latina/o philosophers in the elaboration of a decolonizing and liberating theology. The intellectual spirit of the gathering was guided by the conviction that if we affirm and respond to the religious understandings and practices of Latinas/os, and to how religion is an integral element of our reality, we need to work from an epistemic locus that puts religious practices and understandings at the center. To do this we need a sustained dialogue with the philosophical insights about epistemology, hermeneutics, and praxis that are elaborated by Latina/o philosophers, and, likewise, we need an appreciation of the vibrant contemporary theological enterprise of Latina/o theologians. The orchestrating of this dialogue was guided by the belief that the respective disciplines of Latina/o theology and philosophy are two of the most original areas of the Latina/o discourse that is produced at present. It is from within theology, philosophy, cultural studies, and literature that Latina/o scholars have produced distinct ways of thinking that emerge from Latina/o experiences. The colloquium organizers brought into dialogue at least three different generations of Latina/o scholars, who, up till then, had not been together in the same space of critical and productive dialogue. Among those who participated in the colloquium were well-established scholars, recognized nationally and internationally, whose books are textbooks in different disciplines and, therefore, whose influence has reached beyond the Latina/o world. A second group of scholars included tenured professors who are recognized as ‘‘Latina/o’’ scholars. A third group included younger colleagues who are at an earlier stage of their academic and professional careers. Attentiveness to the locus of epistemic production requires also attentiveness to the issue of different generations as knowledge producers. The essays in this book are at the intersection of two axes: liberation epistemology and decolonizing epistemology. Liberation epistemology, born from the struggles of oppressed peoples all over the world, emerged originally in Latin America, the roots of Latinas/os living in the United States. The centrality of comunidades de base—base communities—in this movement and the insistence on the richness of popular religion that is fed by Amerindian, African, and European beliefs clearly indicate that the experiences and understandings of grassroots people are the source and . 6 ada mar´ı a isasi - d´ı az and eduardo mendieta locus of liberating Latina/o subjugated knowledge. The decolonizing axis, a more recently developed one, emerged as a response/reaction to the way that over the last half a century most theories have synergistically conspired to exclude the non-West, the non-Male, the non-White, and the non-European, which means the privileging of European, AngloSaxon, Protestant, becoming-White-in-the-United-States experience. The decolonizing axis points to how a group of ~~Latina/o~~ [Latine] scholars has challenged the way ~~Latinas/os~~ [Latines] have been written off the epistemic geopolitical maps produced by the West—Europe and now the United States. Latinas/os are not postcolonial subjects the way that Indians or South Africans are postcolonial subjects. Nor are we imperial subjects, in the way one can say that the Spaniards, the French, and the British are imperial subjects. Latina/o political and cultural identities have been forged in the cauldron of struggles to resist postimperialism (after Spain, Portugal, England, France) and neoimperialism (U.S.). Latinas/os are not national subjects of one given nation, for we occupy at the same time different national imaginaries and have plural allegiances; nor are we postnationals, for most of us are U.S. citizens, and our Latina/o identities are forged in and are part of the United States. All of these forces, political vectors, spaces of belonging, sites of dispossession, claimed interstices, erased memories, and hushed stories have been theorized under a group of terms that aim to reorient the way we approach knowledge production. At the center of this new epistemic matrix is an understanding of our ‘‘coloniality/neocoloniality,’’ which we live in the streets of New York, Miami, Chicago, and San Francisco and in the agricultural fields of Florida, Michigan, Ohio, and California. We are the children of a West, a Europe, and a United States, whose lies about themselves refuse and negate our histories. **To survive and flourish we have to decolonize ourselves**. Our confrontation with the ‘‘coloniality of power,’’ to use Anibal Quijano’s generative expression, requires a relentless and ceaseless struggle to value our past as our peoples experienced it and not as the West has written it. Our past is part of our present, as it continues to frame what becomes actuality from a horizon of possibilities. Our decolonizing enterprise to free subjugated knowledges is a creative process that works at uncovering how to determine, from our own Latina/o perspectives, horizons of possibility and knowability. Both axes—liberation and decolonizAtion—focus their knowing gaze on the ignored histories of Latinas/os; . freeing subjugated knowledge 7 they also embody archaeologies and genealogies that deliberately explore ‘‘sites of exception, fracture, dehumanization, and liminality’’ (Nelson Maldonado-Torres).

#### Beyond that, there is a wide array of critical scholarship, particularly from indigenous theories, grappling with what exactly the “engagement” question means, and how we can invision alternative perspectives of engagement with Latin America

Garcia 22 [Isidro Pérez García, El Des-Archivo del Campesino Urbano / The Un-Archive of the Urban Campesino, University of California San Diego]

The project El Des-Archivo del Campesino Urbano / The Un-Archive of the Urban Campesino is an artistic attempt to engage with the complex question of how to reconnect with indigenous worlds from the positionality of a de-indigenized indigenous person – uprooted by centuries of genocidal violence inflicted on the original peoples of Ixachilan (or the Americas) by the nation-building and citizen-making/ unmaking projects of both México and the United States. The project is a gallery installation of thirteen artworks centered on this question, as well as the networked and layered processes of art-making and of “thinking with things” that produced the final art works. The campesino urbano named in the title of xi the project is part of an undocumented migrant diaspora who migrated from rural México to the cities of the United States. This project follows the ethical idea that who I am, where I am, the context from which I engage, and how I engage – and the relationship between those things – are important and world-making ideas. As a whole, the Des-Archivo is about making – making and materiality as the basis for how we engage in the world – and how we algorithm the world through our making.

The project El Des-Archivo del Campesino Urbano / The Un-Archive of the Urban Campesino1 is an attempt to engage with the complex question of how to reconnect with indigenous worlds from the positionality of a de-indigenized indigenous person – uprooted by centuries of genocidal violence inflicted on the original peoples of Ixachilan2 by the nation-building and citizen-making/ unmaking projects of both México and the United States. The project is a gallery installation of thirteen artworks centered on this question, as well as the networked and layered processes of art-making and of “thinking with things”3 that produced the final art works. The campesino urbano named in the title of my project is (like myself) part of an undocumented migrant diaspora who migrated from rural México to the cities of the United States. Produced out of the collisions and overlays4 of the nation-building projects of the United States and México, the campesino urbano is a subject who is full of seeming contradictions: third-world subject in first-world environment; subject but not citizen; part of the capitalist economy but not “modern”; essential but expendable; pobre y humilde5 but also threatening; machista6 but also feminized7 ; “indio” 8 but not indigenous9 ; subject of art but not artist or audience; etc. These seeming contradictions of the campesino urbano have not come about by accident. They are a result of the type of binary thinking that is characteristic of Western colonial frameworks of legibility (Canters and Jantzen, quoted in Chacón, Indigenous Cosmolectics 13). This tendency to see the world in terms of categories and essentialisms leads to distorted, too-easy black-and-white understandings of the world, and/or unintelligible contradictions. However, a campesino urbano way of being in the world is all of these things at once, neither/nor, and also other/more.10 Escaping the trap of binary thinking is part of the project of becoming unknowable11 and refusing Western colonial frameworks as a way of understanding and experiencing the world. This project is a des-archivo, or an un-archive, because it is an attempt to un-do what the archives of Western colonialism have done – the epistemological violence of “making ‘knowable,’ the unknown” where the “definitions belong to the definers – not the defined” (Benally, Unknowable 6, Toni Morrison quoted in Watego 34). It is a gathering together of art works that do not strive to represent or define a body of knowledge but instead are themselves embodied and interconnected processes of thinking. Some of the other important ideas influencing this project include: how Western concepts of “time” have been important to imposing modernity/coloniality onto the land and people of Ixachilan12; how “free-floating” knowledge can never fully obscure knowledge that flows through and is grounded in the land13; how doing work allows us to see the work that has been done to make things the way they are14; the projects of radical resurgence and land as pedagogy15; and multiple philosophies and practices of indigenous refusal.16

In focusing on my own experiences as a campesino urbano and relating scholars' works to my experience, I am not attempting to center myself or universalize my experience. This way of “knowing” by speaking as the authoritative Western “I” – presuming to know everything, everywhere on behalf of all others – is a violence that I do not want to replicate. Instead, I try to follow what Chelsea Watego (Munanjahli, South Sea Islander) describes in this way, speaking from her experience as an Aboriginal person living under Australian colonialism: “I tell this story of the colony through my experience of it… grounded in… knowledge [that] is embodied and relational… I am not claiming the position of ‘knower’, rather I am showing how I came to know…” (Watego 4-5). For these reasons, I center campesino urbano relationality17 and also follow the idea of Leanne Betasamosake Simpson (Michi Saagiig Nishnaabeg) that “how we engage in the world—the process—not only frames the outcome, it is the transformation… Engagement changes us because it constructs a different world within which we live” (As We Have 19- 20). With these things in mind, this project follows the ethical idea that who I am, where I am, the context from which I engage, and how I engage – and the relationship between those things – are important and world-making18 ideas. As a whole, this project is about making – making and materiality as the basis for how we engage in the world – and how we algorithm19 the world through our making.

### EXAMPLE AFF---Soft Left Sanctions

#### Understanding and Removing Sanctions to weaken empire

**Atiles** (20**25**) Jose Atlies is Jose Atiles is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Sociology at the University of Illinois at Urbana- Champaign. Economic Sanctions as State Crime: Empire, Law and the United States’ Economic Warfare in Latin America. The British Journal of Criminology, 2025, Fuchs]

Central to conceptualizing sanctions as state crimes is the criminology of empire (Iadicola

2009, 2010, 2011; Michalowski 2009). This involves efforts to define and centre the structural

violence of imperial forces in the study of state crimes. Scholars have shown how **empires** **and**

**imperialism are central to the configuration of domestic and international state crimes** (Kramer

and Michalowski 2005; Iadicola 2009, 2010, 2011; Michalowski 2009; Agozino 2018).

Similarly, in the wake of the United States’ invasion of Iraq and the ‘war on terror’, there were

significant discussions and publications on imperialism and state crime (Green and Ward 2004;

Kramer et al. 2005; Whyte 2007). Nevertheless, that **scholarship** **did not consider the role of**

**sanctions as part of the crimes of empire or state crime**.

Michalowski (2009) and Iadicola (2011) propose developing a criminology of empire in

which state crime plays a prominent role. **Iadicola** (2011) d**efines imperialism as the economic**

**exploitation of other people, often deemed inferior by race and gender, supported by military**

**and political domination.** This **includes both colonial and non-territorial domination**. Similarly,

**Michalowski (2009) defines empire as the construction of development strategies, citizenship,**

**sovereignty, and culture in subordinate spaces through arrangements with local elites if possi-**

**ble, and by force, if necessary, to facilitate processes of capital accumulation and distribution of**

**power that disproportionately benefit a dominant metropolitan centre**.

In tune with these definitions, Iadicola (2011) argues that the **crimes of empires are the most**

**devastating because empires have the greatest power to commit them with impunity**. **Empires**,

historically and contemporarily, **are major sources of wars**, changing regimes to maintain and

**expand their influence**, fighting proxy wars with rivals**, and seek**ing **to destroy or assimilate**

**resistant populations incorporated into the world system centred in the imperial nation’s state**.

Furthermore, **Michalowski’s** (2009) approach to the criminology of empire centres on analys-

ing US military invasions and economic interventions in the Global South. He **suggests that,**

In addition to these military and political power crimes, the imperial project of promoting

‘savage capitalism’ under what was once called the ‘Washington consensus’ and later known as

‘**globalisation’** **has fostered starvation**, **the spread of** debilitating **illnesses**, **and the loss of patri-**

**mony and livelihoods due to the immiserating logic of ‘free’ trade based on unequal exchanges**

between poorer, less-developed peripheries and wealthy cosmopolitan centres, often **facili-**

**tated through ‘structural adjustments’ imposed by US-dominated international financial insti-**

**tutions such as the IMF and World Bank** (Michalowski 2009: 306).

This interpretation of US interventionism concomitates with the socially injurious impact of

sanctions in the Global South. Furthermore, **Michalowski** (2009) **suggests that the criminol-**

**ogy of empire is not constrained or limited to government actors in powerful nation-states.**

Instead, it focuses on how metropolitan power centres dominate and disadvantage less pow-

erful locales

**Criminology of empire should be alert to the harms and social injuries of internal domi-**

**nation that mirror those resulting from the extraterritorial projection of power and colonial-**

**ism**. Analyses of empire should recognize that many social injuries caused by the imposition

of imperial power do not end with the formal cessation or alteration of the imperial relation-

ship. As postcolonial and decolonial theories have shown,12 the structural violence and harms of

imperial domination persist despite the so-called formal end of colonial rule. Imperial projects

are not limited to the historical model of direct or indirect rule associated with formal colonial

domination. In the age of neoliberal globalization, imperial projects often involve creating a cli-

entelist state through which key segments of local elites facilitate the reorganization of critical

spaces in their economic and political life in accordance with the interests of the metropolitan

centre. **Imperial domination is not limited geographically; it is about dominating social spaces**

**that enable capital accumulation**. At the core of neoliberal globalization lie imperial and colonial

practices.

Thus, analysing the crimes and social injuries resulting from imperial domination must

always be alert to the role of colonial rationalities and global power dynamics in facilitating

capital accumulation and domination. **The American empire, as a global hegemon, exemplifies**

**this through territorial expansion, genocide of indigenous populations, slavery, colonialism and**

**military occupation of foreign countries, and its control over the global economy.**13 On the one

hand, the United States maintains colonial territories like Puerto Rico, the US Virgin Islands,

Guam, American Samoa and the Northern Mariana Islands and has military facilities in more

than 60 per cent of the world’s nations (Iadicola 2011). On the other hand, the United States

has exercised financial and politico-economic control of the global economy since World War

II (WWII) and exacerbated by the end of the Cold War. US imperialism and its state crimes are

underpinned by the United States’ global hegemony and colonial violence. **Central to this his-**

**tory have been US interventions in Latin America and the Caribbean and the socially injurious**

**impact of its unilateral sanctions in the Global South.**

In this context of imperial interventions, **we must understand economic sanctions as a form**

**of state crime**. **Sanctions, viewed through a liberal lens, often fail to highlight their specific**

**harms, as economic suffering is naturalized** (Whyte 2022). **Sanctions are part of the colonial**

**arsenal of economic statecraft, disproportionately used by the United States against the Global**

**South. Despite their humanitarian harm and ineffectiveness, sanctions persist due to US hegem-**

**ony** (Bâli 2024).

Since **sanctions** relied on US financial global domination, they **can** also **be understood as**

**a form of financial imperialism** ( Jamshidi 2023a). The **United States manipulates and con-**

**trols international financial markets to maintain its capitalist domination and discipline non-compliant**

**entities** ( Jamshidi 2023a). Sanctions regimes leverage the US dollar’s hegemonic role

to isolate and deplete resources without resorting to kinetic war. **Furthermore, as a result of the**

**global-local feedback, sanctions enabled corruption, both locally and internationally** (Green

and Ward 2004) and **caused white-collar and corporate crimes** in third countries (Gottschalk

2024).

**By categorizing economic sanctions as state crimes**, **this** paper **underscores** **the importance of**

**understanding their transnational and historical dimensions.** It highlights the need for a crimi-

nological perspective considering sanctions’ global impacts and their role in perpetuating impe-

rial power and corruption.

#### Cuba specific advocate

**Atiles** (20**25**) Jose Atlies is Jose Atiles is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Sociology at the University of Illinois at Urbana- Champaign. Economic Sanctions as State Crime: Empire, Law and the United States’ Economic Warfare in Latin America. The British Journal of Criminology, 2025, Fuchs]

Cuba: the US embargo as an act of aggression

**The U**nited **S**tates **has maintained a near-total trade embargo on Cuba since 1962, costing**

the country **about $130 billion in lost revenue** (Gordon 2016; Rodríguez-Rodríguez 2023).

US sanctions on Cuba are among the oldest and most restrictive of all economic coercion

regimes. This **embargo** has **negatively** **impacted Cuba’s healthcare system by blocking imports**

**of life-saving drugs and medical equipment** patented in the United States. **It has hindered**

**Cuba’s economic development by restricting access to goods, services and financial resources**

(Main 2020). **US unilateral economic sanctions against as Cuba target the civilian popula-**

**tion as a form of collective punishment, leading to many thousands of excess deaths, illness**

**and hunger** (Beeton 2024). Thus, the Cuban government and society view these sanctions

as acts of war, with a superpower using its asymmetric strength to impose regime change

(Rodríguez-Rodríguez 2023).

From the outset, US sanctions against Cuba were geostrategic, as the Cuban revolution

challenged the Monroe Doctrine and US hegemony in the Western Hemisphere (Rodríguez-

Rodríguez 2023). The embargo not only blocked Cuba’s access to the US market but also inter-

fered with Cuba’s trade with third countries and its international financial transactions (Gordon

2016). The embargo began with a trade ban imposed on 19 October 1960 by the Eisenhower

administration in response to Cuba’s nationalization of oil refineries and agrarian reforms

(Galant 2024). In February 1962, President Kennedy signed Executive Order 3447—follow-

ing provisions of the TWEA—which, combined with the Cuban Assets Control Regulation of

1963, enforced broad restrictions on trade, travel and financial transactions aimed at destabi-

lizing the Cuban government (Rodríguez-Rodríguez 2023). The embargo was accompanied

by the United States’ organizing, funding, and CIA-backing anti-revolutionary groups that sys-

tematically carried out terrorist acts against Cuba, its government and international supporters

(Atiles 2012).

In the 1970s and 1980s, Cuba’s trade with the Soviet Union mitigated the embargo’s effects,

but the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991 led to severe economic crisis in Cuba, losing

75–80% of its trade (Rodríguez-Rodríguez 2023). In the following decades, various executive

and legislative actions tightened specific restrictions. For example, the Cuban Democracy Act of

1992, or the Torricelli Act, prohibited foreign subsidiaries of US companies from trading with

Cuba. **Gordon (2021) argues that this prohibition contradicts international commercial law,**

**which determines a company’s nationality by its incorporation location rather than its owners’**

**nationality.** The Torricelli Act also stipulated that any ship docking in Cuba could not enter a

US port for 6 months and authorized withholding aid from any country assisting Cuba (Galant

2024).

In 1996, the Cuban Liberty and Democratic Solidarity Act or Helms-Burton Act, enshrined

the embargo into law until Cuba became a ‘market economy’, among other conditions. Gordon

(2021) notes that the Helms-Burton Act allowed Cubans who had left the island and become

US citizens to sue any foreign company whose business in Cuba involved confiscated prop-

erties. Under international law, these measures are considered ‘extraterritorial’, as the United

States illegitimately subjects foreign parties to its jurisdiction.

The US embargo has significantly affected Cuba’s trade and limited its capacity to engage in

international commerce. **Cuba cannot conduct transactions in US dollars, leading to additional**

**exchange rate costs and difficulties finding foreign banks willing to do business due to potential**

**US sanctions** (Gordon 2016). Consequently, many Canadian and European banks have ceased

operations with Cuba. **Furthermore, the US embargo and secondary sanctions have directly**

**impacted Cuba’s tourism industry, limiting its development** (Gordon 2023b).

While the Obama administration made some efforts to ease trade restrictions with Cuba,

these were largely reversed under President Trump. During his first term in office, Trump expanded sanctions by adding Cuba to the ‘State Sponsors of Terrorism’ list18 and refused to

waive Title III of the Helms-Burton Act,19 which allows legal action against third parties engag-

ing with Cuban properties nationalized by the government (Galant 2024). Additionally, the

**Trump administration reduced cash remittances to Cuba, blocking FINCIMEX, the Cuban**

**remittance agency, and forcing Western Union to cease operations in Cuba** (Gordon 2021). This

reduction in remittance access directly harmed the Cuban population, which relies heavily on

cash transfers due to the embargo**. President Biden has largely upheld Trump’s policies, leading**

**to continued over-compliance by banks and further exclusion of Cuba from the global financial**

**system** (Gordon 2021). US **sanctions are so restrictive that even humanitarian aid is threatened,**

**interfering with people’s access to food, medicine and other essential services** (Gordon 2021).

Decades of strict embargo have severely affected Cuba’s economic development and popula-

tion (Rodríguez-Rodríguez 2023). Due to Trump-era policies and the COVID-19 pandemic,

**Cuba has faced a prolonged economic and humanitarian crisis, leading to the migration of over**

**4 per cent of the country’s population**. **A recent casualty of the embargo has been the complete**

**failure of the island’s electrical system, which led the country to experience significant blackouts**

**in 2024**.20

On 31 October 2024, the UN General Assembly overwhelmingly voted to condemn the US

economic and trade embargo on Cuba. One hundred eighty-seven member states supported

the annual resolution against the embargo, with only the United States and Israel voting against

it and Ukraine abstaining. The Assembly also expressed a concern that despite UN resolutions

dating back to 1992 (Resolution 47/19),21 the embargo persists, emphasizing its detrimental

impact on the Cuban people and Cuban nationals living abroad.22 **This enduring policy, in the**

**face of global opposition, underscores the continued use of economic coercion by the United**

**States, exemplifying an imperial state crime.**

#### Venezuela specific advocate

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**The U**nited **S**tates’ **sanctions on Venezuela exemplify its imperial and neocolonial measures**

**of economic coercion**. Initially, the **US government imposed targeted sanctions on specific**

**Venezuelan individuals in 2005 in response to claims of non-cooperation with US narcotics**

**and counterterrorism policies**. **In 2006**, the United **States extended its sanctions to arms and**

**military technology restrictions**. However, the **current sanctions regime began in 2014** (Galant

2024). The **Obama** administration’s **sanctions**, **introduced via Executive Order 13692 in 2015,**

**targeted Venezuelan officials under the Venezuela Defense of Human Rights and Civil Society**

**Act of 2014** (Galant 2024).

**In 2017,** the **Trump** administration **significantly expanded these sanctions**, **banning the**

**Venezuelan government from borrowing in US financial markets, seizing the central bank’s**

**assets, and blocking transactions with Petróleos de Venezuela, S.A**. (PDVSA),23 **which historically provided over 95 per cent of Venezuela’s foreign exchange** (Weisbrot and Sach 2019;

Gordon 2023a, 2023b; Rodríguez 2023; Galant 2024). **After the 2018 Venezuelan elections**,

**new sanctions isolated Venezuela further, including restrictions on the purchase of Venezuelan**

**debt and a ban on transactions involving Venezuela’s digital currencies**.

**In 2019, the Trump administration imposed additional sanctions on PDVSA and compa-**

**nies, individuals, and countries that assisted Venezuela in exporting, producing and selling its**

**oil. These sanctions formed the basis of the Trump administration’s ‘maximum pressure’ policy,**

**which explicitly aimed to remove President Nicolás Maduro from office through political and**

**economic coercion** (Galant 2024). After the United States and EU recognition of opposition

leader Juan Guaidó’s self-proclaimed interim presidency, the **United States also froze billions**

**of dollars in Venezuelan assets and IMF Special Drawing Rights** (Galant 2024). The **Trump**

administration’s **sanctions** on Venezuela are **blamed for exacerbating one of the worst peacetime**

**economic collapses in modern history, an economic contraction roughly three times as large as**

**that caused by the Great Depression in the United States** (Stein and Cocco 2024).

While the Biden administration rhetorically moved away from ‘maximum pressure’, it

retained most of the Trump-era sanctions. Simultaneously, the Biden administration has

focused on restarting negotiations between Maduro’s government and the opposition, leading

to easing restrictions in the oil sector. Norway-mediated talks in Mexico City between Maduro

and opposition parties, along with civil society under the Unitary Platform, encouraged the

United States to release the ‘Chevron license’ and led to a partial agreement to manage $3 billion

in Venezuelan funds seized by the United States for various social needs. However, the funds for

many projects have yet to be released (Stinebower et al. 2024). In October 2023, an agreement

on electoral guarantees prompted the United States to ease sanctions on Venezuela’s oil and

gold sectors and to authorize transactions involving Venezuelan state-owned mining company

CVG Compañía General de Mineria de Venezuela CA. OFAC also eased sanctions on repatri-

ation flights and allowed US institutions to provide certain services to blocked Conviasa air-

crafts (Stinebower et al. 2024). The Biden administration has authorized other transactions and

activities, including allowing international organizations and certain NGOs to conduct official

business in Venezuela without fear of US secondary sanctions.24

**Despite these adjustments, sanctions since 2017 have caused an estimated $22.5 billion**

**income loss** (Galant 2024). **While some economic challenges predate the sanctions, evidence**

**shows that US policy has stifled recovery and worsened the humanitarian crisis, driving poverty,**

**disease and emigration** (Weisbrot and Sachs 2019). The decline in oil exports, primarily due to

**US sanctions**, has **collapsed Venezuela’s import capacity, exacerbating hunger and migration**.25

The **impact on civilians has included reduced caloric intake, increased disease and mortality,**

**and mass displacement**. Sanctions have led to shrinking foreign currency reserves, losing access

to international financial markets, and reduced public investment**. As a result, the government**

**has imposed austerity measures that have disproportionately affected marginalized communi-**

**ties, enhancing economic and social inequalities**. **This has intensified the global-local feedback,**

**in which, given the pressure created by sanctions, the local government enhanced its repressive**

**and militaristic apparatus, which led to the sanctions’ expansion**. **The sanctions’ global-local**

**feedback has intensified economic harm, prompting increased migration from Venezuela to the**

**United States and other Latin American countries.**

#### Nicaragua specific advocate

**Atiles** (20**25**) Jose Atlies is Jose Atiles is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Sociology at the University of Illinois at Urbana- Champaign. Economic Sanctions as State Crime: Empire, Law and the United States’ Economic Warfare in Latin America. The British Journal of Criminology, 2025, Fuchs]

**Nicaragua had endured United States’ unilateral sanctions since 1985**, when President Ronald

Reagan invoked the IEEPA to impose a comprehensive embargo against the Sandinista govern-

ment.26 **In 1986, the ICJ ruled in Nicaragua v. United States that the United States had repeatedly**

**violated international law by training, arming, and financing paramilitaries in Nicaragua, attack-**

**ing its infrastructure, placing mines in Nicaraguan ports, imposing an economic embargo, and**

**encouraging the paramilitaries to commit atrocities**. **The ICJ ordered the United States to pay**

**reparations, which it never did**. This historical context is crucial for understanding the United

States’ current unilateral sanctions, particularly those targeting individuals in Nicaragua. **As we**

**saw in the cases of Cuba and Venezuela, these sanctions should be viewed within the broader**

**history of US imperial intervention in Latin America and the systemic human suffering it has**

**caused in the region.**

**In 2018, the United States imposed new unilateral sanctions on Nicaragua**. This time, **the**

**United States targeted individuals’ assets, which were allegedly involved in human rights viola-**

**tions and corruption**. Justified largely as the United States’ reaction to the Nicaraguan govern-

ment’s repressive actions against protesters, these sanctions targeted President Daniel Ortega

and other members of his government. In November 2018, the Trump administration issued

its first executive order against Nicaragua, designating several people from Daniel Ortega’s fam-

ily—including Vice President Rosario Murillo, and the chief of police—as Specially Designated

Nationals (SDNs). **US citizens were prohibited from engaging in transactions with those on the**

**SDN list. In December 2018, the US Congress enacted the Nicaragua Human Rights and Anti-**

**Corruption Act, imposing additional restrictions.**

**Following the 2021 elections, which Ortega and Murillo won, the United States and its**

**allies imposed further sanctions on individuals, including those in the Ministry of Defense and**

**Telecommunications. They implemented a travel ban on 116 people**. Simultaneously, the US

Congress enacted the Nicaragua’s Adherence to Conditions for Electoral Reform Act in 2021,

which introduced numerous sanctions against those obstructing the establishment of condi-

tions for free elections.

**In October 2022, additional sanctions were imposed due to Nicaragua’s increased military**

**and economic ties with Russia**. Throughout 2023, OFAC designated Nicaraguan judicial offi-

cials for involvement in human rights abuses, imposed further travel bans, and targeted addi-

tional individuals with sanctions. **The United States also imposed financial restrictions, limiting**

**Nicaragua’s ability to receive loans from the Central American Bank for Economic Integration,**

**which has lent nearly $3.5 billion in recent years**.

Counterintuitively, **targeted sanctions on government figures and individuals in positions**

**of power often have a larger impact on society**. **Those targeted individuals frequently resort to**

**repressive measures to curtail opposition and may divert state funds to serve their attempts to**

**retain power.** Thus, **the real impact of the sanctions has been a reduction in foreign currency**

**reserves, loss of access to international financial markets and foreign investments, decreased**

**public investment, and austerity measures that negatively affect Nicaragua’s general population**.

**In practice, sanctions disproportionately harm the country’s poorest, exacerbating poverty and**

**economic instability** (Main 2020; Gordon 2023b).

## Country Links

### Argentina

#### There is increasing political momentum in Argentina for a workers’ movement – general strikes are proving successful against the mobilization of the far-right – resistance to the fascist government is key.

Crisan, 3-29-2024 (Liam Crisan, Liam Crisan is an Inequality.org Next Leader., "Labor Holds The Line In Argentina," CounterPunch.org, https://www.counterpunch.org/2024/03/29/317242/, accessed on 4-29-2024)

This March, Argentina’s school year began with empty classrooms. The price of learning materials rose by 502 percent over the past year, leaving many children unprepared for the year to come. And the teachers? On strike after President Javier Milei announced deep cuts to their salaries.

There’s something much larger happening here: Workers rights are under attack in an already vastly unequal society. Labor income inequality has been on the decline in many Latin American countries like Chile, Colombia, and Mexico. In Argentina, it’s been on the rise.

Since the 1960s, Argentina has been in an unprecedented period of macroeconomic instability. Stagnating in the lead-up to, and during, the dictatorship years (1976-1983), the country’s economy has reeled from crisis upon crisis — punctuated with the occasional period of recovery and growth. As the decades wore on, public distrust and discontent produced a deep social divide. Argentines call this phenomenon la grieta (“the rift”).

During his successful presidential bid last year, Milei seized upon these conditions. TV personality and self-proclaimed anarcho-capitalist, the eccentric economist promised to correct Argentina’s path and make what he called the “political caste” pay for their mismanagement of the country. Wielding a chainsaw while he campaigned, Milei vowed to eliminate state ministries, abolish the central bank, roll back abortion rights, and dollarize the economy.

Now that he’s had a chance to implement his platform, working families — not an elite “political caste” — are footing the bill for his far-right economic project.

In the two months before Milei took office in December, inflation was running between 143 and 161 percent. In February, inflation soared to more than 254 percentand the poverty rate reached 57 percent — the highest in decades.

Argentina’s labor movement has quickly mobilized widespread and effective opposition to his policies. While strikes and protests continue, we can already begin to draw lessons on resisting the far-right’s rise worldwide.

Milei takes a chainsaw to workers’ rights

After taking office on December 10, 2023, Milei acted swiftly. Declaring “There is no alternative to shock,” the president immediately devalued the peso by 50 percent, lifted price controls, and dissolved half of the country’s ministries.

Milei’s government then launched an offensive on workers rights. On December 14, the newly appointed Minister of Security announced a new protest protocol. Consolidating control of Argentina’s security forces and creating a registry for organizations suspected of “instigating” the protocol allowed federal forces to use increased surveillance and violence.

Days later, Milei signed the “Decree of Necessity and Urgency 70/2023.” Dubbed the megadecreto (“mega-decree”) for its sweeping scope — cutting severance pay, weakening collective bargaining rights, deregulating the rental market, and otherwise undermining existing protections — the 366-article document is an unconstitutional abuse of executive powers.

Making matters worse, Milei cut public subsidies on utilities and transportation. Hypocrisy shone through his already vague definition of the “political caste.” As one Argentine told a journalist, “The caste doesn’t take the train nor any form of public transit. We workers and students do.”

Milei’s aggressive measures roused a prompt response from Argentine labor. In late December, the country’s largest unions announced plans for a January 24 general strike — the quickest to be organized under any president since Argentina’s return to democracy in 1983.

Millions join the general strike

Forty-five days after Milei took office, 1.5 million Argentines took to the streets. Workers from all sectors joined the strike: transit, aviation, government, banking, and sanitation, just to name a few.

“Not one step back,” one associated union declared on the day of the strike, “for the unity of the workers movement is essential in protecting the rights we’ve achieved.”

The protesters’ outrage centered on Milei’s Omnibus Bill. The proposed legislation contained sweeping changes to Argentina’s economic and political structure, including the privatization of state-owned companies and an unprecedented expansion of executive powers.

The bill would also codify Milei’s unpopular “mega-decree.”

“[Milei’s ‘mega-decree’] destroys individual rights of workers, collective rights and seeks to eliminate the possibility of union action at a time in which we have great inequality in society” said Héctor Daer, the Secretary General of the General Confederation of Labor. One of the world’s largest unions, the CGT represents roughly two-thirds of Argentina’s unionized workforce.

Shortly after the strike ended, the National Congress of Argentina rejected Milei’s Omnibus Bill. Initially approved by the Chamber of Deputies in a 144 to 109 vote, majority support faltered when it came time for an article-by-article review.

The first Omnibus Bill consisted of 664 articles. Now, two months later, they are struggling to push an amended 269-article version — with hefty concessions for the left.

Milei’s uncompromising approach played no small role in killing his first Omnibus Bill. But the general strike served a critical blow to his already weak coalition.

Aftermath in Argentina, implications abroad

Beyond their victories in the streets, Argentine labor has also made notable gains in the courts. Successfully challenging the legality of Milei’s “mega-decree,” the General Confederation of Labor blocked the roll-out of several critical anti-worker measures.

Following January’s general strike, February and March witnessed a patchwork of smaller strikes, placing continued pressure on the government. The most recent have come in the aviation, healthcare, and education sectors. The Argentine Workers’ Central Union (a federation with 1.2 million members) held a “national day of struggle” on March 12 — and united with other groups to block 500 roads throughout the country on March 18. More strikes are planned for March 28.

On March 14, the Senate voted down the Decree of Necessity and Urgency. Though the “mega-decree” remains in force unless the lower house also opts to reject, the upper house vote represents another massive blow to Milei’s government.

Instrumental in defeating Milei’s first Omnibus Bill — and otherwise slowing the pace of his anti-worker disaster project — Argentine labor’s recent victories offer an important reminder: Working-class people are a potent political force.

These victories also offer lessons in resisting the far-right’s rise worldwide: Organized labor can serve as an infrastructure for mobilization and a counterbalance to democratic backsliding. At their best, unions provide checks on abuses of executive power and ensure that working people always have political representation — no matter who occupies the presidential palace.

With nearly 30 percent of the workforce unionized, the labor movement is strong in Argentina. The United States hasn’t seen that degree of union density since the 1950s, though now the tide might be turning.

With 64 countries holding national elections in 2024, this year will be a watershed moment in world history. And with the far right on the rise, there’s never been a more critical time to mobilize in defense of dignity and democracy.

Here in the United States, there are over 85 million poor or low-income eligible voters. As Inequality.org’s co-editor Sarah Anderson writes, “If this bloc voted at the same rate as higher-income voters, they could sway elections in every state.”

### Belize

#### Decolonization in Belize entails uncompromising refusal of the state and its false promises of inclusion and self-determination – indigenous activism in Belize spills out internationally

Gahman, Penados, & Smith, 3-25-2022 (Levi Gahman, Filiberto Penados, Shelda-Jane Smith, Levi Gahman is a Reader of emancipatory politics, anticolonial praxis and participatory approaches to global challenges and environmental change at the University of Liverpool. He is author of A Beginner’s Guide to Building Better Worlds (Bristol University Press), Land, God, and Guns: Settler Colonialism and Masculinity (Zed Scholar), and resident of L8-Toxteth., "The Government Of Belize Is Attempting To Suppress Indigenous Self-Determination And Disavow Customary Maya Governance In The Name Of “Development.”," ROAR Magazine, https://roarmag.org/essays/belize-maya-land-struggle/, accessed on 4-29-2024)

For a colonized people the most essential value, because the most concrete, is first and foremost the land: the land which will bring them bread and, above all, dignity.

— Frantz Fanon

Many social movement sympathizers, scholars and activists concerned with combating land-grabbing, climate breakdown and environmental ruin are familiar with the Zapatistas, but far fewer are up to speed on the parallel Maya land struggle that is taking place a few hundred kilometers to the east, in Belize. Uniquely, this is a struggle for Indigenous territory and self-determination situated in both Central America and the Caribbean. While local autonomy is the ultimate aim, it also involves resistance to extractivist “development aggression” and an authoritarian state, as well as rejecting the British monarchy, patrons of privatization and lasting vestiges of empire. More succinctly, it is a battle against what the Peruvian decolonial scholar Anibal Quijano refers to as the “coloniality of power.” This is the struggle for land and freedom of the Qʼeqchiʼ and Mopan Maya communities of Toledo District, southern Belize.

Across Latin America and the Caribbean, Indigenous and Afrodescendant communities continue to be subjected to recurring enclosures and expropriations of land as a result of state-sanctioned “development” projects. The ecological damage, social harms and forced dislocations that follow are directly connected to extractivist agendas masquerading as initiatives for economic “growth” and “progress.” The plunder and violence that ensues is a tangible manifestation of the lasting legacies of the plantation economy, enslavement and imperialism. Regrettably, accumulation by dispossession has become a hallmark of development in the region.

In turn, rural Indigenous, Afrodescendant and peasant groups throughout Latin America and the Caribbean continue to be negatively racialized and adversely affected by economic growth schemes marketed as “green” and “sustainable.” The destructive consequences of neoliberal development include land grabs; displacement; destitution; the demolition of ecosystems; illness induced by pollution; spikes in sexual abuse and gender-based violence; loss of heritage, culture, languages; and the criminalization — and targeted killing — of land defenders. Many of these trends can be seen in the multi-ethnic and ecologically biodiverse country of Belize.

Belize was historically besieged by colonizers from both Spain and Great Britain and known as “British Honduras” until its independence in 1981. To this day, it maintains a hierarchical structure of governance based upon the Westminster model, which was imposed by the British Empire. Notably, Belize has one of the highest per capita murder rates in Latin America and the Caribbean, which is already one of the most violent regions in the world. The state, rather notoriously, also has a tarnished track record of repudiating Indigenous land claims, both of the Maya and Garinagu.

Amidst this reality, two key pillars of the land struggle and autonomous Maya movement of southern Belize are the Maya Leaders Alliance (MLA) and the Toledo Alcaldes Association (TAA), an Indigenous Maya institution of democratically elected village leaders called alcaldes. The MLA, also fully Maya, is a coalition of grassroots environmental defenders, political activists and former alcaldes. It was officially formed in 1999 as a union of Maya organizations and has since evolved into a coalition of activists, former village leaders and elders in the land rights struggle. Its members have been engaged in community organizing and environmental defense for decades.

Given the MLA is accompanying the TAA, members of the movement use the acronym TAA-MLA as a moniker and means of centering the role of the alcaldes association. Together, the TAA-MLA serves and advocates for over 20,000 Maya people across 41 remote communities in Toledo District, Belize’s southernmost and poorest district. Broadly, the movement is endeavoring to build, much like the Zapatistas who are also guided by Maya cosmology and collectivity, “a world where many world’s fit.”

THE MAYA LAND STRUGGLE

In addition to grassroots mobilizing and resistance, the TAA-MLA represents Maya communities nationally, regionally and internationally on legal matters related to human rights violations, racial discrimination, land encroachments, heritage site destruction and threats to cultural survival. In 2015, after 20 long years and numerous caustic legal battles with the state, the Maya movement made history regarding the recognition of Indigenous land rights by winning a landmark case against the government of Belize in the Caribbean Court of Justice, the region’s highest and final court of appeal. The court’s decision established that the Maya’s customary communal lands and notions of complex tenure are equal in status to the conventional private property rights recognized in Belize’s constitution.

The 2015 Caribbean Court of Justice ruling also came with a compliance order requiring the state to work in “good faith” with Maya communities, specifically the appellants, the MLA and TAA, to delimit, demarcate and title traditional Maya territories. As a first step towards its implementation, the court further required the government to develop a Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC) protocol in conjunction and via consultation with the TAA-MLA, which has not yet happened.

Tellingly, the government of Belize has absconded from its role in the implementation process for over seven years. During this time, state-sponsored land predation and encroachments onto Maya farmlands and milpas have continued. Sometimes the infringements occur under the guise of “help” and “development,” in other instances dispossession is an outcome of the fraught “good intentions” of conservationists and charities. The intrusions have been so persistent that the government was yet again found guilty of violating the Maya’s customary land rights this past year.

Despite their watershed victory over the Belizean government in the Caribbean Court of Justice in 2015, the TAA-MLA maintain that organized communities and grassroots movements are the drivers of social change and point source of self-determination — not the state nor the courts. In actualizing this, the alliance has, since its beginning, engaged in a wide range of tactics and strategies aimed at effecting what Unangax̂ scholar Eve Tuck refers to as “non-metaphorical decolonization.” The movement recognizes, like Aymara anarchist Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui has proclaimed, “that there can be no discourse of decolonization, no theory of decolonization, without a decolonizing practice.”

For the Maya of Toledo District, this decolonizing practice includes protecting and preserving their Maya culture, languages, cosmovision and even dreams. It also entails retaining and embodying their Indigenous conceptions of ral ch’och’ (being “children of the earth”) and se’ komonil (togetherness-community). Se’ komonil is a kaleidoscopic and layered Qʼeqchiʼ (Maya) term that escapes English translation but connotes “living well together in dignity, balance and harmony.” The phrase is not dissimilar to the Quechua notion of sumak causay, the broader idea of buen vivir, and the Tseltal and Tsotsil (Maya) concept of el lek’il kuxlejal, which many Zapatista supporters will be familiar with.

Significantly, for the Maya of Toledo District, being ral ch’och’ and nourishing se’ komonil are inherently connected to taking care of, cultivating reciprocal relationships with, and defending the land and environment — not to mention practicing their customary system of communal governance, the alcaldes.

THE CONTENTIOUS POLITICS OF FREE, PRIOR AND INFORMED CONSENT

Against the backdrop detailed above, in late January 2022, the TAA-MLA issued a press release announcing that Maya communities in Toledo District had been “ambushed” by the government. The alliance’s declaration, not to mention the ongoing clash that is taking place between the Maya and state, was prompted by the government unilaterally filing a FPIC protocol with the Caribbean Court of Justice. That is, the state, ironically, revised and submitted the FPIC framework without either consulting or obtaining consent from the appellants of the 2015 court case, the TAA-MLA.

FPIC is sanctioned by the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) and permits Indigenous people to discuss and decide the terms and conditions through which development projects that will impact their lands and cultures will be planned, initiated, scrutinized and evaluated. While it has garnered a great deal of traction globally as a mechanism for safeguarding Indigenous communities and attenuating environmental damage, several analysts argue that the FPIC framework can best be thought of as a limited instrument or even trap that inescapably reproduces Western worldviews and the concentrated power of the state. Despite FPIC’s deficiencies, many observers have noted the protocol can, in some instances, be employed by Indigenous groups to mitigate land grabbing and environmentally destructive development projects.

Regarding the FPIC protocol in Belize, the government is claiming that it conferred with Maya communities before submitting the new framework to the Caribbean Court of Justice — and that the Maya accepted the revised protocol. The TAA-MLA have resoundingly disputed the state’s claim that meaningful consultation and approval took place and is asserting the government is acting in bad faith and with impunity, as it has done before.

Once news of the government’s filing broke, the TAA-MLA specifically denounced the Ministry of Indigenous Peoples Affairs, the office which played a key role in unilaterally proffering the new FPIC protocol to the Caribbean Court of Justice without properly fulfilling its responsibility regarding the duty to consult. Essentially, the TAA-MLA is contending that the state at once violated the court’s consent order and betrayed the Maya communities by refusing to engage in good faith negotiation and consultation. Maya village leaders have specified this was an act of “total disrespect,” not to mention disavowal of Indigenous governance.

Maya movement leaders and villagers have since explained that the government is operating in an imperious manner as a means to undermine the customary governance system of the Maya, the alcaldes, and deny the legitimacy of its representative body, the TAA. Maya activists from the alliance have surmised that the state’s explicit rejection of the TAA, a critical element of Maya governance, is a concerted effort to fracture and sow discord amongst communities, which is a long-standing divide-and-rule strategy deployed all over the world against Indigenous peoples.

REFUTING INDIGENOUS GOVERNANCE

In addition, in what Maya activists are saying was an equally audacious and authoritarian move by the government — which has a history of violating Maya land rights — it independently altered the terminology of FPIC, replacing the word “consent” with “consultation.” Consequently, the abbreviation FPIC, according to the government, is now a framework related to free, prior and informed “consultation” — not “consent”.

Changing the highly specific term “consent” to the more ambiguous word “consultation” will hinder the Maya’s ability to refuse and resist future development initiatives that will impact their territories, communities and cultural heritage. In essence, eliminating “consent” from the compulsory process will disempower Maya communities and place decision-making authority solely in the hands of the state.

The omission of “consent” further implies that the state’s obligation is limited to only informing and listening to what Maya communities have to say, but that it is ultimately free to do as it pleases. This will reverse a host of key advances Indigenous people have made across the international sector with respect to affirming that self-determination and “consent” — not merely consultation — are at the heart of encroachment issues related to development projects and even conservation efforts.

Blunders by the Belizean government related to its unilateral alteration of the FPIC protocol have been patently obvious, if not embarrassing. For example, in a recent information campaign related to economic development with Maya communities in Toledo District, officials from the government’s Ministry of Human Development, Families and Indigenous People’s Affairs patronizingly announced to Maya villagers that FPIC literally means “Free, Prior and Informed Consultation.” This contravenes the accepted definition of FPIC that is used globally.

Another major flash point related to the amended FPIC framework the government is trying to have formalized by the Caribbean Court of Justice is that the alcaldes of the TAA, as elected village leaders and representatives of a customary Indigenous Maya institution, have been deliberately omitted from the new protocol. Adding fuel to the fire and as a means of further subverting the alcaldes and Maya movement, the government issued a press release of its own on its website, which simultaneously questioned and blatantly denied the very presence of Maya communal governance by bluntly asserting: “We do not believe that there is such collective governance system of the Maya people.”

Moreover, in its non-consensually revised FPIC protocol, the government replaced the TAA with a list of Maya-led NGOs it single-handedly deemed as being eligible for consultation. Rather peculiarly, some of the NGOs the state listed are no longer even operational and, markedly, none are a critical element of customary Maya governance like the TAA is. Supporters of the Maya communities deemed this cunning deceit and called it out as one of the myriad ways in which the non-profit industrial complex is used to obstruct grassroots Indigenous self-determination.

In the face of the government’s brash modification of FPIC and its rogue submission of the newly revised protocol to the Caribbean Court of Justice, the TAA-MLA is maintaining that the collective governance system and right to self-determination of the Maya of Toledo District have “once again” been attacked. In doing so, Maya activists cited the state’s lengthy rap sheet of disavowing the alcaldes and repeated efforts to undermine the TAA. As one might imagine, the alliance rejected the government’s new consultation framework outright and condemned its redefinition of FPIC.

MOBILIZING NATIONALISM AND MANAGERIALIST COMPULSIONS

In responding to the TAA-MLA’s assertion that Maya systems of customary governance were being denigrated and renounced by the actions of the state, Belize’s Prime Minister, John Briceño, marshaled an appeal to nationalism, which inferred that the Maya movement of southern Belize is greedy, irrational and separatist. In his statement he alleged: “I think they [the MLA] will not be happy until we give them over the Toledo District and that’s never going to happen under a PUP (People’s United Party) government. Toledo is a part of this country and as a government we have a responsibility to this country.”

It is well worth noting that the Maya of Toledo District, which is a multi-cultural and heterogeneous district in its demographic make-up, readily self-identify as Belizean and have never sought to have the region split from the rest of the country.

In a virtue-signaling bid to rationalize removing the TAA from the consultation process, the government, through a narrow and liberal-managerialist approach to “inclusion” that is common amongst credentialed professionals and elitist bourgeois institutions, vaguely argued that every person should be consulted on issues related to development. During a follow-up press conference, the TAA-MLA did not dispute this point in principle, agreeing that decision-making authority should ultimately rest within each and every Maya community.

Detailing this stance but in situating inclusion within an Indigenous frame of collectivity and direct democracy, Cristina Coc, spokesperson of the MLA, clarified:

We don’t disagree with that (i.e. that every member of a community needs to be a part of the consultation process). This is not something new to us (the Maya). That is the way that we make decisions in our communities. Customarily, the fundamental authority for decision making rests with the village meeting where the members of that community collectively — by way of consensus — make decisions.

The crux of the matter regarding making sure every village member is included in the FPIC protocol thereby remains the process through which consultation occurs. The Belizean government is trying to force and micro-manage the Maya communities into existing and operating on its terms and conditions. Conversely, the TAA-MLA and Maya villages are seeking to hold fast to their customary governance system and communal ways of organizing.

Maya customary governance in southern Belize includes gathering together, listening collectively, disseminating information, deliberating issues and arriving at consensus in participatory assemblies known as “ab’inks.” For generations, the ab’ink, which is inherently democratic and inclusive, has been a fundamental cornerstone of Maya self-determination and governance. Revealingly, the state deleted every mention of the ab’ink from the amended FPIC framework and, in a calculated move, is attempting to remove the communal assemblies from the FPIC procedure.

Amid heightened tensions and escalations in hostile rhetoric, Cristina Coc, a Qʼeqchiʼ environmental defender who was criminalized by the state in 2015 along with 12 other Maya villagers yet later had all charges dropped, did not waver and responded to government’s belligerence with the following:

I just want to make it clear that despite the appearance, or what the perception out there might be, it is very clear that this government is attempting to remove and erase the traditional governance institution of the Maya people, which is dangerous and damaging…

This a concerted effort to plant seeds of division among our people and to break up the collective institution that provides the strength and the unity that has carried this movement for 30 long years. …Enough is enough.

THE DYNAMICS AND DILEMMAS OF DECOLONIZATION

This particular FPIC altercation and the broader Maya struggle in Belize raises necessary questions about prevailing notions of sovereignty and self-determination, which are relevant to communities and geographies everywhere — not just in Latin American and the Caribbean. The dynamics at play in this case also cast critical light on the contentious politics and dilemmas that materialize at the nexus of land, capitalist modernity, state power and economic development.

In his revolutionary work The Wretched of the Earth, Frantz Fanon avowed: “Each generation must out of relative obscurity discover its mission, fulfill it, or betray it.” For settler and postcolonial societies across the world, the “mission” at hand is the pursuit of actually-existing democracy and decolonization. With respect to Indigenous people’s pluralistic and ever-evolving practices of collective governance, relationality and peace and diplomacy, how does one reconcile the political legitimacy of the nation-state, profit-driven extractivist development schemes and continued existence of a ruling-class nationalist bourgeoisie? State disavowals of Indigenous worldviews and ways of organizing are not only colonial mimicry, but an absolute betrayal of the “mission” Fanon was so fervently and furiously pleading humanity to remain beholden to.

Indeed, as the conflict in southern Belize illustrates all too clearly, while the complexion of postcolonial governments and face of bourgeois institutions may change, the authoritarianism of the state and repression of Indigenous self-determination stays the same. Even so and equally, Maya environmental defenders in Toledo District are continuing to fight for land and freedom “from below” in the face of the Westminster modeled state, the capitalist hydra — and ongoing legacies of colonialism — come what may.

### Bolivia

#### US aid under the guise of the War on Drugs & Terror enables colonial military and governance entanglements throughout the region – imperial armed forces are weak now, which provides opportunity for resistance movements in Bolivia & throughout the world to refuse colonial impositions

Quintana & Flaig, 11-13-2021 (Juan Ramón Quintana & Anton Flaig, Juan Ramón Quintana was the Bolivian minister of the presidency in Evo Morales's administration. Anton Flaig is the organizer of the Wiphala Movement Germany and a student of political science and sociology., "How The Us War On Drugs Subverted Bolivian Democracy," Jacobin, https://jacobin.com/2021/11/us-war-on-drugs-dea-bolivian-democracy-coup-morales-quintana-interview, accessed on 4-29-2024)

This week marks two years since Bolivian president Evo Morales and his Movement Toward Socialism (MAS) party were overthrown in a military coup. The army’s actions in November 2019 were backed by the Organization of American States, the Trump administration, the European Union, and much Western media, each claiming that Morales had stolen the 2019 presidential election. Their fraud allegations were instantly and thoroughly discredited — but did lasting damage to Bolivian democracy.

Over the months that followed the coup, right-wing forces backed by paramilitaries formed a new regime under transitional leader Jeanine Áñez, seeking to undo Morales’s legacy. While today celebrated by the EU Parliament as a champion of human rights, Áñez’s regime in fact massacred dozens of anti-coup protesters while also driving Morales and many of his colleagues into exile. Yet this was not enough to cow popular resistance, and after massive rallies and strikes demanding that repeat elections go ahead, MAS candidate Luis Arce won a huge mandate in the October 2020 contest.

Juan Ramón Quintana was minister of the presidency in each of Morales’s three governments. A former high-ranking career soldier and a learned sociologist, philosopher, and political scientist, Quintana is considered Bolivia’s most important anti-imperialist intellectual. This August, he published La contraofensiva imperial (Imperial counteroffensive) under the pseudonym Ernesto Eterno, a work whose subtitle promises to examine the coup through the “anatomy of violence and looting” in Bolivia.

Quintana spoke to Anton Flaig about imperial interests in Bolivia, the role of the US Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) in politicizing the Bolivian military, and the challenges for MAS after its return to power.

ANTON FLAIG

What was your experience of Áñez’s regime?

JUAN RAMÓN QUINTANA

I spent almost a year in the Mexican embassy, a very difficult time. I was without my family, which was relentlessly persecuted. Meanwhile, the coup regime took action against our comrades and carried out the massacres in Senkata and Sacaba.

At the embassy, we were besieged by snipers, the telephones were tapped, and the hills around the building were occupied by police. The aim was to intimidate us and break our will. Practically all international norms were broken. The ambassador, the administrative staff, and the service staff were themselves persecuted. The coup regime showed all its cruelty. Almost all of us were denied safe travel to Mexico. A few comrades were still able to get out, including Luis Arce, who went to Mexico, then to Brazil, and later from there back to Bolivia. My strategy was to approach the situation rationally, stay calm, and focus on my writing.

ANTON FLAIG

You were a high-ranking officer, trained in the School of the Americas. But years later, as a minister under Evo Morales, you became the most powerful voice of anti-imperialism in Bolivia. How did you become a convinced anti-imperialist?

JUAN RAMÓN QUINTANA

The decision to adopt an anti-imperialist, anti-colonial, and anti-capitalist position was not easy. From a young age I read a lot about my country’s history, including foreign authors who had a different view of Latin America’s history. Slowly I began to understand that the life of the peoples of the “Third World,” the poor, is shaped by the hegemonic centers of capitalism.

I read a lot about military nationalism in Bolivia. That’s how I found out about presidents who opposed the mining oligarchy, fought for an independent, developed Bolivia, and were murdered. The military socialism of the 1930s; the military nationalism of the 1940s, which later became the national revolution, but was then swallowed up by US imperialism; and then the 1970s resurgence of this earlier military nationalism — they were all defeated. I learned that to build the Bolivian nation, you must oppose the financial system and imperialist rule.

Later I left the army and dedicated myself to studying the armed forces, the police, and relations between the United States and Bolivia.

When I entered Evo’s cabinet as a minister, I had a clear idea of ​​the enormous challenges our government faced. For fourteen years, we managed to resist imperialist interventions, with great effort. That is why the media, which are part of imperialist rule, acted ruthlessly against us. That is why right-wing politicians who are puppets of US imperialism, and the US government itself, attacked us.

ANTON FLAIG

In the 1990s you proposed a reform of the military. What was this about?

JUAN RAMÓN QUINTANA

The aim was to cut the armed forces’ prerogatives and privileges to limit the political autonomy they’d gained since the fight against drug trafficking. The “war on drugs” doctrine came from Washington. The enforcement of US security policy in Latin America required the armed forces to be able to suppress the population and exercise power over politicians, the judiciary, and all society. Under all neoliberal governments there were massacres, assassinations, forcible disappearances, and torture.

During the government of Jorge “Tuto” Quiroga (2001–2002), a mercenary force called the Expedition Group was created — like the paramilitaries in Colombia today. It was created to fight the coca farmers in Bolivia. But the legislature did nothing to control the loss of state sovereignty and rule of law. Political actors gave up their responsibility. What democracy can you speak of when the armed forces have political supremacy over the government and its structure, the national parliament, and the judicial authorities?

I suggested that parliament should exercise more power over the armed forces, so that they’d be accountable for their corruption, their links to drug trafficking, their human rights violations, and the ill-treatment within the army. But mainly because of their dependence on the US Southern Command, our armed forces looked more like colonial forces intervening in a colonized area. The rule of law can’t exist if generals are substituted for politicians and the US military is ruling much of the country. So, unlike the reforms that we would propose today, the reforms back then had to take a different course.

ANTON FLAIG

What reforms would you propose today?

JUAN RAMÓN QUINTANA

There are three basic problems with the army. The first has to do with the political authorities’ weakness in controlling the armed forces. There has been a seditious, conspiratorial culture in the armed forces since the nineteenth century. Bolivia is the Latin American country that has had the most coups. The armed forces believe they are meant to stand above public authority.

But there is also a weakness in society. The population pays its taxes to support the military but has absolutely no knowledge of the military, its doctrine, its weapons, its mentality, and its history. In our fourteen years in office, we [MAS] failed to fill political offices with defense personnel who would democratize knowledge of the armed forces. This left the armed forces exempt from accountability to society.

Second, there is a colonial culture in Bolivia. This has to do with the consequences of more than a hundred years of military service. Rural farming communities assume that their sons have to pay a blood toll to become citizens. Abolishing compulsory military service is unthinkable, because, as a society, we have not created any alternative spaces for exercising citizenship.

The army believes that it has a license to be the “guardian” of society. How come? Its contact with society is contact with the indigenous, rural world. There is no contact with the middle class, with the sons of the oligarchy, because the sons of the oligarchy do not go into the barracks. Those who do go are the indios, the peasants, the workers. The armed forces’ contact with marginalized layers gives them a feeling of cultural superiority. Still today, they have not understood the concept of the plurinational state. So it is necessary to work on decolonizing the armed forces. They must understand that ours is a state that recognizes diversity among nations, coexisting in a complementary way.

The third problem is foreign interference. For seventy years, Bolivia’s armed forces were ideologically ruled by the United States. The appearance of their uniforms, their weapons, their doctrine, their training, their trips to the United States made the armed forces lose its identity as an institution dependent on the Bolivian state. You are proud to be an ally of the most powerful army in the world, even though the relations between you are colonial. According to the colonial armed forces, local criollos are an invincible power.

Today, they realize that the US armed forces can be defeated. The US empire is in decline — and suffering historic defeats. It left Afghanistan in worse conditions than it left Saigon in 1975. So the idea is starting to arise in the armed forces that they don’t automatically have to be aligned with the world’s greatest military power.

What war will you win with an army that has a colonial mentality? The only battle it has won in the last seventy years is the war against the Bolivian people. The armed forces’ doctrine stems from US anti-communist ideology: the people are the enemy, we cannot be a modern country because most Bolivians are miserable, ignorant, indigenous people, and so on. In this idea of ​​modernity, indigenous peoples can only achieve social value if they meet the conditions for living in a civilized society: They have to speak Spanish. They have to have Western urban customs. They have to mimic the US way of life.

That’s why we have to change this nineteenth-century defense model to a twenty-first-century one.

ANTON FLAIG

What would a twenty-first-century model be like?

JUAN RAMÓN QUINTANA

The doctrine of having a professional armed body, plus the military service of part of the people, is a model from the last century. A twenty-first-century model would be the doctrine of the people in arms. In the face of all threats to state security, such as institutional and democratic collapse, it is the people in arms who defend democracy, territory, and sovereignty.

Ultimately, this is what makes the state invulnerable. That is the model that they developed in Vietnam. That is the model that the Taliban have in Afghanistan, the Chinese with Mao Zedong, the Cubans have it, and large parts of Venezuela have it too. Giving arms to the people guarantees national integrity and the defense of sovereignty. The relationship of spiritual, intellectual, and cultural dependence on the United States has to be broken, and the armed forces brought under the state’s control.

Today much of the armed forces around the world have become practically private services. Logistics, food, clothing, and weapons are provided by military companies. There is also a trend toward privatization in the military field itself. The soldiers who have gone to Afghanistan and Iraq are largely mercenaries hired in other countries. They simply respond to the interests of the large corporations that are waging war to loot oil, gas, and minerals. Even US soldiers are not necessarily professional soldiers — it’s cheaper to hire mercenaries.

ANTON FLAIG

When Morales proposed that militias should be formed like in Venezuela, the press reacted very negatively, and he immediately had to withdraw his proposal. So there are certain concerns — even among parts of the population that voted for MAS. How could the people in arms be controlled?

JUAN RAMÓN QUINTANA

In this model, an armed people with a [sufficient] educational level and political awareness takes on the military defense of the territory, but also of the nation itself.

The media condemn Morales for this proposal — but why? I remember that from 1960 to 1964 the constitution recognized the army, the air force, the navy, but also the militias. The national revolution from 1952 to 1964 coexisted with armed militias, workers’ militias, peasant militias, and armed women. But now this is supposedly a scandal.

The United States is the most armed society in the world and its civilian population is the most armed population in the world. But now it turns out that it is a scandal to think that there can be militias.

That is a conception for the revolutions of the twenty-first century. It is not just a matter of suppressing coup threats. For sure, there is no coup against a people in arms. But the concept does not stop there — it is a wider concept of self-defense. Today the empire, the United States, is being defeated, and defeated by an armed people [in Afghanistan], the poorest in the Middle East. This is the greatest military defeat for the Western powers in the twenty-first century — and will make the United States and NATO think twice.

ANTON FLAIG

You mentioned imperialist doctrines like the fight against communism. What’s behind these doctrines?

JUAN RAMÓN QUINTANA

The US has fought three wars in Latin America over the past seventy years: the war against communism, the war on drugs, and the war on terror. These imperial wars serve as a pretext for geopolitical rule over Latin America — and other parts of the world, too, but I’ll focus on Latin America.

The war against communism was a farce. It was about US expansion around the world under the pretext of curbing the advance of communism. With McCarthyism, they created the Red Scare in American society. They used this to criminalize communism, but only to maintain the internal cohesion of the US people.

This was a pretext for building the power of the military, which came to Latin America with anti-communism. There were sixty communists in Bolivia and [the anti-communists] had an army of thirty thousand men. The Communist Party in Bolivia was a peaceful party and never declared civil war. It took part in democratic election campaigns. But the armed forces in Bolivia were set up according to anti-communist doctrine. Because the United States said that the workers, peasants, indigenous women, miners, etc. were communists, the army fought the miners, workers, peasants, etc.

With the fall of the Berlin Wall, the anti-communist war was replaced by the war on drugs. They said that drug trafficking corrupts and destroys society. But for what? To create the DEA and have it interfering in Bolivia’s domestic affairs.

But let’s look at two cases. In 2001, when the United States invaded Afghanistan, there was twenty times less opium production than today. What fight against drugs are we talking about? There are seven US bases in Colombia and a large part of the US Southern Command. Colombia is a US-occupied country and the largest net producer of cocaine. Where is the fight against drug trafficking there? Where are the DEA and the US soldiers?

Today they have the war on terror. They called us seditious and terrorists, a narco-government, etc. But where are the terrorists?

ANTON FLAIG

While the DEA was expelled from Bolivia in 2008, according to various reports, drug trafficking activities increased with DEA support. What do you think about that?

JUAN RAMÓN QUINTANA

Historically in Bolivia, the DEA was part of the drug trafficking problem and never part of the solution. I’ll give you three clear examples.

The DEA was involved in exporting drugs from the Serranía de Caparuch to feed the financial system and purchase weapons for the civil wars in Central America under the command of Oliver North. In both cases, the CIA was involved in the export of cocaine. Here in Bolivia, there are two cases in which the DEA was involved in the export of four tons of cocaine that left from El Alto and was then detained in Peru.

In addition, you have other cases of DEA agents being involved in drug trafficking. It’s not just me saying it. There are books by former DEA agents who confess that the DEA was involved in the protection of drug trafficking, in the production of cocaine, in the protection of international cocaine routes. Michael Levine wrote about it. He is an ex-DEA agent who worked in Bolivia and Argentina. He reported that Luis García Meza’s military coup in 1980 was financed with the support of the CIA and drug trafficking.

Who believes today that the war on drug trafficking is achieving victories? Quite the opposite. It’s been a resounding failure.

ANTON FLAIG

It’s interesting that in Evo Morales’s cabinets there were union leaders, academics, ex-guerrillas along with you, a high-ranking former soldier. Why did Morales create such a diverse government, including certain tensions?

JUAN RAMÓN QUINTANA

Previous governments didn’t reflect society. Evo pursued the indigenous Andean logic of weaving together relationships. For Evo, power is not the predominance of one man’s decision but knowing how to weave things together. In the cabinet, there were miners, workers, indigenous women, artisans, ex-soldiers, and middle-class intellectuals.

On any political decision, you had the possibility of hearing an opinion from any of these different social actors. There were always discrepancies, there was always debate. But the political decision was enriched by the plural combination of everyone’s thinking.

ANTON FLAIG

There were strong criticisms when you said, a few days before the coup in 2019, “We are going to be the second Vietnam for the United States.” Why did you say that?

JUAN RAMÓN QUINTANA

The right wing will use anything the government says for their own political ends. If we say that [my speech] contributed to a climate of social tension, that was due to the Right’s manipulation of my simple statement that “My greatest wish is that Bolivia will be a Vietnam against the empire.”

But what revolutionary doesn’t want his homeland to be another Vietnam? If not, what is the point of being anti-imperialist?

Today the greatest threat to humanity is Western European and US imperialism, allied in NATO. This is the imperialism that has destroyed Afghanistan, which is destroying Iraq, which is destroying Yemen, which is destroying the Middle East, which is destabilizing the region.

It is also an imperialism in crisis, unable to stand on its own two feet. Imperialism sustains itself by exploiting society, looting natural resources, exploiting the labor force, concentrating wealth in a few hands. We have 1 percent of society ruling 50 percent of the world’s wealth. Do you think this is rational?

This armed imperialism is the expression of a global capitalist system — as Vladimir Lenin said, in the higher phase of capitalism. It can only survive through war. Our proposal is the defeat of the logic of the war industry, the system based on war.

To say that Bolivia can become another Vietnam — well, politically, I believe that this is what any progressive, humanist, solidaristic citizen of the Left aspires toward. It’s the minimum we should be proposing. When you think of Vietnam, you think of a nation in arms, a poor and battered people invaded by the greatest power in the world, which showed it could defeat the empire.

Obviously, this is going to generate a lot of controversy on the Right, which defends the empire. The media in Bolivia are transmission belts for the project of imperial domination. They are defending the destruction of humanity, whereas we defend humanity and Mother Earth. That is why we are anti-imperialists. Because we want peace. Because we don’t want supremacy but equality and justice. So what I said was not a militaristic position but political opposition to imperial militarism.

Some people didn’t believe that a coup would take place in Bolivia. But when you have a political project of emancipation, of independence from the empire, a coup is inevitable. Because the United States cannot accept any country in Latin America not obeying its strategic and geopolitical interests. All the countries that have opposed the United States in the last hundred years have suffered imperial punishment or military invasion, coups, assassinations, or the destruction of the government.

ANTON FLAIG

You are a controversial but also popular figure, and recently you published your new book. What do you see as your future role in Bolivia’s “change process”?

JUAN RAMÓN QUINTANA

I am trying to make young people aware of their responsibility toward humanity. I want to see them have an ethical, political, and moral conduct that is anti-imperialist, anti-capitalist, anti-colonialist, and anti-fascist. So my work will focus on political education.

Capitalism is an exhausted project. So we need to think about an alternative. To think about this philosophy of living well (vivir bien), an anti-imperial thought that also has a global projection. I see myself as a humble teacher of this generation of young people, to try to make them understand our history.

We need to push back against the history we’ve been taught for 180 years. The nineteenth century saw the indigenous movement fight to preserve their lands against the siege of big mining and the big landowners trying to expropriate them. If you expropriate the lands of a community, you are also destroying their culture, their language, their customs, their ancestral memory.

That history has always been hidden from us to deny the leading role of the worker, the farmer, the peasant woman. My greatest wish is to teach this hidden history. If I can have that job in MAS, then I will be truly happy.

ANTON FLAIG

If you could give advice to any member of the government, what would it be?

JUAN RAMÓN QUINTANA

I don’t usually give advice, but I’ll make a simple recommendation, for MAS and the government especially. If power is not understood in the right way, we are doomed to defeat.

The Right wants power and is willing for people to be massacred — as in Senkata and Sacaba — so it can have it. This power has no morals or scruples in imposing dominion over others.

But our power is not the Western concept of power, a concentration of privileges. Rather, it is a tool for liberation. Power is not a means to usurp what others have. It is doing everything possible so that others can live well. Power is not about command from the heights of public office but obedience to the collective will — guaranteeing collective interests.

### Brazil

#### US-Brazilian relations are lip service for a legacy of imperial regime changes and meddling in governance structures to promote anti-communism regionally.

Cleveland-Stout, 3-31-2024 (Nick Cleveland-Stout, Nick Cleveland-Stout is a researcher at the Quincy Institute., "On 60th Anniversary Of Us-Backed Coup, Brazilians Ask Us To Declassify Records," Truthout, https://truthout.org/articles/on-60th-anniversary-of-us-backed-coup-brazilians-ask-us-to-declassify-records/, accessed on 4-29-2024)

On the one hand, U.S. support for the coup laid bare the hypocrisy of America’s supposed commitment to sovereignty and democracy. Gone was the Kennedy administration’s promise to reject a “Pax Americana enforced on the world by American weapons of war.” The Cold War logic of siding with anti-communist dictators for the purpose of defeating the Soviet Union prevailed. Washington may have lost China, but it won Brazil — or so the thinking went.

However, even the most cynical arguments for aligning with undemocratic regimes for a strategic purpose often failed to bear fruit, given that many of these regimes departed from U.S. policy on key issues. Many historians of the U.S.-Brazil relationship contend that during this period their ties at times more closely resembled rivals rather than close partners. Rubens Ricupero, a former diplomat and minister of finance of Brazil, writes that, “Little by little, doubts turn[ed] into disappointment, and this le[d] to gradual disengagement in relation to the regime they had helped to create.”

When it first took power, Brazil’s military dictatorship closely followed Washington’s lead. Goulart was out, as was his “Independent Foreign Policy,” a non-alignment stance that emphasized self-determination, decolonization, and non-intervention, devised by the ousted president’s predecessor, Janio Quadros. In line with Washington’s desires, the dictatorship, which rotated through five different military general-presidents between 1964 and 1985, broke off relations with Cuba and even assisted the U.S. in its occupation of the Dominican Republic in 1965.

Washington also saw Brazil as a key ideological partner in destabilizing leftist regimes across Latin America. As one Brazilian general put it, the United States wanted Brazil “to do the dirty work.” And it did. Most prominently, the Brazilian regime played a critical role in the overthrow of the democratically-elected government of Salvador Allende in Chile,. even secretly bringing members of the Chilean military to Brazil to discuss the potential coup. Brazil under the generals also participated in Operation Condor, the secret cooperation of right-wing military dictatorships in much of Latin America to assassinate, or “disappear” perceived leftists and other dissidents during the 1970s.

Over time, the Brazilian regime’s alignment with the U.S. waned and tensions bubbled up. Dr. Luiz Alberto Moniz Bandeira writes in his book “Brazil-United States: An Emerging Rivalry,” that “automatic alignment with State Department guidelines could no longer continue for long, as it no longer effectively corresponded to the national interests of a developing country that aspired to become a power.”

Despite the fact that the U.S. wanted the benefits of outsourcing its dirty work, it was not willing to accept the consequences that came with greater military autonomy for Brazil. Dr. Eduardo Svartman, a political science professor at the Federal University of Rio Grande do Sul, told Responsible Statecraft that one early issue that emerged was over Brazil’s request for F-5 fighter jets.

“In the eyes of American politicians, if the great threat in Latin America was communist insurgents, there was no point to sell or transfer modern supersonic fighter jets to Latin American countries when helicopters would do the job much better,” Svartman said.

The Brazilian government disagreed, believing it was important to have a modern military in order to project power in South America. The generals accordingly grew more reliant on Europe, buying several Mirage fighter aircrafts from France. They eventually pushed the F-5 sale through several years later, but it was an early lesson that the U.S. may not be their most reliable partner.

Though the U.S. remained an important supplier of critical components for Brazil’s burgeoning national arms industry, Brazil’s supply of U.S.-made arms imports decreased from 92% to 14% of its total arsenal over the course of the dictatorship.

The U.S. also grew frustrated with Brazil’s move towards positions associated with the non-aligned movement. Though Brazil was never a full member of the movement, in the early 1970s, it supported the decolonization of the Lusophone countries in Africa, emphasized non-intervention, and recognized the MPLA in Angola. Elements of the Independent Brazilian Foreign Policy had returned.

Perhaps the biggest source of tension between the U.S. and Brazil was over the development of a nuclear program. Brazil refused to join the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, arguing that nuclear technology was vital for its development. After the U.S. suspended the supply of enriched uranium for Brazil’s research reactors, the regime turned to West Germany and negotiated a major nuclear agreement in 1975.

In an internal report, the CIA claimed that Brazil’s nuclear ambitions posed a “fundamental challenge” to U.S.-Brazil relations. Without informing the Brazilians, newly-elected Vice President Walter Mondale tried to lobby the German government to cancel the agreement.

Washington also grew frustrated with the generals’ authoritarianism and human rights abuses. The regime passed a series of “institutional acts” — the first of which came just days after the coup — that gave them sweeping powers, including suspending the rights of opposition leaders and power to declare a recess in Congress. Ricupero writes that “with each new attack on the legal order or violation of rights, the embassy in Rio de Janeiro was forced into dialectical contortions to calm the State Department’s unrest.”

Pressure on rising authoritarianism and the nuclear issue came to a head during the Carter administration, which applied human rights as a criteria for military assistance more directly. After the Carter State Department criticized Brazil for its human rights abuses in 1977, the Brazilian government retaliated by suspending the Joint Military Commission between the U.S. and Brazil, its Naval Mission, and a long-standing bilateral military accord. According to Washington’s then-ambassador to Brasilia, Robert Sayre, “U.S.-Brazil relations just went to pieces.”

Despite a brief rapprochement with the election of Ronald Reagan as president in 1980, Brazil became critical of Washington’s revival of more interventionist policies under his administration. Washington’s decision to side with Britain against neighboring Argentina during the Falklands/Malvinas War in 1982 confirmed Brazilian suspicions that the U.S. was not a reliable partner. For the first time ever, “the hypothesis of war with the United States became an object of study in the Armed Forces,” writes Bandeira.

Brazil also opposed the so-called Reagan Doctrine, which sought to overthrow leftist governments in Central America and southern Africa. The U.S. had become not just a distant partner but something altogether new: an emerging rival. Many of these disputes between the two countries remained well into the period of democratization that began in 1985.

There is a lot that is still unknown about this chapter in Brazil’s history, and the U.S.’ relationship to the military regime. Peter Kornbluh, a senior analyst at the National Security Archive who also served as the liaison between the U.S. and Brazilian governments for the Truth Commission, estimates there are still thousands of records that remain classified, including many sensitive records from the CIA and the Department of Defense.

“[T]he degree to which the United States is sitting on documentation about repression in Brazil is the degree to which the United States is not assisting Brazilian society in reminding itself about the horrors of what happened behind closed doors in secret detention centers,” Kornbluh told Responsible Statecraft.

To start, President Biden could honor a request from 16 Brazilian civil society organizations to declassify these records. The groups’ appeal states that declassification would “provide valuable information about human rights violations committed during the Brazilian dictatorship and clarify the degree of the United States’ involvement in or knowledge of these events. This act of transparency would also strengthen the foundations of the U.S.-America relationship, fostering trust and collaboration on important issues such as human rights, democracy, and regional stability.”

### Chile

#### Chile’s history of imperialism and popular movements offers important lessons in the formation of structures of oppression or resistance.

Ackerman, 9-25-2023 (Alex Ackerman, "Chile 50 Years Later: Imperialism's Blight Still Reverberates," Hampton Institute, https://www.hamptonthink.org/read/chile-50-years-later-imperialisms-blight-still-reverberates, accessed on 4-29-2024)

September 11, 2023 marked the 50th anniversary of the devastating US-backed coup in Chile that resulted in the death of President Salvador Allende and the installation of fascist dictator Augusto Pinochet. The years that followed under the regime were marked by state-sanctioned disappearances, torture of dissidents, widespread poverty, and systematic repression. In looking back on this day in history, a day that would forever change the course of the country, it is important to connect the example of Chile to the broader structure of imperialism and its manifestations, both past and present. The tactics employed in fomenting destabilization of the country and its subsequent regime change are not an historical aberration; rather, they represent the tactics and aims of imperialism, epitomizing the very intent of the system: exploitation of the people and resources of the Global South for the enrichment of the Global North, especially the United States. Such a system has unleashed incalculable harm as a result of the hundreds of violent interventions motivated by greed and financial interests. However, the case of Chile is not one of deference; the resistance and organization of the working class stands as testament to the collective power that stands to threaten imperialist hegemony, in spite of the numerous contradictions with which it dealt. Through linking Chile to the ways in which imperialism functions historically and currently, a deeper understanding of the history and function of imperialism as a system can emerge. The case of Chile exemplifies the continuous provokation of unrest and instability as a pretext for intervention and control, thereby securing Western economic interests via imperialist tactics and violently maintaining their hegemony. Furthermore, popular resistance to this foreign domination has been violently repressed both historically in Chile and currently, as workers have encountered brutal state-sanctioned violence in the name of anti-communism.

This coup is a harrowing moment in Chilean and world history, as it marks not only the death of former president Salvador Allende, but also the ushering in of a fascist dictatorship that would loom over Chile for 17 years and still haunts the country to this day. On September 11, Chilean military leadership, which had been incorporated into Allende’s government, launched the coup that would usurp Allende; they initially occupied Valparaíso and subsequently moved in on Santiago, wherein soldiers attacked Chileans on the ground while simultaneously bombing the presidential office, El Palacio de La Moneda. In the days following the swift and ruthless coup, the regime unleashed atrocities on the Chilean people in order to consolidate power and eliminate any potential threat to their authority. Thousands were kidnapped and held hostage in the national stadium, where ultimately they were tortured and massacred by government firing squads. Even the smallest hint of association with support of Allende, or the indigenous and working class masses more broadly, was a death sentence. The leaders of the coup and dictatorship openly admitted that these anti-democratic massacres were fueled by virulent anti-communism, though they claimed to have “freed” the country. For almost two decades, Pinochet oversaw an uninterrupted campaign of terror that claimed at least 3,000 lives and was characterized by extrajudicial kidnapping and trafficking, in addition to widespread poverty and income inequality.

While the actual day of the coup is significant, it did not occur in isolation nor spontaneously; rather it was the result of a coordinated effort by the Chilean bourgeoisie and the United States government to usurp Allende. In fact, the Chilean working class had thwarted years of attempted sabotage, and the coup was therefore a last resort. The right-wing opposition, consisting of the Christian Democratic Party and the National Party, used any means at their disposal to manufacture unrest across Chile in order to delegitimize Allende’s government, led by the Popular Unity party, and restore the conditions that served their own interests and augmented their personal profit at the cost of the Chilean masses. As a developing country, Chile depended on copper as its main export, accounting for 76.9% of all exports in 1970. Therefore, when copper miners launched strikes across the country in 1972, the entirety of Chile was forced to endure the ramifications that such shortage of production inflamed. Supported by the opposition-led Congress, these mobilizations facilitated calls for regime change, reflecting their reactionary nature and more insidious purpose. Such strikes were not uncommon, and many petty-bourgeois professionals stood on the wrong side of history in their desire for greater personal comfort. For example, with aid and training from the US, Chilean bus owners that dominated the transport sector called an indefinite strike, aggravating already precarious conditions and further paralyzing the country. The 600 state buses stood in stark contrast to the 5000 privately owned buses that no longer offered transportation to and from the factories, resulting in the disturbance of the supply chain and the loss of millions of dollars.

In addition to the economic pressures, the Chilean opposition used their control of Congress and the Supreme Court to obstruct Allende’s governance and strip the legality of his executive authority. For example, the legislature launched a boycott against the promoters of state-controlled food distribution, leveling accusations against top officials to discredit their competence and integrity, resulting in their acquiescence or expulsion. At least two intendants and seven ministers in Allende’s government were removed by the opposition; they even attempted to dismiss 15 ministers at once, although this specific effort failed. Congress also led continuous efforts to obstruct the legal expropriation of industries that would have further entrenched the power of Popular Unity and cemented their shift away from the capitalist mode of production and imperialist collaboration. In this manner, the opposition stirred political conflict, expanding power that benefited them while attempting to dispute that which Allende held through the executive branch. Furthermore, the military played a role in fabricating this crisis of legitimacy, as they threatened to mutiny if Allende violated the Constitution, of which the right-controlled legislature had control to amend. On June 29, 1973, the military would foreshadow their destruction of democracy, revealing their true face with an unsuccessful coup attempt wherein a small faction of officers attacked La Moneda with tanks and soldiers shot civilians, ultimately killing 22 people. In this instance, Pinochet remained loyal to the forces that defended Allende, who was blind to the fate that awaited him. In the aftermath of the failed uprising, the legislature blocked Allende from declaring a state of emergency, further entrenching their own power while provoking more instability. The political conniving that ensued after Allende took office thus demonstrates the lengths to which the opposition felt threatened by the ongoing project of nationalization that Allende undertook.

These political ploys were not limited to the Chilean government, but also included support from the US government. The role of the United States in generating social, political, and economic chaos cannot be understated. In seeking to maintain cheap access to Chile’s copper, former employees of US Information Services in Chile instructed Chilean fascist groups, such as Homeland and Freedom, to provoke violence and terrorize the Chilean people with the goal of justifying a coup. These were not solitary acts; rather, they formed a right-wing mass movement fueled by anti-communism that sought to implement a neoliberal, capitalist order in Chile. This neoliberal policy would eventually come to fruition with the aid of the Chicago Boys, economists who studied under Milton Friedman and oversaw the realization of neoliberal policy in Chile once Pinochet had seized power. In addition to aiding fascists, the Chilean military itself received training from the US, with more than 4,000 officers attending courses in the US or Panama Canal area since 1950, as well as $45 million dollars in aid from the Pentagon since Allende took office. By incorporating the military into the government, his hand forced due to gridlock by the right-wing legislature and judiciary, Allende unwittingly signed his own death certificate.

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Another means by which the US engineered the conditions for regime change in 1973 can be found in its economic warfare against Chile, specifically through boycott and sanctions. By preventing the import of spare parts, the conspirators hoped to halt production in factories, stifling the economy and thus fomenting further social unrest due to this manufactured scarcity. These sanctions affected all aspects of life, as food distribution became a crucial focus amongst the working class as an immediate result of limited supplies; the presence of black markets and the issue of hoarding necessitated the creation of direct supply systems, eliminating the role of intermediaries, whose petty-bourgeois role aligned them with the opposition. This ingenuity on the part of the Chilean people demonstrates their commitment to a government that operated in service of the interests of the masses rather than the few elite, in addition to the innovation that is possible when people organize, especially in the face of such monumental adversity as US imperialism.

Just as the US weaponized sanctions against Chile during Allende’s tenure in office, US sanctions today impact almost one third of the world population, including those from Syria, Zimbabwe, Venezuela, Cuba, Iran, and the DPRK. This policy is an act of warfare itself, designed to intentionally target those most vulnerable and to sow discord amongst the people, ripening the conditions for regime change. The extremely limited supply of food and medical supplies, as well as restrictions applying to international trade, entail a disenfranchised population that struggles to survive on a day-to-day basis. In this manner, sanctions elucidate the connection between the economic and political aspects of imperialism, given that the United States and international bodies such as the International Monetary Fund will contribute “aid” and facilitate trade so long as the respective government heeds the wishes of its neo-colonial puppet masters. Often, a small comprador class will collaborate with the Western imperialist forces, securing personal enrichment at the cost of adhering to neoliberal policy imposed by Western powers, characterized by austerity, free markets, and, in the case of the Global South, inexpensive exports, especially of raw materials. In the case of Chile, the right-wing opposition comprised the few elite who wanted to institute neoliberalism, implicating the entire country in the imperialist machinations of the United States. Thus, the Chilean struggle against imperialism took on a national character, as the fate of the country and what it meant to be Chilean stood in question, while simultaneously belonging to the collective efforts of the international proletariat.

The US imperialism that deposed Allende in 1973 is the same imperialism that currently operates around the world and informs international politics. In Latin America alone, the US has intervened in at least 15 countries, including Bolivia, Nicaragua, Guatemala, Honduras, Brazil, Cuba, Haiti, Venezuela, Panama, and Uruguay. This unfettered violence has resulted in the destruction of democracy and even the very fabric of the countries themselves, as evidenced by the resurgence of open-air slave markets in Libya after the NATO-led operation that resulted in the death of Gaddafi in 2011. In this manner, the US has made clear that the unending pursuit of profit and capitalist expansion will eclipse any moral goodwill or qualms about the ordinary people who face the brunt of being caught in the crossfires of imperialism. The magnitude of resources that the United States poured into regime change in Chile demonstrates the lengths to which they have gone and will continue to go in order to preserve their hegemony and maintain the capitalist-imperialist system that continues to shape current global relations From Iran to Korea, from Syria to Chad, from Vietnam to Ghana, the US empire has unleashed its full arsenal against the colonized and working class masses, deposing leaders across the Global South for threatening the imperialist hegemony that has enriched a few at the cost of the exploitation of billions of people. Important to note is the fact that this imperialism is not a relic of the past, but rather a structure that has evolved concurrently with the changing conditions of an increasingly globalized and digitized world. For example, the Organization of American States (OAS) orchestrated a coup in Bolivia that installed right-wing leader Jeanine Áñez, utilizing bogus statistics and the threat of military violence to unseat democratically elected former president Evo Morales. Morales had presided over a government responsible for a 42% reduction in poverty, as well as the empowerment of historically marginalized indigenous populations and a greater emphasis on environmental protection. These modern machinations of imperialism function in the same manner as they did in 1973, revealing the serpentine nature of empire and its relentless cruelty in perpetuating capitalism and neo-colonialism.

The weaponization of sanctions, as exemplified in the case of Chile, highlights the importance of organization and national unity among those affected, given that the United States’ express aim is to manufacture forced scarcity in order to destabilize and undermine those countries that resist the encroachment of American empire. In July 2021, the ongoing embargo by the US against Cuba, coupled with even more dire conditions arising from the COVID-19 pandemic, sparked counter-revolutionary protests against the government that the United States exploited for their own purposes. This attempted color revolution mirrors the various ways in which the US manipulated the material conditions in Chile with the aim of inciting the overthrow of Allende; only the sacrifice and mass organization of the Chilean working class prevented his earlier demise, which subsequently impelled the US and Chilean elite to their last resort: the coup. The swift implementation of neoliberal policy in Chile, in tandem with the brutal repression of the Pinochet regime, sharply contrasts the previous emphasis on nationalization and agrarian reform under Allende that alleviated the harsh conditions of poverty. The resulting widespread hardship endured by the Chilean people serves as the basis of the model inflicted on countries around the world; in other words, it is the intended consequence, not an aberration or mistaken oversight. What the Chilean people suffered, the US hopes to inflict on Cuba and other countries who resist its hegemony. In fact, the US actively engenders Cuban suffering and obstructs the Cuban people’s right to self-determination because of its continuous struggle against imperialism. For example, despite Cuba developing a vaccine with an efficacy rate of 92 percent, rivaling that of vaccines produced in the United States, a shortage of syringes due to the embargo prevents Cuba from ensuring its citizens' health, even though the vaccine is readily available to be produced. This deliberate approbation of hardship for the Cuban people by the US government serves as an example of the US denial of Cuba’s right to self-determination, exemplifying how rather than championing self-determination, the United States is its active adversary.

In the midst of United States interference in the conditions of Chile before the coup itself, contradictions emerged specifically amongst the Chilean left from which the left today can learn and use to discern its own path forward. The Chilean working class understood the necessity of community self-defense and organized vigilance committees in order to prevent right-wing sabotage and protect against US-funded fascist violence. This protection was a matter of utmost urgency: military violence manifested across the country in the form of raids, including of cemeteries, under the pretense of searching for illicit weapons, in addition to the looming presence of extrajudicial right-wing groups. However, the issue of taking up arms presented itself with many difficulties due to right-wing interference by the legislature and judiciary. While extrajudicial violence carried out by right-wing fascists received monetary and instructional support from the American state department, the Chilean people were legally not entitled to bear arms and thus take up armed self-defense. In attempting to negotiate with the Christian Democratic Party, Allende was forced into a position wherein he could not risk further alienating this wing of the opposition, who would only balk at the left demonstrating an explicit show of force. Thus, Allende was caught between the growing desire on the left for the right to bear arms and the consequences of enabling this form of defense on his success with maintaining any semblance of cooperation with the other branches of government.

This specific contradiction that arose amongst the left reflects a growing class consciousness that developed concurrently with the highly systematized organization of the working class in their defense of Allende’s government. The steadfast determination of the Chilean working class maintained the functioning of the mines and factories, as they organized under the slogan “popular power,” or poder popular. Embodying this slogan in every aspect of their praxis, the Chilean masses developed autonomous forms of food distribution, transportation, union protection, and even self-governance. Consequently, workers found themselves directly immersed in the contradictions concomitant with the nationalization of various industries. Though these changes facilitated greater worker participation and control, the nature of the state itself remained unchanged, and the bourgeoisie maintained their grasp of the means of oppression against the proletariat. These conundrums reveal the inherent limitations of liberal democracy, as well as the dangers of granting concessions to the right; the right will always manipulate the verbiage of the law, and even the law itself, in order to gain more power at the cost of progress made by the left. Thus, the left today can call awareness to the fact that genuine revolution will not take place in the form of the ballot or liberal reformism; only through the complete seizure of the state and the suppression of the bourgeoisie by the proletariat can an end to capitalism and imperialism be achieved.

After decades of repression and subsequent papering over the past, Chile is just now beginning to contend with its history. The government announced at the end of August that it would play a more central role in leading the search for the almost 1500 people forcibly disappeared by the Pinochet regime, demanding cooperation from the military, which has historically feigned ignorance as to its crimes. The number of families torn apart by the dictatorship spans beyond those tortured, executed, and dumped in mass graves; at least 20,000 infants were stolen from their families and trafficked into other countries, primarily the United States. Such institutionalized, state-sanctioned devastation bespeaks the cruelty on which these structures of inequality rely. No aspect of life has remained impervious to this government repression, and the ramifications of the regime reverberate through the world to this day. Though the United States, a settler-colonial state founded on slavery and genocide, will never address its own past, it is the task of the left–still scattered and reeling in many ways from previous decades of coordinated anti-communist and racist repression–to reckon with this history and adapt to the current material conditions that dictate the most immediate concerns. An increasingly prevalent rise in right-wing censorship and an institutionalized erasure of history necessitates even greater urgency in confronting the ongoing escalation of domestic and international state-sanctioned violence.

The lessons the left can learn from Chile assume an even greater importance in this current context of state-sanctioned repression. The United States government is currently escalating state violence against its own population, as evidenced by the RICO charges brought against Stop Cop City protestors in Atlanta. The collective, organized effort of these forest defenders reflects a growing resistance to this imperialist police state in spite of the immense resources levied against those who dare to challenge its hegemony. Furthermore, this brutality is not exclusive to the imperial borders of the United States. The people of Palestine, Kenya, and Haiti, among numerous other countries, continue to challenge the brutal violations of their right to sovereignty and self-determination. In this manner, the imperialist violence occurring today parallels that which occurred in Chile in 1973.

Chile stands as a principal testament to the viciousness inherent to capitalist imperialism, as well as the power and necessity of unified, working class organization. Imperialism is a global force, and its enforcers are highly organized and have proven that they will use any and all means in order to preserve their power. Thus, it is our collective responsibility to organize, and the example of Chile illuminates the multitude of possibilities that such organization can inspire, with purposeful mobilization guided by concrete goals that do not underestimate the primary enemy of the world. Then and now, Chile shows that revolution is not some distant ideal but rather an immediate possibility; Chile shows that the masses control their own destinies, and that a better world is ours to win.

### Colombia

#### The US uses anti-trafficking policies and broad ‘engagement’ agendas as cover for anti-leftist military campaigns and expansions of the prison industrial complex globally – refuse further cooperation between the US & Colombia

Whitney, 7-20-2022 (W. T. Whitney, W.T. Whitney Jr is a retired pediatrician and political journalist living in Maine., "Prisoner Simón Trinidad Is A Victim Of The Toxic Us/ Colombia Alliance," CounterPunch.org, https://www.counterpunch.org/2022/07/20/prisoner-simon-trinidad-is-a-victim-of-the-toxic-us-colombia-alliance/, accessed on 4-29-2024)

Simón Trinidad’s 72nd birthday is July 30. Don’t think about sending him a card. U.S. prison authorities have blocked his mail since 2004. Extradited from Colombia, he would remain in solitary confinement until 2018. He is lodged in a maximum-security federal prison in Colorado.

As a leader of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), Trinidad was in charge of political education and propaganda. He was captured in Ecuador in 2003, with CIA assistance. He had been conferring there with a United Nations official about the release of FARC-held prisoners.

Transferred to Colombia, Trinidad was a high-profile prisoner. He had family connections with upper elements of Colombian society and had been a lead FARC negotiator in peace talks with Colombia’s government from 1998 to 2002. The Colombian government and its U.S. ally might have detected a propaganda advantage in a public trial and severe punishment. Putting him away, out of sight, as a prisoner of war in Colombia would have offered little gain.

Ideas may also have cropped up that Trinidad extradited would be an object lesson for Colombia’s political dissidents, display damage done to the FARC, and advertise the newly strengthened U.S. – Colombian alliance. Colombian officials asked the U.S. government to request his extradition.

U.S. Plan Colombia took effect in the early 2000s. At the cost eventually of more than $10 billion, the U.S government provided military equipment, intelligence services, and funding for Colombia’s military, police, and prisons. The purpose, claims the U.S. Global Leadership Coalition was “to provide security and economic development assistance to help combat the spread of narcotics … and promote economic growth.”

Narco-trafficking was a secondary matter. Plan Colombia was mainly about fighting leftist insurgents, primarily the FARC. A stiffened alliance was background to the targeting of Trinidad and to enhanced political oppression in Colombia.

Interviewed recently, Colombian historian Renán Vega Cantor mentions “80 years, during which Colombia became the main US ally in the region.” He cites seven U.S. military bases, “a U.S. presence in 50 [other] places …[and] 25 secret U.S. agencies” operating in Colombia. Crucially, the paramilitaries, long notorious as agents of deadly violence, are “Colombian Army proxies sponsored, financed, trained, and supported by the United States, which have carried out all kinds of atrocities that the Armed Forces, openly, cannot legally carry out.”

Says Vega Cantor, “Plan Colombia militarized [Colombian] society in an impressive way, propelling the growth of the Colombian Armed Forces to unthinkable levels.” Colombia presently fields 500,000 troops; its army is one of the world’s largest. Some 50,000 Colombian military and police officers received training at the U.S. Army’s School of the Americas in Georgia, referred to by some as the “school of assassins.”

The U.S. government has readily accepted the cruelty marking its partner’s civil war. Cruelty was on display recently. The Truth Commission, set up via the 2016 Peace agreement between the FARC and Colombian government released its ten-volume Final Report on June 28, 2022. Cruelty portrayed there is vast enough to have infected the criminal justice system of its ally, or so it seems.

Analyst Camilo Rengifo Marín, referring to the Report, takes note of “an armed conflict of more than 60 years that goes on still and led to more than 10 million victims of whom 80 percent were civilians.” He writes that, “50.770 were kidnapped, 121.768 disappeared, 450.664 murdered and 7.7 million forcibly disappeared.” Another observer indicates that, “The report is critical of the role played by various U.S. administrations in developing security policies, in militarizing society, and in hiding relations between paramilitary groups and the Colombian Army.”

The Final Report itself states that, “During many years, the victims got little attention and often were defended only by human rights organizations or by churches. From torture victims and kidnappings by guerrillas … to victims belonging to political movements like the Patriot Union and other opposition groups, those victims were invisible to most Colombians over the course of decades.”

Simón Trinidad has been all but invisible in the United States. U.S. authorities sought his extradition solely because of alleged narco-trafficking. After all, international law does forbid extradition on political grounds, like rebellion. The indictment greeting Trinidad on arrival in Washington charged him with providing material support to terrorists, taking hostages, and dealing in illicit drugs.

It took four trials between 2006 and 2008 to exonerate him on the charges of narco-trafficking and providing material support for terrorists, and to convict him of conspiring to capture three U.S. drug-war contractors. FARC gunfire had brought down their plane. The idea of conspiracy derived exclusively from Trinidad’s status as a FARC member.

In 2008, 57-year-old Trinidad received a 60 -year sentence. Since 2018, he’s been allowed to eat a midday meal in a dining hall. Phone calls are rare. Emails and periodicals are prohibited, along with letters. Trinidad’s only visitors are his lawyers and rarely his brother and Colombians conferring about Peace-Agreement arrangements.

Trinidad faces charges in Colombia relating to possible crimes committed during the Civil War. The Peace Agreement provided for a “Special Jurisdiction for Peace” (JEP in Spanish) whose role is to decide on punishment or pardon for former combatants on both sides charged with crimes. To be pardoned they must tell the truth.

Simón Trinidad is eligible to appear before the JEP. Trinidad’s U.S. lawyer Mark Burton indicated via email that a first step towards his virtual appearance there is for Colombia’s Foreign Ministry to ask the U.S. Justice Department to approve of Trinidad’s appearance before the JEP.

Burton is hopeful. The new foreign minister of the incoming Gustavo Petro government may be receptive; Álvaro Leyva Duran “worked on the negotiating team of the FARC in Havana” during the peace talks, Burton recalls. The JEP could pardon Trinidad or require court appearances in Colombia. Either way, pressure would mount for the U.S. government to commute his sentence to allow for deportation.

President-elect Gustavo Petro, campaigning, protested the ongoing killings of community leaders and former FARC combatants. A central demand of his Historical Pact coalition has been full implementation of the 2016 peace agreement. Ultimately, relief for Trinidad rests on realizing peace in Colombia.

Any affinity of the U.S. government with the goals of the new Historical Pact government would be good news for Trinidad. For the United States to back away, even a little, from intervening in Colombia would also be good news. Secretary of State Blinken, speaking with Petro, “underscored our countries’ shared democratic values and pledged to further strengthen the 200-year U.S.-Colombia friendship,” according to an announcement on June 20. The mouthing of hypocrisy is bad news.

Peace in Colombia, and Trinidad’s fate, depends on the U.S. relaxing its cop-on-the-beat posture for an entire region, that of monitoring any and all stirrings of fundamental political and social change. A new kind of U.S. openness, however, doesn’t jibe with U.S. determination to protect the interests of corporations and the moneyed classes at home and abroad.

Until a new anti-imperialist consciousness has inspired a meaningful and potentially effective, all-points opposition, collective effort is in order now towards organizing and fighting for Simón Trinidad’s return to Colombia. Even so, that struggle would have to fit within a larger context of anti-imperialism, peace now in Colombia, and support for the new government there.

### Costa Rica

#### Humanitarian aid to Costa Rica is cover for extractive mining and oil prospecting missions, destroying the environment and enacting irreparable harm to sacred indigenous lands.

Bessi & Navarro, 2017 (Renata Bessi & Santiago Navarro F. Renata Bessi Is A Freelance Journalist and Contributor The Americas Program And Desinformé Monos. She Has Published Articles In Brazilian Media, RENATA BESSI<br>Renata Bessi is a freelance journalist and contributor the Americas Program and Desinformémonos. She has published articles in Brazilian media: The Trecheiro newspaper magazine, Página 22, Repórter Brasil, Rede Brasil Atual, Brasil de Fato, Outras Palavras. Santiago Navarro is an economist, a freelance journalist, photographer and contributor to the Americas Program, Desinformémonos and SubVersiones., "Southern Command In Costa Rica: Us Occupation Disguised As Humanitarian Aid," Truthout, https://truthout.org/articles/southern-command-in-costa-rica-us-occupation-disguised-as-humanitarian-aid/, accessed on 4-29-2024)

From the top of the great Talamaca mountain range in southern Costa Rica, you can see the Caribbean Sea and the houses of the Bribri and Cabécar Indigenous groups. According to their cosmology, their ancestors are in every tree, in every river and in every living being found in this reserve close to the border with Panama: The place is sacred. But to the Costa Rican government and the United States Southern Command, its value lies in its mineral deposits and oil.

Costa Rica hasn’t had an official army for the last 68 years. However, in 2013, people in the Talamaca region were surprised by the arrival of a helicopter full of uniformed military personnel, whom they immediately identified as being part of the United States Southern Command. The military personnel were playing the role of missionaries, giving Bibles away. However, simultaneously, they were carrying out various military training activities in the area around Alto Cuen, a Bribri community.

“They said they were missionaries, but no one believed them,” Bribri tribe member Leonardo Buitrago Morales told Truthout. “We knew they were looking for something more. The truth is that they want our lands and our forests to make money.”

In addition to the locals, the organization Ceiba Amigos de la Tierra, which promotes sustainable societies through social, economic and environmental justice, also spoke out against the arrival of the eight military personnel, who carried sophisticated equipment including GPS, cameras, altitude and topography meters, firearms and other weapons. The non-governmental organization even filed a complaint with the Costa Rican government, but “the Public Ministry never followed up on it. On the contrary, the complaint was dismissed,” says Henry Picado of the Costa Rican Biodiversity Network.

According to a report by researcher Irene Burgués Arrea, completed with support from The Nature Conservancy, the Talamanca region has been deemed a “priority site” by the US and Costa Rican governments. The Mesoamerican Integration and Development Project plans to build a complex energy infrastructure in this region, including highways and hydroelectric dams. In the Telire, Coen, Lari and Urén Rivers there are 16 hydroelectric projects planned that would affect the ecosystem of the Amistad International Park.

Additionally, studies show that the region is rich in minerals. In 1974, the US-based Alcoa company estimated that there is a 600,000-ton copper deposit in the Ñari River region of the Cabécar’s Chirripó reserve. Similarly, in the mid-1980s, the then-named Fischer-Watt Gold Company — also US based — analyzed soil samples from Tsuköt and found high amounts of gold, up to 7.7 particles per million.

“Humanitarian aid is just a pretense. They’ve already constructed a heliport. And local villagers have found tools used by miners. They’re carrying stones from our lands,” says Rafaela Torres, a member of the Bribri Indigenous group in Alto Uren, a village in the Telire area of Talamanca.

A History of US Involvement

“This isn’t the first time that this sort of thing has happened in Talamanca,” says Buitrago Morales. Since 2008, helicopters have arrived from the Costa Rican Social Security Fund (CCSS), which provides health, water and sanitation services to the public and private sectors. “We were surprised once more with the arrival of an helicopter from CRSS,” Buitrago Morales continues.

Since 2008, in an operation called the “Puentes de Vida para Talamanca” (Talamanca Bridge of Life) Initiative, 16 Southern Command soldiers in coordination with CCSS have helicoptered in 160,000 pounds of material in order to build suspension bridges in the area. “‘Humanitarian aid’ has long been shameless. We know that it’s a front to conduct mining and oil prospecting,” Picado says.

The Talamanca mountain range is the highest elevation in the south of Central America. It extends from the southern part of the Central Valley of Costa Rica and continues through the territory of Panama. (Photo: Santiago Navarro F.)

Meanwhile, the CCSS is planning new incursions into the territory. In August 2016, it announced that it would use drones from the US company Zipline to deliver medicine in the Talamanca Health Area and Star Valley. “They called in all the people of the region and told us they’d be using drones, and said they needed our approval to build an airstrip for their equipment,” says Buitrago Morales. “They spoke of millions of dollars, but we didn’t believe them. They’re just interested in our lands. We don’t trust the government because it hasn’t shown a willingness to support its Indigenous people.”

The Role of the US Southern Command in Costa Rica

The governments of the US and Costa Rica do not make plain the ways in which they’re targeting Talamanca for transnational economic and military objectives. “They hardly ever make their strategic interests public. But we can tell when there are invaders and strange movements, because we know our territory,” Buitrago Morales says.

In 2009, the US Southern Command published a report titled “US Southern Command Strategy 2018: Friendship and Cooperation in the Americas,” in which it revealed its plans in Latin America and the Caribbean.

One of its key points is the importance of guaranteeing the supply of fossil fuels in the US to ensure continued economic growth. “According to the Department of Energy, three of the top four foreign energy suppliers to the US are located within the Western Hemisphere (Canada, Mexico and Venezuela). According to the Coalition for Affordable and Reliable Energy, the US will need 31 percent more petroleum and 62 percent more natural gas in the next two decades. As the US continues to require more petroleum and gas, Latin America is becoming a global energy leader with its large oil reserves and oil and gas production and supplies,” the report states.

In 1998, MKJ Xploration — a company that is part of a consortium including the then-named Harken Energy Corporation — was given the right to explore for fossil fuels in 5,634-square-kilometers in the Caribbean. This included four of the 22 oil blocks that the Costa Rican government had designated for exploration in 1994, affecting part of Talamanca. In 2000, six more blocks were also assigned to the Mallon Oil Company. All three of these companies are from the US.

The United States Southern Command reports that its mission is to “develop … military operations and to promote security cooperation to reach strategic objectives in North America with countries in Central and South America.” Its main lines of action, as outlined in an official note by the Latin American division of the US Army, are fighting the war on drugs and terrorism; providing humanitarian assistance; carrying out exercises and operations in collaboration with the Navy; establishing relations between the public and private sectors; and intervening in the theater of security and cooperation; among others.

Fighting “Drug Trafficking and Terrorism”

Ana Gabriel Zúñiga Aponte is the chief of staff of the Costa Rican Presidential House, and her position includes presiding over the Costa Rican Institute on Drugs and dialoguing with Indigenous groups. When asked about the flights and the presence of the Southern Command in Talamanca, Zúñiga Aponte told Truthout, “The United States’ collaboration with the Costa Rican government has focused on fighting drug trafficking, crime and money laundering. And in order to be effective in this area, investment in aerial surveillance systems and infrastructure is needed.”

According to Costa Rica’s US Embassy website, the Central American country received more than $25 million in assistance between 2009 and 2014 to support three priorities: borders, fair trials and “safe communities.”

Within the framework of fighting terrorism and drug trafficking, between 2011 and 2016, the Special Intervention Unit of Costa Rica participated in police and military activities called “Fuerzas Comando” along with the Southern Command. In May 2016, on the esplanade of the Marine Infantry base in Ancon, Peru, a military competition began, presided over by the chief of Intelligence and Operations Command Specialties of Peru, Maj.-Gen. Moisés Del Castillo Merino. The event lasted 10 days during which Special Forces of 20 North, Central and South American countries participated, including Costa Rica.

“For more than eight years, the Southern Command has been negotiating with the Costa Rican government, in particular offering international cooperation in the form of humanitarian aid and military training of police forces,” Picado says. “This training was put on display by the new government when it repressed protesters demonstrating against the privatization of health care.”

The Southern Command took another step to secure relations with Costa Rica in security matters — particularly in the fight against terrorism and drug trafficking — in 2011, when it financed and inaugurated a new Coast Guard station almost 975-meters high in Puntarenas on the central Pacific coast. The facility includes a new communications center, mooring posts, a maritime mechanics workshop and an extensive dock. “This dock will boost Coast Guard capabilities and increase collaboration between the United States and Costa Rica in the fight against drug trafficking,” Col. Norberto Cintron, chief engineer of the Southern Command, remarked at the opening.

According to Zuiri Méndez, coordinator of the University of Costa Rica’s (UCR) Socio-Environmental “Kiosk” Program, US vessels are allowed to ship to and from Costa Rican ports seamlessly. “For three years now, the Costa Rican Legislative Assembly has allowed American army fleets to use Costa Rican ports,” said sociologist Zuiri Méndez, who has been facilitating organizational strengthening in more than 12 Bribri and Cabécar communities in the Talamanca area since 2008 through a UCR program. “Additionally they can travel unencumbered throughout the country. And they have an agreement with the Ministry of Health allowing their aircraft to fly over all of Costa Rican airspace.”

Capitalizing on Disaster

Indigenous Bribri people celebrate their resistance of several years against the commodification of their forests in the Cordillera de Talamanca, Costa Rica. (Photo: Santiago Navarro F.)

The CCSS and the Southern Command have a team of doctors who visit the village of Piedra Mesa, Telire, in Talamanca every three months. According to the official US Embassy website, these activities have been carried out by the Fund since 2010. “Thanks to the joint work carried out by the Southern Command of the United States, the Costa Rican Social Security Fund, the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Security, Governance and Police, and Limón airport authorities, more than 500 residents of Piedra Mesa, Talamanca have received free medical care,” the Embassy states.

The Southern Command’s most recent opportunity to enter Talamanca’s most remote communities was Hurricane Otto, which passed through Costa Rica and Nicaragua on November 24, 2016. A few days later, it had mobilized four helicopters from the First Battalion’s 228th Air Regiment transporting food, clothing and medicine to the village of Piedra Mesa, Telire. This humanitarian mission was called “Operation Pura Vida,” and involved 16 military doctors, nurses, dentists and other specialists from the Bravo Joint Task Force, which operates from Soto Cano Air Base located in Honduras. Its staff is made up of more than 500 US military personnel and 500 Honduran and US civilians.

US Army Maj. Rosemary Reed participated in the operation, along with engineers and geologists who helped make key measurements to determine the carrying capacity of the rebuilt bridges, note locations and record the extent of damage. “The purpose of the FTC-Bravo carrying out this exercise is to test its ability to react to natural disasters and to interact with the local population in developing relationships with other entities in Central America,” claimed Capt. Lettishia Burchfied, the officer in charge of Operation Pura Vida.

However, some advocates don’t trust this synopsis of the US’s goals in the area. The FTC-Bravo carries out a variety of missions in Central and South America, ranging from supporting US government operations to countering transnational organized crime, as well as providing humanitarian assistance and support around natural disasters and development. According to Picado, the intervention that took place last fall is worrisome because, “It seems more like a pretext, since the effects of Hurricane Otto were minimal in Talamanca. They were almost null, in fact. The most affected areas were on the border with Nicaragua, in the northern region of Upala.”

So, why is the US sending significant numbers of people and supplies into the area?

“The Talamanca mountain range is being mapped by the United States to highlight the various minerals and oil that exist in the region,” Méndez says. “It’s clear that its presence in the region is because of those resources.”

The future of the Southern Command in Costa Rica cannot be predicted, but President Trump’s cabinet appointees may hold some clues. For instance, President Trump chose retired Gen. John Kelly to lead the Department of Homeland Security, a position that includes overseeing the enforcement of immigration laws. General Kelly served as chief of the Southern Command between 2012 and 2016, and was responsible for overseeing a rapid expansion of Special Forces in Latin America. He also encouraged and maintained military cooperation with key partners such as Colombia, Honduras and the rest of Central and South America, all within the framework of fighting drug trafficking and illegal immigration to the US.

“This nomination not only leaves the country of Costa Rica, but all of Latin America unsure about how geopolitical elements will play out,” Picado says.

### Cuba

#### The US uses the false pretenses of Cuba as a ‘failed state’ or ‘humanitarian aid’ as justifications for imperial, anti-communist interventions – don’t assume good faith implementation from a government full of neo-McCarthyism.

Granados Ceja, 2021 (José Luis Granados Ceja, José Luis Granados Ceja is a writer and photojournalist based in Mexico City. He previously worked as a staff writer for teleSUR and currently works on a freelance basis. His stories focus on contemporary political issues, particularly those that involve grassroots efforts to affect social change. He often covers the work of social and labor movements in Latin America., "Don’T Use Cuba Protests To Justify Us Intervention, Say Activists In Mexico," Truthout, https://truthout.org/articles/dont-use-cuba-protests-to-justify-us-intervention-say-activists-in-mexico/, accessed on 4-29-2024)

Rather than alleviating the embargo, U.S. policy makers have actually tried to use the fallout of the impact of the pandemic to tighten the screws on Cuba. Former President Donald Trump implemented nearly 250 new measures against the country in an effort to increase suffering as Cuba reeled from a loss of income from tourism. Biden has refused to lift even these measures, including the ban on remittances to Cuba.

“This is nothing new; they have been trying to overthrow us for 60 years,” said Crespo, who pointed to the United States’s decades-long foreign policy toward Cuba that has consistently fomented dissent.

The U.S. has long funded counterrevolutionary activities, both on and off the island. Writer Alan Macleod revealed how the National Endowment for Democracy (NED), a foundation funded by the U.S. government that works to advance U.S. foreign policy interests, has recruited Cuban artists and musicians, some of whom ended up playing a key role in promoting recent protests for right-wing ends.

Meanwhile, Miami Mayor Francis Suarez said the U.S. should consider bombing the country.

Luis Ángel León López was strident in his criticism of the press coverage of protests in Cuba, arguing that media outlets have tried to craft a story and drive an interventionist narrative, rather than report on what is actually happening.

“They want to depict Cuba as a failed state, as a government that has failed, a process that has failed, from a political point-of-view, from an ideological point-of-view, from an economic point-of-view,” said León. “They lie, they shamelessly lie.”

While voices calling for U.S. intervention in Cuba have been amplified, other perspectives have been smothered.

Mexican President Andrés Manuel López Obrador expressed his solidarity with the Cuban people and rejected interventionism and violence. He also dispatched his Foreign Secretary Marcelo Ebrard to New York, where Mexico used its position as a member of the UN Security Council to call for an end to the blockade of Cuba.

José Eduardo Crespo expressed gratitude for Mexico’s position, calling it a “dignified” and “principled” stance.

The same voices calling for U.S. intervention in Cuba have also made demands to open a so-called humanitarian corridor, a concept that has been rejected by the Cuban leadership as a Trojan horse.

“Some in an intentional and manipulated way adduce the need to implement humanitarian corridors, humanitarian intervention,” said Ernesto Soberón, an official from Cuba’s Foreign Relations Ministry. “[These] are concepts and terms related to situations of armed conflict, serious violations of international humanitarian law, which in no way have anything to do with what is happening in our country today.”

### Ecuador

#### Revolutionary energy is reaching a peak in Ecuador – solidarity across labor, feminist, and indigenous activisms sets the stage for revolutionary success against the neoliberal state

Roar Collective, 2019 (Roar Collective, "Ecuador: A Rebellion For The Renewal Of Struggle," ROAR Magazine, https://roarmag.org/essays/ecuador-a-rebellion-for-the-renewal-of-struggle/, accessed on 4-29-2024)

Over the past days, women, children and elders from the diverse nations and Indigenous communities in Ecuador have paralyzed highways, and carried out assemblies in their communities, neighborhoods, and cities. These dignified women and men, who live at the middle of the world, have risen up to recover and take back their country, their present and their future, which is under threat once more by the same elites as always, allied to the predatory right wing patriarchs that monopolize political life.

With the declaration of a national strike and an Indigenous uprising, they have created a powerful space of discussion that questions the nefarious Decree 883, which dictates austerity measures, the most obvious of which is a dramatic increase in the cost of fuel. “If the price of gas rises, everything gets more expensive, transportation and food get more expensive,” said one Indigenous woman into a microphone in front of a crowd of mobilized community members in the Cotopaxi region.

Communities in the mountains, in the Amazon and along the coast are standing up together. Through their speeches, posters and songs, they are producing a plurality of meanings, and weaving rejection to the issues that affect them: resisting poverty, resisting being subjected to the economic measures and agenda of the International Monetary Fund, and stopping the extractive regime that is destroying their collective wealth.

A LONG TERM STRUGGLE HAS BEEN ACTIVATED

As part of this powerful uprising, which is connected to strikes in the cities, calling up historic Indigenous struggles for land and water, and against oil and gas camps and mining projects which sow misery wherever they operate, is clear. In Ecuador we can tell that a long term struggle has been activated, because while today we see that effort and energy are devoted to rolling back economic austerity, the power of the Indigenous and community struggle demonstrates the frustration of the people with state aggression against their communities.

On October 5, the government of Lenin Moreno declared a sixty day State of Emergency to avoid demonstrations, gatherings and public actions. In response, the president of the Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities of Ecuador (CONAIE), together with members of the Popular Front and the Unified Workers’ Front, responded: “Don’t play with fire, the destiny of 17 million people is at stake.”

In the days following, the CONAIE has announced that Indigenous communities have also declared themselves in a State of Emergency, and stated that they will not allow police of the army to destroy the homes of those they detain, or mistreat women and children. Their communiqué makes clear that anyone found taking part in human rights violations will be brought before Indigenous justice.

The communities that are rising up are doing so with the aim of re-establishing the order of communal life. Indigenous justice does not threaten or contradict the Constitution, nor does it allow rights and guarantees that have been won through organization to be ignored in such an arbitrary and crude manner. The State of Emergency, through an Indigenous lens, is against the detention of more than 477 people, the attacks on many others, and the killing of one.

The images from Ecuador that are spreading around the world today show the decision and the energy of the youth, of children, of women and elders. These images have profoundly moved Indigenous people throughout the continent. The speeches of Indigenous leaders in Ecuador have been seen thousands of times on social media. Their speeches are expansive, they nurture Indigenous struggles and at the same time, they include cities in their demands.

THE DIGNITY OF COMMUNITY STRUGGLES

Students around the country have also powerfully spoken out. The green kerchiefs from recent feminist struggles for legal abortion can also be seen in the images of the demonstrations in the cities, as organized women add their voices and bring with them the capacity to sustain a strike. The cacerolazos (pots and pans demonstrations) convened by womens’ collectives force us to take note of the double workday and the exploitation of women via unpaid work, it also demonstrates how the paquetazo (series of economic reforms ordered by the IMF) will impact them.

Urban women recognize the dignity of community struggles, and seek to add their voices, their screams of frustration, by self-organizing to take the streets.

On October 8th, at the barricades in the Pastaza region, the people demanded the resignation of Lenin Moreno, in other parts of the country, interior ministry buildings have been occupied. The Indigenous movement entered Quito from the south, receiving support and solidarity from working class and poor neighborhoods who joined them to chant: “Join in, pueblo, join the struggle against this government that is against us.”

Social organizations represented by workers unions and others in the cities will now join in the massive National Strike on October 9th. An Indigenous uprising is, once again, at the heart of the struggle, opening a horizon of re-appropriation in the face of an attempt to expropriate all of the peoples of Ecuador. The Indigenous mobilization calls for the generalization of protest actions so that the struggle can grow stronger.

This moment of struggle is a moment to re-appropriate strength and self determination, a time of rebellion towards the production of a renewed sense of struggle, woven together with diverse voices that warn, clearly and firmly: “Not Moreno or Correa, not Lasso or Nebot! The struggle is ours!” This makes clear that this uprising will not end in new alliances between power brokers or in other kinds of patriarchal pacts.

On October 7, Lenin Moreno moved the seat of his government to the coastal city of Guayaquil. His actions remind us of the nervous and fearful priests and colonial bureaucrats during the colonial period, who hid in walled houses and called for military aid, fearing the moment that Indians in resistance would, in the words of Bartolina Sisa, reign again.

From our communities, from the cities we live in, we are and will continue to follow and express solidarity with what is taking place in Ecuador. The strength of Indigenous communities nurtures ours. We raise our voices together and show our support for popular and Indigenous resistance. Here and there, we resist being overseen by the state, and we yell once again that we are moved by a desire to change every single thing.

¡Nos queremos vivas, libres y desendeudadas en todas partes! We want to be alive, free and without debt, everywhere! ¡Que se sigan tejiendo entramados comunitarios y populares de lucha! May community weavings of popular struggle continue to be woven! ¡Que siga creciendo la dignidad! May dignity continue to flourish!

### El Salvador

#### Racialized tropes of El Salvador and violent gangs are not only vile pedagogically but promote interventionist politics under the guise of aid – reject promises of engagement and the political tropes underlying their justifications.

Austin, 2020 (Tyler Austin, Hilary Goodfriend is a doctoral student in Latin American Studies at the Universidad Nacional Autónomo de México (UNAM) in Mexico City., "Explaining El Salvador’s Violence," No Publication, https://jacobin.com/2020/02/el-salvador-violence-hollywood-kid-ms13-hitman, accessed on 4-29-2024)

In recent years, the small Central American nation of El Salvador has become synonymous in the United States with gangs. One organization in particular, MS-13, has captured popular imagination, usually in racist media caricature. This is thanks in no small part to Donald Trump’s bigoted fearmongering. But well before Trump, the US government was at work fomenting the conditions for the gang’s rise and inflating its international profile.

Jimmy Carter ignored Archbishop Oscar Romero’s plaintive request to sever aid to the Salvadoran military dictatorship in 1980, shortly before Romero’s assassination by US-trained death squads. Ronald Reagan escalated and sustained the bloody civil war that ensued, in which US-backed security forces were responsible for over 85 percent of the seventy thousand deaths and ten thousand disappearances suffered during the twelve-year conflict with the leftist insurgency. It was the Clinton administration that escalated the incarceration and deportation of Salvadoran refugees, many of whom adapted to local gang culture in working-class California neighborhoods and prisons, and approved the draconian 1996 immigration reforms that created the foundations for today’s mass deportation machine.

Bush Jr signed the Central American Free Trade Agreement, which further subordinated the region’s labor and natural resources to the demands of US capital, ravaging local economies and spurring US-bound migration beyond even wartime levels. And in 2012, the Obama administration designated MS-13 an international criminal organization on par with the Italian Camorra, Mexico’s Zetas, or the Japanese Yakuza, all while accelerating the detention and deportation of migrants to unprecedented levels.

Decades of bipartisan US security aid fueled El Salvador’s repressive zero-tolerance policing, which radicalized and fortified incipient gang organizations. All this, to say nothing of the preceding century of imperial pillage, intervention, and exploitation, produced a predictably monstrous social formation.

With MS-13 in the spotlight, a flurry of new English-language publications seek to shed light on the gang for a US audience. Few are better positioned to do so than the investigative journalists from the Salvadoran digital magazine El Faro, who gained international acclaim for their reporting on gangs and government corruption. In a recent book, The Hollywood Kid: The Violent Life and Violent Death of an MS-13 Hitman, celebrated El Faro contributors and brothers Óscar and Juan José D’Aubuisson Martínez — nephews of Roberto D’Aubuisson, the notorious death squad leader and founder of the far-right ARENA party — chronicle the devastating story of a notorious MS-13 hitman turned police informant, providing at the same time a detailed history of the gang’s origins and rise within a broader international context.

The Hollywood Kid is a gripping read, thoroughly researched and dramatically conveyed. But the book also reproduces racialized and gendered constructs common to the mainstream discourse on violence and crime in El Salvador. Above all, despite recourse to historical antecedents, the book perpetuates the notion of Salvadoran violence as inevitable, innate, and insuperable.

The Life and Death of a Hitman

The book recounts the life and death of Miguel Ángel Tobar, alias el niño de Hollywood, who gained notoriety within MS-13 before becoming a protected state witness. It begins with his hurried and thoroughly undignified funeral, beset by hostile local gang members, then hopscotches through time with miserable anecdotes from Tobar’s biography, interspersed with historical overviews of the social conflicts that led to the genocidal massacre of 1932, the civil war of 1980–1992, and the UN-negotiated Peace Accords that demilitarized the state and established the fragile and fraught liberal institutions like the National Civil Police now charged with repressing the gangs

The Martínez brothers review the origins of El Salvador’s monocrop export economy, first driven by indigo under Spanish colonization, then coffee, and the sequences of primitive accumulation that drove indigenous inhabitants from their mountainous communal lands and into the hands of the emergent landowning oligarchy. They recount the failed 1932 communist and indigenous uprising in western El Salvador, positioning Tobar as heir to that legacy of repression and bloodshed.

Tobar was born in 1984 to a family of immiserated peons who labored on the large coffee plantations near the Guatemalan border. The authors describe his first attempt at murder when, at the age of eleven, he tried to kill the hacienda foreman who Tobar’s alcoholic father had authorized to regularly rape his sister. A few years later, in the mid-1990s, he would be recruited into a local MS clique led by a deported former national guardsman, alias “Chepe Furia,” who transcended the usual turf disputes to run a powerful organized crime syndicate that dominated western El Salvador.

The Martínez brothers identify Ronald Reagan as an unsuspecting “godfather” of MS-13. They describe early refugees displaced by the civil war as caught between the growing conflagration in El Salvador and the War on Drugs in California. For the nascent Salvadoran gangsters, “Reagan gave them everything they needed to grow. He ensured a constant flow of new members from Central America and at the same time weakened their biggest enemies in California.”

Through interviews with anonymous scattered survivors of those early days, the book provides an overview of the complex milieu in which recent migrants flooded into the veteran Barrio 18 gang while others formed their own groups. Initial MS formations were rooted in metal, marijuana, and satanism. But the original Mara Salvatrucha Stoners would eventually join the Sureño system of Southern California Chicano gangs, governed by the Mexican Mafia, abandoning their rocker identity for the predominant cholo style and tacking a requisite “13” onto their title.

At the intersection of the consolidating mass incarceration regime and the emergent machinery of mass deportation, working-class young Salvadoran refugees were increasingly shuttled into US prisons and deported. They were expelled to a society ravaged by recent armed conflict, the root causes of which remained largely unresolved, and dramatic neoliberal restructuring.

Extremism flourishes in these wretched conditions. Two of the principal social institutions that structure daily life for working-class slums and poor rural enclaves in postwar El Salvador are the gangs and fundamentalist Christian evangelical churches: “Both of them came from the United States, and after they arrived their destinies would be interlaced forever. [. . .] Since the early ’90s both groups saw themselves as reigning over the margins, as giving direction — though by very different means — to the lives of those neighborhoods and villages where the state represents nothing but a distant threat.”

In the swelling ranks of El Salvador’s impoverished unemployed postwar youth, deportees found eager participants for the cliques that would soon become nodes in an international network. The gangs, the Martínez brothers note, have a different ethos than that of, say, extravagant Mexican narcos: “The life of gang soldiers didn’t change much after they earned their letters. It was, and is, a mafia, but a mafia of the poor.” Despite its nationwide extortion system, “the MS-13 economy is barely a subsistence economy” for its tens of thousands of participants.

It was in prison, however, that these street organizations grew into mature criminal enterprises. The authors offer data that points to a remarkably under-examined process: the US export of mass incarceration throughout the region. They note that US-backed anti-gang policing in El Salvador saw the prison population nearly double between 2000–6. In fact, today El Salvador ranks second in the world to the United States for incarceration rates, jailing an astonishing 604 people per 100,000 inhabitants.

The authors claim that “one of the greatest failures of the Salvadoran government was handing the prisons over to the gangs.” They describe the brutal violence between rival groups that drove the government to segregate the burgeoning prison population in the early 2000s, allowing the gangs to consolidate leadership structures nationally.

State actors further contributed to the sophistication of gang leadership during the first administration of the Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front (FMLN), the party of the former leftist insurgency, when members of the security cabinet secretly helped negotiate a truce between the warring parties. The brokers helped facilitate communications to ensure agreements with imprisoned leaders could take effect on the outside, with predictable consequences once the truce collapsed.

Despite the notable reduction in homicides achieved, the strategy — revealed in 2012 by El Faro’s reporting — was met with broad public repudiation: “The government, faced with mass rejection of its peace policy, prioritized raising its popularity over lowering the homicide rate.” The ensuing surge in murders, which peaked in 2015 and 2016, was a reaction from the betrayed gangs. The state’s repressive response to the targeting of public security forces escalated the violence, with US-trained troops forming clandestine extermination groups, essentially reviving wartime paramilitary death squads.

The Hollywood Kid, for his part, managed to evade prison. After years as a loyal foot soldier and dozens of murders to his name, a bloody series of betrayals left Tobar isolated and endangered. In 2010, he flipped, agreeing to testify against Chepe Furia and his underlings.

Tobar spent four years as a protected witness, complementing his meager state rations by selling marijuana that he grew outside the shack on police grounds where he lived with his partner and daughter and, when that failed, shaking down passing cars for spare change. This was where the authors conducted most of their interviews with the Hollywood Kid, restless, undernourished, and stoned.

The Salvadoran state’s capacity to protect its informants is “pathetically inadequate,” and Tobar quickly became the target of gang assassination attempts and threats from crooked cops. Tobar’s testimony brought down an entire MS clique, but, under pressure, he denied his prior implication of two officers in a key homicide. Tobar abandoned his precarious police protection in 2014. He was killed not long after, shot by his former homies after venturing out of hiding to register the birth of his infant daughter at city hall.

No Way Out

The Hollywood Kid is an illuminating glimpse into the workings of a notoriously inaccessible mass criminal enterprise, as well as the failures of the strategies deployed to contain it. Still, its shortcomings are equally revealing.

The gender imbalance among the characters and informants featured in the book is too stark to be ignored. Not until Chapter Six, under a subheading titled “Women,” do the authors half-heartedly recognize this lapse, writing: “When you talk about gangs, you talk about men. This book is no exception. Our history of the Mara Salvatrucha 13 is mainly protagonized by men because more of them tell the stories and explain how the gangs function.” To us, they might have added. This tepid justification, evidently an afterthought, is immediately undermined by the authors themselves in a subsequent paragraph, who note that “there are more women than men in the wider gang structures of El Salvador.”

The women that do appear in the story are mostly downward gazing, furtive figures in the background. Wives making coffee, sisters being raped. Then there’s the vile depiction of Tobar’s mother “rotting” from a venereal disease, suffering from what the authors describe as “the pain in her innards, from which the kid spilled out thirty years ago.” Misogyny, so pervasive in the social relations that structure Salvadoran gangs, pervades these pages as well.

When it comes to Tobar, the authors often adopt the objectifying, external gaze of a nineteenth-century colonial anthropologist examining a lesser species. “There’s something animal about him. About his essence,” they write. This uncomfortable, dehumanizing language of an “animal, predatory essence” recurs throughout the text, naturalizing Tobar’s violent acts and tacitly associating them with his presumed indigenous ancestry. Indeed, in highlighting the pre-Hispanic rituals that imbue contemporary Catholic practice in rural El Salvador, the authors insinuate that ritual bloodshed, human sacrifice even, is some kind of latent impulse that links savage gang violence with a mystified cultural, even racial, heritage.

By essentializing Tobar, the authors essentialize Salvadoran violence. They suggest that El Salvador is trapped in “the cycle of violence, something that will never end because it has no way out.” That’s the final lesson of the book: from bloody pre-Hispanic sacrificial rituals, to the 1932 genocide, to the civil war, and now the gangs, El Salvador is preternaturally condemned to carnage.

In their effort to situate Tobar as the product of historical circumstances — “a long series of violent acts” — the authors resort to tired tropes. The Hollywood Kid renders Salvadoran gang violence into a grotesque, exotic spectacle for a foreign audience. And the analysis, in its excess, borders on nihilism. “The Kid’s story has one consistent thread: everything turns out badly.” El Salvador is portrayed as “a country that, after pitifully trying to hide its face, has shown what it truly is: nothing but war, repression, and hatred.” Far from insightful, the message is easy, and it’s nothing new.

Salvadoran scholar and artist Beatriz Cortez put it best. In a withering 2014 critique of Salvadoran novelist Horacio Castellanos Moya, she writes: “I came to accept that this work did not portray our country, but rather it repeated the official colonialist, racist, globalized, imperialist portrait of Central America. . . . Both in his statements and the form in which time and again he has portrayed the Central American literary universe, he constructs it as other, as an atavistically violent world, an illiterate world, against art and literature, ignorant, obtuse, lacking intelligence.” Cortez’s appraisal of Castellanos Moya resonates here as well.

The hopeless racialized and gendered depiction of Salvadoran violence in The Hollywood Kid sells, especially to a US public. But the book, despite its deft command of history and wealth of information, does much to mystify the social conflict it purports to explain. For US readers committed to repairing the damages wrought by imperialism in the region, and Central Americans organizing for peace, justice, and self-determination, such representations are of little use, and may in fact work against our struggles.

### Dominican Republic

#### US humanitarian & military aid to the Dominican Republic expands fascist military power and crackdowns against protesters and indigenous activists.

Weiss, 2015 (Laura Weiss, Laura Weiss is the Latin America Rights and Security Fellow at the Center for International Policy, and a master’s candidate in Latin American and Caribbean Studies at New York University., "Us Military Aid Supports Anti-Haitian Deportations In The Dominican Republic," Truthout, https://truthout.org/articles/us-military-aid-supports-anti-haitian-deportations-in-the-dominican-republic/, accessed on 4-29-2024)

The United States funds the Dominican military and provides millions of dollars in development and humanitarian aid. US Border Patrol agents monitor the Haitian-Dominican border. In the face of this gross human rights violation, the US should consider withholding some forms of aid to the Dominican Republic.

The US hasn’t made any official statements about what is happening just miles away from our maritime borders. International media, human rights organizations and the UN have denounced the abuses. Martin O’Malley, the former governor of Maryland and mayor of Baltimore, who is running for president, denounced the Dominican Republic’s decision, as did Bill de Blasio, the mayor of New York City, and protesters recently marched on the Dominican Embassy in Washington. But the US government has remained largely silent about the Dominican Republic’s new citizenship ruling.

Until 2010, the Dominican Republic granted automatic citizenship to all people born on its soil. However, in the past years, Haitian-born and Haitian-descendant Dominicans have suffered blows to their legal status that have wracked the community with uncertainty about whether they will be allowed to stay in the country they call home. Adding insult to injury, many Haitians wound up in the Dominican Republic after being recruited or smuggled in by Dominican businesses and traffickers.

In 2013, the Dominican government retroactively stripped citizenship rights from 210,000 of their citizens, including anyone who had undocumented immigrant parents or whose parents were deemed “in transit” at the time of their children’s birth. These people have since become stateless, suddenly unauthorized to live in their home country and ineligible for citizenship in Haiti. In 2014, Dominican President Danilo Medina passed a naturalization law that would give some of those who had lost their citizenship a path toward reestablishment, but the law’s implementation only helped a small number of Haitian-Dominicans regain citizenship.

The current crisis underlies a long history of violent racism in the Dominican Republic. In 1937, the Dominican government under former US Marine and dictator Rafael Trujillo rounded up all suspected Haitians and massacred tens of thousands of them. Often, government officials selected their targets by asking them to pronounce the word perejil (parsley) to see if they could roll their Rs like native Spanish speakers. At the time, the US, which occupied the country from 1916 to 1924, justified the attacks as a necessary evil.

According to data from the Security Assistance Monitor, the US has given the Dominican military more than $96 million since 2000, through military training and education programs, counternarcotics operations and antiterrorism programs.

Although the government claimed there would be no mass roundups, as of June 18, 2,000 Dominican troops were overseeing the process of ordering buses and preparing detention centers.

Starting in 2006, the US government has also deployed its own Border Patrol members to the Dominican-Haitian border, and funded the Dominican Border Patrol, or CESFRONT, greatly influencing its “strong borders” policy. As reported by Todd Miller in a 2013 article for The Nation, the Dominican Republic-Haiti border looks “like a five-and-dime version of what happens on the US southern border.”

The US Embassy in Santo Domingo also has its own Border Patrol office. In addition to the Dominican Republic, Customs and Border Protection attachés are also now detailed to US embassies in Brazil, Mexico, Kenya, South Africa, Italy and Canada, among other countries.

Despite the close relationship between Dominican and US Border Patrol forces, the US has refused to help the government address the massive influx of Haitian immigrants in the wake of the disastrous 2010 earthquake in Haiti. In fact, in the five days after the earthquake, a US Air Force plane circled the island for five hours, with the prerecording voice of Raymond Joseph, Haiti’s ambassador to the United States, saying on repeat:

I’ll be honest with you: If you think you will reach the US and all the doors will be wide open to you, that’s not at all the case. They will intercept you right on the water and send you back home where you came from.

### Guatemala

#### US migration aid to Guatemala encourages violent military crackdowns on migrants & expands global policing networks throughout the region.

Abbott, 2021 (Jeff Abbott, Jeff Abbott is a freelance journalist based in Guatemala. His work has appeared in Al Jazeera, The Guardian, and The Progressive magazine., "Guatemala Takes a Hard Line Against Migrants—With US Support," Nation, https://www.thenation.com/article/world/migrants-immigration-guatemala-mexico/, accessed on 4-29-2024)

GUATEMALA CITY— On January 18, hundreds of Guatemalan soldiers armed with batons and wooden poles, backed by the Guatemalan National Civilian Police, violently confronted and dispersed thousands of Honduran migrants and asylum seekers who had formed a caravan in the hope of reaching the United States.

As the tear gas cleared, the estimated 8,000 Hondurans—fleeing poverty, the destruction caused by two consecutive hurricanes, and both state and gang violence—were pushed off the highway in Vado Hondo, Chiquimula, in eastern Guatemala. Thousands were forced to return to Honduras. Some managed to slip through the police lines but were later detained along Guatemala’s border with Mexico.

Guatemala’s violent disbanding of the first caravan of 2021 was widely denounced by migrant rights advocates, but it was praised by the US State Department, with Michael Kozak, the acting assistant secretary for Western Hemisphere affairs, tweeting his support of the violent eviction on the final day of the Trump administration. Days later, on January 22, US Ambassador William Popp held a joint press conference with Guatemala’s foreign minister, Pedro Brolo, and Mexico’s ambassador to Guatemala, Romeo Ruíz Armento, to declare that the three countries will not tolerate migrant caravans.

As Guatemala has taken a more hard-line stance against migrants, it is becoming harder for migrants passing through the Central American country to reach the United States. This stance has meant an expanded use of the military as a response to social problems, and it has extended the presence of the United States border apparatus farther south.

“Mexico was the southern border for many years, but Guatemala is now using that same strategy,” Ursula Roldán, an immigration expert at Guatemala’s Rafael Landívar University, told The Nation. The United States “may not be building the walls now,” she said, “but they are building those walls here in Central America.”

The Washington Connection

As tens of thousands of desperate Hondurans and Salvadorans streamed through Guatemala on their way to the United States, the Trump administration increased pressure on the Central American country to control migratory routes. In response, the Guatemalan government has increasingly deployed the military, backed by police, to disband caravans and “irregular” migration.

Ahead of the January 2021 caravan, the administration of Alejandro Giammattei declared a state of emergency in the departments along the borders with Honduras and El Salvador. The declaration suspended constitutional rights in the region and led to the deployment of thousands of soldiers and police. “The states of prevention [one level for states of emergency in Guatemala] are a mechanism that permits [the government] to bring out the armed forces,” Roldán said.

In the past 15 years, Guatemalan governments have frequently declared states of emergency to confront and dismantle social protests—but Giammattei’s declaration was the first one called to confront a caravan of migrants and asylum seekers. However, this was not the first time Giammattei’s right-wing administration has turned to the military to stop a caravan. Last October, the military and police disbanded a caravan of over 3,000 Honduran migrants, forcing them to return to their home country.

Elements of the Guatemalan military and police have received support and training from the United States for years. In 2013, the government of Otto Pérez Molina launched new border security task forces. These interagency forces, which combined elements from the military, the police, tax authorities, and other agencies, received support and training from Washington, including Customs and Border Protection agents, as well as military J-8 Jeeps.

“You look at these border forces that exist now, that are young relatively speaking, that come from this long legacy of US domination in Central America and Guatemala,” Todd Miller, the author of Empire of Borders: The Expansion of the U.S. Border Around the World, told The Nation. “It is about maintaining dominance and control in an area, in almost a new face of counterinsurgency.”

The United States Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs (INL) has maintained a presence in Guatemala, working with and training police units. These efforts are part of the Central America Regional Security Initiative (CARSI), a Central America offshoot of the Mérida Initiative that was established in 2010 under the Obama administration to support police training to confront gangs, drug trafficking, and address border security across the region. The Trump administration maintained CARSI but placed more of a focus on addressing and controlling migration.

The Department of Homeland Security began operations in Guatemala during the Trump administration. In May 2019, the administration of then-President Jimmy Morales signed an agreement with the DHS to deploy agents from Customs and Border Protection (CBP) and Immigration and Customs Enforcement to Guatemala. Following the signing of the agreement, the DHS agents began working with a small division within the Guatemalan National Civilian Police. Part of that effort is to target networks of migrant guides, known as coyotes, whom Washington has labeled as “human smugglers.”

Guatemala’s Division of Ports, Airports and Border Posts (DIPAFRONT), a border and ports security unit, is also receiving support from the United States, including training from the CBP’s elite BORTAC unit. In 2018, 540 officers were recruited to DIPAFRONT, with at least another 100 agents recruited and trained in 2019. The INL states in its 2018 summary of operations in Guatemala that the bureau’s goal is to increase the ranks of DIPAFRONT to 2,500 by 2023.

In late 2019, nearly 90 agents from the Department of Homeland Security were deployed to Guatemala to help police units set up checkpoints across the country and work alongside them in checking people’s immigration status. In tactics similar to those used in Portland, Ore., during the Black Lives Matter protests, CBP and DIPAFRONT agents rented vans to pick up migrants and return them to the Honduran border. That operation came to light in a report titled “DHS Run Amok: A Reckless Overseas Operation, Violations, and Lies,” which was commissioned by Senator Bob Menendez for the Senate’s Committee on Foreign Relations.

The crackdown on migrants goes against Guatemala’s own migration law, which recognizes the rights of migrants.

“In Guatemala, the agenda of risks and threats established by the National Security Council cannot consider migrants a threat,” Francisco Jimenez, a former interior minister and current researcher at Guatemala’s Center for National Economic Research, told The Nation. “We are a country with a migrant characteristic, and Guatemala recognizes the right to migrate as a human right.”

Jimenez adds that the actions against the caravans go against a regional agreement signed in 2006, the CA-4, which permits residents of Guatemala, Honduras, El Salvador, and Nicaragua to travel between the four countries with only an identification.

“What Jimmy Morales did, who at least was smarter about this, was to let [the caravans] pass, to certify that they were passing, maintaining order until it reached the border,” Jimenez said. “There at the border Mexico could see how they would resolve the issue of the caravan.”

Since October, Guatemalan officials have utilized the Covid-19 pandemic to justify the crackdown on migrants and caravans. Officials argue that migrants have not complied with measures put in place to control the pandemic, but Roldán disagrees. “Infections are not brought by migrants,” she said. “The infections are the result of government measures that did not contain the pandemic adequately.”

Roldán adds, “The idea is to place fear of migrants in the population, as is the case in Mexico. Another of the means to activate fear of others and of the other: an external enemy.”

Moving the Border South

The United States has for years exported the control of migratory routes to Mexico and Central America. The repression of the most recent Honduran migrant caravan highlights this shift, but the effort began much earlier, during the Obama administration. As Col. Oscar Pérez Figueroa, the spokesperson for the Guatemalan military at the time, told me in 2017 in an interview about border security in Guatemala, “The US changes the president, but they continue the same politics that prioritize actions for the national security of the US.”

Indeed, in his first presidential term, Obama increased US support for migratory controls in southern Mexico. That effort led Alan Bersin, Obama’s “border czar,” to declare in 2012 that “the Guatemalan border with Chiapas is now our southern border.” These efforts were intensified following the arrival of thousands of unaccompanied minors to the US border in 2014, when Mexico’s president at the time, Enrique Peña Nieto, announced the establishment of Programa Frontera Sur.

Mexico’s aggressive policing of migrants continued after populist leader Andrés Manuel López Obrador was elected president. In January 2020, the Mexican National Guard, which he had created the previous year, confronted and violently stopped a caravan of thousands of Honduras. The migrants were loaded onto buses and deported back to their home country. Mexico is thus increasingly a barrier to migrants rather than a way station. According to the Guatemalan Institute of Migration, in 2020 Mexico deported nearly 23,000 Guatemalans.

But as Todd Miller points out, the increased repression is not just limited to Guatemala and Mexico. The United States is expanding the border apparatus across the hemisphere and the world. These operations include strengthening of border security in Panama, Colombia, the Caribbean, and elsewhere. This has led to a new world of borders confronting migrants from all over the Global South.

“The US presence is forming a scaffolding in the world,” Miller said. “And by its own admission, it is to extend the border to stop the people from coming to the US border far before they can reach it.”

He adds, “It is keeping a status quo in place; a status quo of a world of dreadful inequalities, a world of a heating globe where there are super hurricanes that are displacing people, who then are corralled by these global border systems.”

#### History of US “engagement” with Guatemala has been one of violent intervention – creating conditions for trafficking, femicide, and everyday violence

Gaffey 20 [Gaffey, Katherine A., she is am a recent graduate of the MSc in International Development and Humanitarian Emergencies at the London School of Economics and Political Science. She volunteer weekly in an after school program with migrant and refugee children working to build their confidence in school while providing academic and emotional support. She is part of her MSc in International Development and Humanitarian Emergencies at the London School of Economics. Conducted a report titled: “Transformational Humanitarian Response: The Example of Poland” which analyzed the Polish response to Ukrainian refugees. Data was gathered through key informant interviews with NGOs, INGOs and volunteers who worked first hand on the response."The Lasting Effects of U.S. Intervention in Guatemala" (2020). University Honors Theses. Paper 842. <https://doi.org/10.15760/honors.861> 3/13/2024] DelG

Introduction Guatemala has been sucked into a cycle of civil unrest, poverty and mass migration. How did this happen? In order to understand the issues Guatemalans face today, a historical analysis of Guatemala’s relationship with the U.S. is needed. Guatemala has had a long and tumultuous history of U.S. intervention within its borders. This essay will examine the role of the 1954 CIA coup and the United Fruit Company in fostering the Guatemalan Civil War and the implications of that war for ongoing crime and instability in the country today. Some of the most pressing issues Guatemalans face today are high migration rates, femicide, and human trafficking. Guatemalan migration is on the rise; from October 1st, 2017 to August 31st, the U.S. government arrested 42,757 Guatemalans who attempted to immigrate to the U.S. with their families. This is the highest number of migrant families from a single country that U.S immigration has seen. (Yates-Doerr, 2018). According to the U.S. Department of State’s 2019 Trafficking in Persons Report, Guatemala is currently a Tier 2 country for human trafficking. Guatemala does not meet the standards for eliminating trafficking, but is making an effort. According to UNICEF, there are nearly 48,500 victims of sex trafficking in Guatemala, creating illegal profits equivalent to 2.7% of the Gross Domestic Product (Velásquez Gómez & Skoog, 2016). Why is this? In 1954, a CIA supported military coup was launched against democratically elected Colonel Jacobo Arbenz bringing rise to the 36 year Civil War from 1960-1996 in which over 200,000 lives were taken and over 45,000 missing (Ewing, 2018). The Civil War ended with the 1996 Guatemala Peace Treaties and a hope for a better future for the country, but unfortunately that was not the case. Instead, there was a surge in criminal violence and a weakening of 4 democratic institutions, leading to a situation in which Guatemala was unable to respond to the multiple threats attacking its democracy. Human trafficking was able to flourish and migration to the U.S. rose tremendously. In this paper, I trace the implications of U.S. intervention in Guatemala and the effects it had on their security and stability, taking trafficking, current day femicide and a rise in immigration as an example of the types of unintended consequences that can emerge when foreign intervention creates civil unrest. In this essay, I argue that the role of U.S. intervention through the United Fruit Company’s vast involvement in Guatemala and the CIA-backed 1954 coup are key causal factors for the Guatemalan Civil War, which has now led to an environment conducive for the normalization of gender based violence and human trafficking. This in turn, has resulted in high rates of Guatemalans migrating to the U.S. border where they are being met with racist anti-immigrant rhetoric. In order to understand why so many Guatemalans are fleeing their country, an analysis of their history and the role the U.S. played in it is essential. The US role in the 1954 coup placed Guatemala on a trajectory of civil conflict that the country is still affected by today.

### Haiti

#### US humanitarian aid only funds American military & corporate ventures – little to no aid has ever gone to Haitians nor promised infrastructure projects

Macdonald & Dupin, 2020 (Isabel Macdonald, ISABEL MACDONALD is an investigative journalist based in Montreal who has traveled to Haiti frequently since 2005. JEREMY DUPIN is an Emmy-winning journalist and filmmaker., "10 Years Ago, We Pledged To Help Haiti Rebuild. Then What Happened? Hundreds Of Millions In Aid Went To U.S. Corporations And The U.S. Military. A Fraction Went To Haitian Institutions.," In These Times, https://inthesetimes.com/features/haiti\_earthquake\_recovery\_us\_aid\_anniversay\_military\_waste.html, accessed on 4-29-2024)

THE EARTHQUAKE THAT STRUCK HAITI ON JAN. 12, 2010, unleashed one of the worst humanitarian crises in decades. In hard-hit places like Port-au-Prince, Haiti’s capital and most densely populated city, schools and medical centers collapsed. More than 300,000 homes were damaged or destroyed. The disaster is estimated to have killed at least 220,000 Haitians and displaced 2.3 million—about a quarter of the population.

Above: “There was no garbage here before,” environmental activist Milostène Castin says, gesturing at a mountain of trash produced by the garment manufacturing center in Caracol, Haiti. The industrial park was built with the help of $202 million in U.S. recovery funds earmarked from the 2010 earthquake, though the area was untouched by the disaster.

The crisis also unleashed an unprecedented humanitarian response. Charity groups, private individuals and governments around the world offered support. At a United Nations conference in New York on March 31, 2010, 58 donors pledged more than $8.3 billion to help Haiti “build back better,” reducing the nation’s vulnerability to future disasters. The United States made the biggest pledge of any nation, promising $1.15 billion. Then-U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton emphasized Haiti’s urgent needs: safe homes, food security and basic services that were not broadly accessible even before the earthquake—including healthcare, potable water and a national system of sanitation.

A decade later, for many, conditions are still worse than before.

The U.S. Congress ultimately approved more than $1.6 billion for emergency humanitarian relief and more than $1.14 billion for recovery. The United States went on to finance other Haitian development projects, bringing the total in post-earthquake commitments to almost $4.16 billion.

But relatively little of the housing that was destroyed in hard-hit areas like Port-au-Prince has been rebuilt. More than 34,000 Haitians who lost their homes still live in displacement camps, and more than 300,000 Haitians have migrated to new slums just north of the capital that lack healthcare services and potable water. Many Haitian families have even less access to food. And there is still no functioning national sanitation system; more than 10,000 have died of cholera since the earthquake.

So where did all that aid money go?

To find out, In These Times reviewed U.S. government spending records and spent three weeks on the ground in Haiti in July 2019. Of the $1.6 billion committed to humanitarian relief, we found all of it bypassed Haitian institutions—and more than a third went directly to the U.S. military.

Of the $1.14 billion for recovery, more than a fifth was earmarked for the partial cancelation of debt to multilateral organizations such as the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) and the World Bank. Another $10 million went to overhead for the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), the agency that channeled much of the recovery money.

Nearly a quarter of what remained—$202 million—was allocated to infrastructure projects, but not to rebuild Port-au-Prince or other hard-hit areas; they were to provide electricity, transportation and housing for a new industrial park in Caracol, a community in northern Haiti untouched by the earthquake. To date, the United States has committed $160 million of these funds and given an additional $15 million to the State Department to help build the park itself.

In These Times visited Caracol, where Haitian workers are paid $5.25 a day to sew clothing for American brands like Gap, Walmart and Target. We found it has introduced a host of new problems, including increased food insecurity, exposure to pollution, unlivable wages and workplace sexual harassment.

Rather than addressing Haiti’s needs, much of the recovery aid has instead made Haiti even more vulnerable to environmental disasters, including severe droughts intensified by climate change. As climate change exacerbates disasters around the world, this raises questions about the potential consequences of U.S. disaster aid for many other countries.

AS THE HAITIAN GOVERNMENT acknowledged at the 2010 UN donors’ conference, the deadly toll of the earthquake was not caused by tremors alone. The dangerous conditions that followed are, in many ways, inseparable from the ongoing dynamics of Haiti’s colonial past.

Modern Haiti was founded in 1804 after the world’s only successful slave revolution, winning its independence from France after a century of brutal slavery. But France refused to recognize Haiti’s sovereignty until the nation paid its former colonizer an indemnity of 150 million gold francs, compensation for French “property” lost—including the enslaved people who won their freedom. Haiti paid the debt with high-interest loans—sometimes devoting 80% of its national budget to repayment—until 1947, which hamstrung the development of basic infrastructure and services.

The United States, for its part, failed to recognize Haiti’s sovereignty until after the Confederacy seceded. Since the U.S. first occupied Haiti—from 1915 to 1934, as part of a broader strategy to secure exclusive influence in the area surrounding the nearby Panama Canal—the United States has worked to reorient the country’s economic and political system to better serve U.S. and transnational corporations.

To this end, the United States supported the Duvalier dictatorships from 1957 to 1986. Then, in 1991, when the Haitian military ousted Haiti’s first democratically elected president, Jean-Bertrand Aristide, the United States covertly supported death squads targeting his supporters. The United States eventually agreed to Aristide’s return, on condition he implement neoliberal reform recommendations from the World Bank—a reversal of the platform Aristide campaigned on. Such policies, pushed on Haiti since the 1980s by aid donors and multilateral financial institutions, have undermined Haitian public services by slashing social spending and privatizing state enterprises. These reforms have also undermined the livelihoods of Haitian farmers by removing tariffs on food imports that previously protected them from unfair competition from U.S. agribusiness. These reforms, commonly referred to in Haiti as Plan Lanmò—“the death plan” in Creole—had catastrophic effects on Haitian agriculture, and precipitated a mass migration of Haiti’s rural population to cities like Port-au-Prince, thus contributing to the urban population density that has been cited as a factor in the earthquake’s deadly toll.

When Aristide was reelected in 2000, the United States successfully pressured the IDB to block a series of loans it had promised for Haiti, earmarked for healthcare and basic services, including potable water and education.

In 2004, the United States supported a second coup to remove Aristide and sent troops for another occupation, later supported by a UN stabilization effort known as the Mission des Nations Unies pour la stabilisation en Haïti, or Minustah.

Living in dangerously constructed homes in the overcrowded capital, without reliable healthcare or potable water, Haitians were, thanks in large part to years of neoliberal policy and ongoing U.S. interference, particularly vulnerable during both the earthquake and the cholera epidemic that followed.

At the 2010 UN donors’ conference, Clinton emphasized the need for donors to avoid bypassing Haitian public institutions. “It will be tempting to fall back on old habits—to work around the government rather than to work with them as partners,” she cautioned.

Despite Clinton’s warning, much aid exemplifies the same pattern. Of the $1.6 billion relief budget, none was allocated directly to any public Haitian institutions, according to the Congressional Research Office. By far the largest portion of this aid, $655 million (about 40%), was earmarked directly for the U.S. military, which received an additional $40.5 million from USAID.

The overwhelming majority of international donors followed suit. According to the UN Office of Paul Farmer, UN deputy special envoy for Haiti from 2009 to 2012, less than 1% of relief aid disbursed by donor nations and multilateral organizations by 2012 went to Haiti’s public institutions.

Farmer cautioned in 2011, “With ... relief funding circumventing Haitian public institutions, the already challenging task of moving from relief to recovery—which requires government leadership, above all—becomes almost impossible.”

A graph of a earthquake

Description automatically generated with medium confidence

THE EARTHQUAKE DESTROYED MANY PUBLIC BUILDINGS, undermining Haiti’s already weak public sector. Some Haitian institutions, however, did survive, and were arguably better positioned than the U.S. military to provide relief. For example, Haiti’s most important medical facility, General Hospital, remained standing. Haitian NGOs could likely have distributed food and water more quickly and to greater numbers than the U.S. military, whose operations were limited by language barriers and its self-imposed restriction to operate only in zones it deemed “secured.”

The U.S. Department of Defense (DOD) deployed 22,000 personnel, more than 300 aircraft and 33 ships to Haiti, instructed to “save lives” and “mitigate human suffering”—but the goals of military security and control seemed to take precedence. One of the military’s first actions was to seize control of air traffic at the main Port-au-Prince airport, a move the military claimed was necessary to ensure order—but also, as Haïti Liberté reported, blocked life-saving humanitarian relief supplies and emergency search and rescue personnel. As the New York Times reported, U.S. commanders turned away World Food Program flights “so that the United States could land troops and equipment, and lift Americans and other foreigners to safety.” One search and rescue team from the U.K. was blocked from landing, as were five planeloads of supplies for Doctors Without Borders, whose staff resorted to buying a saw from the local market for amputations.

More than a week after the earthquake, General Hospital still hadn’t received supplies and medicines needed to treat hundreds of dying patients. One doctor identified the disproportionate emphasis on security as “our major block to getting aid in.” While the U.S. military and the international response saved Americans and Western expats, journalists and researchers reported much of the work of digging out Haitian survivors from collapsed buildings was done, in fact, by other Haitians, often with bare hands.

About 6% of the U.S. relief money, $96.5 million, went to the U.S. State Department, which funded more soldiers and police for Minustah. Minustah’s infamous contribution to the relief effort is a deadly cholera epidemic, cholera being unknown in Haiti before October 2010. Despite the well-documented fact that Haiti lacked a basic sanitation system, cholera-infected Minustah soldiers from Nepal were housed at a military base whose sewage UN contractors dumped near important water sources, triggering the outbreak. After denying its role for years, the UN apologized in 2016.

The U.S. Coast Guard, which received $50 million for its role in the disaster response, deployed 16 cutters to patrol Haitian and international waters—to ensure, as Lt. Cmdr. Chris O’Neil, a Coast Guard spokesperson, told the Washington Times, that no one “try to enter the United States illegally by sea.” Meanwhile, the DOD flew one of its cargo planes over Haiti five days after the quake, broadcasting a loud, pre-recorded announcement in Creole: “If you think you will reach the U.S. and all the doors will be wide open to you, that’s not at all the case. They will intercept you right on the water and send you back home where you came from.”

The United States also awarded the private prison corporation GEO Group more than $540,000 to prepare for a “Haiti surge” through operations in Cuba, where the U.S. had recently prepared a migrant detention camp on its naval base in Guantanamo Bay. But Haitians did not flee their country in droves and, in fact, the number of Haitian migrants intercepted by the Coast Guard decreased the year after the disaster. More than 1.5 million homeless earthquake survivors, however, formed camps throughout Port-au-Prince during that same time. Many reported they received no humanitarian assistance whatsoever.

ILNA SAINT JEAN REMEMBERS ALL THE CROPS HER FAMILY USED TO GROW where the Caracol Industrial Park now sits. On her half-hectare plot, the 60-year-old peasant farmer recalls, “We had yucca, corn, black beans, pigeon peas, okra, peanuts, all kinds of stuff.” This plot, in the farmland area referred to by locals as Tè Chabè, allowed Saint Jean to support her nine children. The community was untouched by the 2010 earthquake.

One year later, however, in January 2011, “everything was lost,” Saint Jean says. A Haitian government agent arrived without warning and removed her fence. The yucca, beans and other plants were soon entirely destroyed by roaming animals.

“They told us the land doesn’t belong to us, it’s the state’s land, it’s the foreigners’ land,” Saint Jean says. “They came and took the land, they cemented it, and they made that industrial park on it.”

Saint Jean is one of 442 peasant farmers who lost their crops and their farmland in the evictions for the industrial park.

While supporters describe the industrial park as a flagship project of post-earthquake recovery, the plans for it had actually been discussed months before the disaster, at a trade conference convened by the IDB and the William J. Clinton Foundation, a nonprofit founded and directed by former President Bill Clinton. Such industrial parks are central to the neoliberal economic model the U.S. government has pushed for decades. This model has long held that low-wage sectors like garment manufacturing are a necessary stepping stone to prosperity for countries like Haiti, and that governments should offer tax breaks and incentives for private corporations to set up shop. Unfortunately, because these factories pay workers so little, they can also exacerbate pre-existing economic and social inequalities. Moreover, garment manufacturing is often detrimental to local communities and environments, given its high water requirements and polluting waste.

The U.S. government has championed garment manufacturing as a viable economic development strategy for Haiti since the 1970s, proclaiming Haiti could become “the Taiwan of the Caribbean.” With U.S. support, employment in the garment industry—which, at the time, had largely been concentrated in Port-au-Prince—peaked in the 1980s. Partly because of the extremely low wages, however, these factories never kickstarted the promised economic boom. They also spurred the rise of slums, attracting tens of thousands of job-seekers to Port-au-Prince who could not afford standard housing.

Despite these problems, the U.S. continued to create incentives for the Haitian garment industry. HOPE II, a 2008 trade deal between the United States and Haiti, allows Haitian-made textiles to enter the U.S. without tariffs, an attractive lure for companies from around the world.

The Haitian government’s Action Plan for National Recovery and Development, unveiled at the March 2010 UN donors’ conference, articulated a vision of reconstruction based on a more just society, capable of meeting Haitians’ basic needs, with an emphasis on housing and environmentally sustainable projects. But it also included more industrial parks for such sectors as textile production.

The Interim Haiti Recovery Commission, an international body mandated to ensure accountability in the post-earthquake rebuilding and co-chaired by Bill Clinton, approved the construction of the Caracol park. Hillary Clinton’s State Department recruited Sae-A, a major Korean garment manufacturer, as its anchor tenant.

The Haitian government agreed to provide the land, the IDB offered $100 million for construction, and the United States pledged $124 million for a power plant, a new port (later cancelled), and a housing project. Sae-A committed $78 million to the project and predicted 20,000 new jobs, scoring free facilities and tax breaks in exchange.

Before the deal was signed, the AFL-CIO warned the U.S. government about Sae-A’s record of “acts of violence and intimidation” in Guatemala, where it closed its flagship factory in 2011, after threatening to leave the country following a dispute with a local union.

Environmentalists also raised concerns about water and waste, given the site was on some of Haiti’s most fertile farmland and close to Caracol Bay, a fragile marine ecosystem home to critically endangered species and an important source of food and income for many in Caracol. The mayor of Caracol was not informed of the project until after the site had been decided. The U.S. consulting firm that proposed the site, Koios Associates, later admitted it had not carried out an environmental assessment; upon review, the consultants rated the project “high risk” and recommended either a change of location or to just end the project altogether.

The project’s backers charged forward.

### Honduras

#### Disengagement from the US is key to ensure leftist struggle can flourish in Honduras – the legacy of US aid and military interventions ensures re-engagement will promote corruption & expansion of the military industrial complex

Dominguez, 2021 (Francisco Dominguez, Francisco Dominguez is head of the Research Group on Latin America at Middlesex University. He is also the national secretary of the Venezuela Solidarity Campaign and coauthor of Right-Wing Politics in the New Latin America (Zed, 2011)., "Honduras Can Break Free Of Washington And Neoliberalism," No Publication, https://jacobin.com/2021/12/honduran-politics-narco-dictatorship-elections-xiomara-castro, accessed on 4-29-2024)

Cáceres had been a leading figure in the grassroots struggle against electoral fraud and dictatorship and had been calling for the urgent refounding of the nation, a proposal incorporated into the programs of mass social movements such as the Council of Popular and Indigenous Organizations of Honduras. Since 2009, hundreds of activists have been assassinated at the hands of the police, the army, and paramilitaries.

The Colombianization analogy does not stop at the assassination of opponents. Last June, the Washington Post explained the extent of infiltration by organized crime: “Military and police chiefs, politicians, businessmen, mayors and even three presidents have been linked to cocaine trafficking or accused of receiving funds from trafficking.”

US judge Kevin Castel, who sentenced Tony Hernández, JOH’s brother, to life in prison after he was found guilty of smuggling 185 tons of cocaine into the United States, said, “Here, the [drug] trafficking was indeed state-sponsored.” In March 2021, at the trial against Geovanny Fuentes, a Honduran accused of drug trafficking, the prosecutor, Jacob Gutwillig, said that JOH helped Fuentes with the trafficking of tons of cocaine.

Corruption permeates the whole Honduran establishment. National Party candidate Nasry Asfura has faced a pretrial “for abuse of authority, use of false documents, embezzlement of public funds, fraud and money laundering,” and Yani Rosenthal, a congressman and banker who was the candidate of the once ruling Liberal Party, was found guilty and sentenced to three years in prison in the United States for “participating in financial transactions using illicit proceeds (drug money laundering).”

The parallels continue. Like Colombia, Honduras is a narco-state in which the United States has a host of military bases. It was from Honduran territory that the Contra mercenaries waged a proxy war against Sandinista Nicaragua in the 1980s, and it was also from Honduras that the US-led military invasion of Guatemala was launched in 1954, bringing about the violent ousting of democratically elected left-wing nationalist president Jacobo Árbenz. Specialists aptly refer to the country as USS Honduras.

Cocaine trafficking and state terrorism, which operates as part of the drug business, are tolerated and probably supported by various US agencies in exchange for a large US military presence — the United States has Soto Cano and twelve other military bases in Honduras — due to geopolitical calculations like regional combat against left-wing governments. This criminal system’s stability requires the elimination of political and social activists.

Thus, many US institutions, from the White House down the food chain, turn a blind eye to the colossal levels of corruption. In fact, Southern Command has been actively building Honduras’s repressive military capabilities by funding and training special units like Battalion 316, which reportedly acts as a death squad “guilty of kidnap, torture, and murder.”

“Between 2010 and 2016, as US ‘aid’ and training continued to flow, over 120 environmental activists were murdered by hitmen, gangs, police, and the military for opposing illegal logging and mining,” one report explains.

The legacy of right-wing governments since the violent ousting of Manuel Zelaya in 2009 is abysmal. Honduras is one the most violent countries in the world (37 homicides per 100,000 inhabitants, with 60 percent attributable to organized crime), with staggering levels of poverty (73.6 percent of households live below the poverty line, out of which 53.7 percent live in extreme poverty), high levels of unemployment (well over 12 percent), and even higher levels of underemployment (the informal sector of the economy, due to the effects of COVID-19, grew from 60 to 70 percent). Its external debt is over $15 billion (57 percent of its GDP), and the nation suffers from a high incidence of embezzlement and illegal appropriation of state resources by criminal administrations.

The rot is so pronounced that back in February this year, a group of Democrats in the US Senate introduced legislation intended to cut off economic aid and sales of ammunition to Honduran security forces. The proposal “lays bare the violence and abuses perpetrated since the 2009 military-backed coup, as a result of widespread collusion between government officials, state and private security forces, organized crime and business leaders.” In Britain, Colin Burgon, the president of Labour Friends of Progressive Latin America, issued scathing criticism of the British government’s complicity for “having sold (when Boris Johnson was Foreign Minister no less) to the Honduran government spyware designed to eavesdrop on its citizens, months before the state rounded up thousands of people in a well-orchestrated surveillance operation.”

To top it all off, through the Zone for Employment and Economic Development initiative, whole chunks of the national territory are being given to private enterprise under a “special regime” that empowers investors to establish their own security bodies — including their own police force and penitentiary system — to investigate criminal offenses and instigate legal prosecutions. This takes neoliberalism and the dream of multinational capital to abhorrent levels: the sell-off of portions of the national territory to private enterprise. To state that the Honduran oligarchy, led by JOH, is “selling the country down the river” is not a figure of speech.

It is this monstrosity, constructed since the overthrow of President Mel Zelaya in 2009 on top of the existing oligarchic state, that the now victorious Libre Party and incoming president Xiomara Castro need to overcome to start improving the lives of the people of Honduras. The array of extremely nasty internal and external forces that her government will be up against is frighteningly powerful, and they have demonstrated in abundance what they are prepared to do to defend their felonious interests.

President-elect Xiomara’s Libre Party is the largest in the 128-seat Congress, and with its coalition partner, Salvador, it will have a very strong parliamentary presence, which will be central to any proposed referendum for a constituent assembly aimed at refounding the nation. Libre has also won in the capital city, Tegucigalpa, and in San Pedro Sula, the country’s second largest city. More importantly, unlike elections elsewhere (in Venezuela, Nicaragua, and Bolivia), the National Party’s candidate, Asfura, has conceded defeat. Thus, Xiomara has a very strong mandate.

However, in a region subjected to US-led regime-change operations — the coup in Bolivia, the coup attempt in Nicaragua, the mercenary attack against Venezuela, a raft of violent street disorders in Cuba, vigorous destabilization against recently elected president Pedro Castillo in Peru, and so on, ad nauseam — Honduras will need all the international solidarity we can provide, which we must do.

The heroic struggle of the people of Honduras has again demonstrated that it can be done: neoliberalism and its brutal foreign and imperialist instigators can be defeated and a better world can be built. So before Washington, its Honduran cronies, its European accomplices, and the world corporate media unleash any shenanigans, let’s say loud and clear: US hands off Honduras!

### Mexico

**Discussion of Latin America is uniquely key because it allows us to understanding the broader entanglements of colonial influence.**

Christian 19 ;Associate Professor of Sociology Michelle; “A Global Critical Race and Racism Framework: Racial Entanglements and Deep and Malleable Whiteness” published in Sociology of Race and Ethnicity 2019, Vol. 5(2) 169–185

**Early Latin America zones governed by the Spanish colonial legislation of sociedad or regime de castas exhibited some fluidity of racial movement,** with various categories—peninsulares, criollos, mestizos, castizos, mulatos, and moreños—**signifying different meanings.** **However, these classifications were firmly rooted in a glorification of whiteness,** with its mixed and varying meanings, and individuals’ attempts to demonstrate limpieza de sangre (pure blood) (Kinsbruner 1996). In India, there were shifting views on caste and religion from the East India Company period (1765–1858) to the British Raj (1859–1947), only to take on a fully racialized conception during the Raj period (Banerjee-Dube 2014; Dirks 2001). In many **white settler societies and traditional colonial structures, local ethnic groups,** groups imported for labor (e.g., South Asians, Chinese, Malays), became racialized but were constructed differently across regions, with varying intermediary categories emerging (Go 2008). **To fight against the fear of “black peril,” “yellow peril,” and “rebellion,” whiteness was also consolidated** **between different** white ethnic groups (Kennedy 1987; Jayasuriya, Walker, and Gothard 2003). Japan began its own **colonial endeavors to negotiate its unequal position vis-à-vis the West** **and subsequently** **racialized** its own indigenous populations and Korean, Taiwanese, and **colonial subjects in an attempt to confront and negotiate but still follow the logic of global white supremacy** (Weiner 1997). **These original racialization mechanisms—creating racial categories, structuring race relations via laws, labor and spatial territory demands, the transportation of bodies across borders, and building early ideologies and justifications of racial rationale and violence—are the foundation of racial social systems. Disentangling this history is necessary to uncover its connection to the contemporary mechanisms in the components of the racialized social systems across geographies.**

#### Mexico Construction K — discourses of Mexico instability is colonialist propaganda designed to spread paternalism and racialization. That undergirds myths of benevolent imperialism, causes structural violence, and makes their impacts inevitable.

**Carlos 14** — Alfredo Carlos, Professor of Political Science at California State University, Long Beach, PhD in Political Science from the University of California, Irvine, 2014 (“Mexico "Under Siege": Drug Cartels or U.S. Imperialism?,” Latin America Perspectives, Volume 41, Number 2, Available Online at , Accessed on 08-28-2021)

According to major U.S. newspapers and policy makers, Mexico is currently waging a “war on drugs.” Former U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton (quoted in Dibble, 2010) described the situation as “starting to resemble an insurgency” and compared it to Colombia’s crisis some two decades earlier. The Los Angeles Times (February 19, 2009) sponsored a conference with the University of San Diego’s Trans-Border Institute at which it suggested that Mexico is “under siege” by drug cartels. Regular updates on the drug war appear in U.S. newspapers. For instance, on January 20, 2010, the Associated Press ran a story entitled “7 Bodies Linked to Drug Cartels Found in Mexico”; on March 19, CNN had one entitled “Drug Criminals Block Roads in Mexico”; and on June 23 the New York Daily News announced, “Mexican Drug Violence Nears Bloodiest Month, President Felipe Calderon Pleads for Country’s Support.” A simple Google News search will show that Mexican drugs, drug-related violence, and antidrug efforts are front and center in Mexico and the United States and have become the primary issue between the two countries. Drug-related violence is not, however, Mexico’s foremost problem, and the reporting on it **obscures** the more **serious and immediate** economic and social problems it faces. More important, it **masks their origin** in U.S. economic foreign policy while providing **justification** for continued and future U.S. **paternalism** and **domination**.

The media and the government in the United States have a **long history** of constructing and perpetuating this type of discourse about Mexico. It is linked to discourses surrounding the colonization of the Americas, the white man’s burden, the **extermination of the native population**, Manifest Destiny, the Mexican-American War, **racial segregation** in the United States, and **prejudice against immigrants**. While the current discourse regarding Mexico is different in that Mexicans themselves are concerned about what is going on, the way it is shaped and manipulated by the media reflects the earlier ones. Gilbert Gonzalez (2004: 7) suggests that the current understandings and representations of Mexico date back to the 1800s, when “U.S. capital interests sought to penetrate Mexico.” The original discourse was **expressly linked** to economic processes, and the same is true of the current drug-related violence story. In that regard discourse can be and in this case is extremely powerful.

Meta-Narratives and Dominant Discourses

Michel Foucault (1972–1977: 120) argues that “discourse serves to make possible a whole series of **interventions**, tactical and positive interventions of surveillance, circulation, control and so forth.” Discourses generate knowledge and “truth,” giving those who speak this “truth” social, cultural, and even political power. This power “produces; **it produces reality**; it produces domains of objects and rituals of truth” (Foucault, 1979: 194). For Foucault (1972–1977: 119), “what makes power hold good, what makes it accepted, is . . . that it traverses and produces things, it induces pleasure, forms knowledge, produces discourse.” In essence, power produces discourse that justifies, legitimates, and increases it. Similarly, Edward Said (1994: 14), speaking in reference to literary discourse, says that literature as a cultural form is not just about literature. It is not autonomous; rather, it is about history and politics. He says that literature supports, elaborates, and consolidates the **practices of empire**. Television, newspapers, magazines, journals, books, advertisements, and the Internet all help construct stories, creating cultures of “us” that differentiate us from “them” (Said, 1994: xiii). They all elaborate and **consolidate the practices of empire** in multiple overlapping discourses from which a dominant discourse emerges.

Dominant discourses are constructed and perpetuated for particular reasons. As Kevin Dunn (2003: 6) points out, representations have very precise political consequences. They either **legitimize or delegitimize power**, depending on what they are and about whom (Said, 1994: 16). Said asserts that a narrative emerges that separates what is nonwhite, non-Western, and non-Judeo/Christian from the acceptable Western ethos as a justification for **imperialism** and the resulting policies and practices and argues that discourse is manipulated in the struggle for dominance (36). Discourses are advanced in the interest of exerting power over others; they tell a story that provides a **justification for action.** For Said, there is always an intention or will to use power and therefore to perpetuate some discourses at the expense of others. It is this intentionality that makes them dangerous and powerful. As Roxanne Doty (1996: 2) suggests, through repetition they become “regimes of truth and knowledge.” They do not actually constitute truth but become accepted as such through discursive practices, which put into circulation representations that are taken as truth.

Dominant discourses, meta-narratives (master frames that are often unquestioned [see Klotz and Lynch, 2007]), and cultural representations are important because they construct “realities” that are taken seriously and acted upon. Cecelia Lynch (1999: 13) asserts that “dominant narratives do ‘work’ even when they lack sufficient empirical evidence, to the degree that their conceptual foundations call upon or validate norms that are deemed intersubjectively legitimate.” They establish unquestioned “truths” and thus provide justification for those with power to act “accordingly.” They allow the production of specific relations of power. Powerful social actors are in a prime position to construct and perpetuate discourses that **legitimize the policies** they seek to establish. Narrative interpretations don’t arise out of thin air; they must be constantly articulated, promoted, legitimized, reproduced, and changed by actual people (Lynch, 1999). Social actors with this kind of power do this by what Doty (1996) calls self-definition by the “other.” Said (1994: 52) suggests that the formation of cultural identities can only be understood contrapuntally—that an identity cannot exist without an array of opposites. Western1 powers, including the United States, have maintained hegemony by establishing the “other”: North vs. South, core vs. periphery, white vs. native, and civilized vs. uncivilized are identities that have provided justifications for the **white man’s civilizing mission** and have created the myth of a **benevolent imperialism** (Doty, 1996: 11; Said, 1994: 51). The historical construction of this “other”’ identity produces current events and policies (Dunn, 2003). Through constant repetition, a racialized identity of the non-American, barbaric “other” is constructed, along with a U.S. identity considered civilized and democratic despite its engagement in the oppression, exploitation, and brutalization of that “other.” Consequently, dominant discourses and meta-narratives provide a veil for “imperial encounters,” turning them into missions of salvation rather than conquests or, in Mexico’s case, economic control (Doty, 1996). Dunn (2003: 174) suggests that dominant discourses legitimize and authorize specific political actions, particularly economic ones.

### Nicaragua

#### US interventions in Nicaragua have long prevented economic and political liberation – ‘democratic aid’ is cover for counterrevolutionary turmoil and military expansion regionally.

Whitney, 3-3-2023 (W. T. Whitney, W.T. Whitney Jr is a retired pediatrician and political journalist living in Maine., "Assessing Nicaragua’s Long Haul Toward Liberation And Economic Democracy," CounterPunch.org, https://www.counterpunch.org/2023/03/03/assessing-nicaraguas-long-haul-toward-liberation-and-economic-democracy/, accessed on 4-29-2024)

Prime minister of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines Ralph Gonsalves, speaking in Nicaragua in 2022, points out that the United States “is 350 million people [and is] the strongest military force in the world. Nicaragua is 6.2 million people, a country in Central America seeking to develop itself and its people.”

And so, “Why in God’s name, with a country so large, with so many resources, with such military strength, why would [the U.S.] want to pick on a small country like Nicaragua? I ask myself that question every day.”

Peace activist and Vietnam War veteran S. Brian Willson, speaking in South Paris, Maine, on September 13, 1998, had answered the question: “This neoliberal economics, the latest stage of capitalism, does not allow for alternative political or economic ideas or values. We already knew that any country that seriously threatened our model either had to assimilate or be eliminated.”

Willson had acted. On September 1, 1987 in Oakland, California, he put himself in front of a train to prevent a weapons delivery to U.S.- backed “Contra” mercenaries fighting revolutionaries in Nicaragua. The train did not stop and Willson lost two legs.

Daniel Kovalik’s valuable new book “Nicaragua, A History of US Intervention & Resistance” (Clarity Press) demonstrates the truth of Willson’s insight. Kovalik is a labor lawyer, human rights activist and teacher, and prolific author (his other books are here).

In that summer of 1987, college student Kovalik was part of a reforestation project in Nicaragua. The Contra war was in progress, and he heard machine gun fire “nearly every night.” The suffering was “simply shocking.” He writes that photos he took of children there “makes me want to cry.” The “Veterans Peace Convey” of humanitarian aid to Nicaragua, which he joined in 1988, was “possibly the most profound experience of my life.” Kovalik’s book is immensely appealing, not least because of personal experience that he relates.

He makes effective use of extended quotations from various reports, other histories, analyses from international agencies, and commentary from participants. Kovalik states that the object with his book was to present “the realities of U.S. intervention [in Nicaragua,] past and present,” highlight Nicaraguans’ abilities to overcome U.S. “assaults,” and promote solidarity with Nicaraguans in their struggle for self-determination.

The book’s first sections review Nicaragua’s history prior to the Sandinista National Liberation Front’s (FSLN) accession to power. It covers Tennessean William Walker’s attempt to set up his own slavocracy in 1855, U.S. Marines’ occupation of Nicaragua from 1912 to 1933, U.S. formation of Nicaragua’s oppressive National Guard, and U.S. support after 1936 for the brutal Somoza-family dictatorship.

Kovalik reports on Augusto Cesar Sandino’s guerrilla army that fought the Marines from 1927 until their departure. He writes about the struggle of the FSLN rural insurgency after 1960 to bring down the Somoza regime. Over 50,000 Nicaraguans died in the year preceding its collapse on July 17, 1979.

Most of the book is about the FSLN in power, their electoral defeat in 1990, the U.S.-led Contra counter-revolution in the 1980s, the “Dark Days” of neoliberal rule after 1990, and the Sandinistas in power again after 2007. There are these points:

+ Until recently, the Sandinistas, originally an alliance of three factions, governed with allies including Catholic Church representatives, business leaders, capitalists, Marxists, and rural collectives.

+ Women’s lives have improved in equality, political participation, and leadership opportunities.

+ Sandinista approval ratings have remained high, even in stressful times, for example, 80% in 2018 prior to the protests of that year and up to 90% before the 2021 elections.

+ Dissent within FSLN ranks and FSLN differences with its opposition have reflected divisions between city and countryside and between intellectual callings and manual work.

+ The Catholic Church, now far removed from liberation theology, has consistently harassed the Sandinistas.

+ Kovalik inveighs against U.S. leftists who have abandoned the Sandinistas. They “claim to know better about the nature of Daniel Ortega and the FSLN than the Nicaraguan people,” he points out.

+ Sandinistas in power have accomplished much: nutritional gains, agrarian reform, food sovereignty, housing access, widespread electrification, increased literacy, more jobs, youth programs, universal access to schools and healthcare, infrastructure improvements, and lowered mortality rates.

Until 2020 or so, far fewer Nicaraguans were migrating north than were the peoples of other Central American countries. Their reduced numbers testify to the benefits of change in Nicaragua.

Kovalik finishes his book with a look at the interplay of recent ant-government protests, harsh penalties exacted by the government, and mounting criticism of the FSLN government by sectors of the U.S. and European left.

Anti-government protests with street actions and barricades prevailed in mid-2018. In his afterword that concludes Kovalik’s book, Orlando Zelaya Olivas indicates that 198 civilians and 22 police officers were murdered. Mainstream news reports uniformly blamed the police for killing peaceful demonstrators. The truth was otherwise.

Kovalik, citing sources, shows that the protesters had been paid and prepared, that many had criminal records, that snipers rather than the police did most of the killing, and that lethal violence continued even after the police were withdrawn. These were fake protests programmed toward destabilization and eventually a coup.

Kovalik shows the U.S. hand in creating turmoil. The U.S. government had funded opposition NGOs, youth groups, religious organizations, and dissidents who included former Sandinistas. U.S. agents and funding were behind the anti-government messaging on social media that played a prominent role.

Nicaragua’s government arrested and jailed many of those who in 2018 had violated laws against terrorist activities and against unauthorized service to a foreign government. In June 2019, the government amnestied hundreds of those caught up in the coup attempt. Dozens of jailed coup plotters were released on promising that they would no longer conspire against the government.

Criticism exploded again in 2021 after those who had promised to give up on plotting were imprisoned again on grounds that they were aiming to destabilize upcoming elections. Kovalik states that, “the first duty of a Revolution is to defend itself, for if it cannot meet this most essential goal, it obviously cannot serve and defend the people as they deserve.”

There was the added element of the imprisonments supposedly constituting interference in the elections of November 7, 2021 that gave Daniel Ortega a fourth consecutive presidential term.

Writing from Nicaragua, Stephen Sefton explains that the jailed opposition leaders were not opposition candidates. The political opposition in 2011 had split into regular political parties and “an extra-parliamentary opposition based in local NGOs.” The latter sector had “mounted the violent, US designed coup attempt” of 2018 and were arrested according to Nicaraguan Law. The opposition’s contending political parties had no part in planning a coup in 2021, according to Sefton

After Daniel Kovalik’s book was published, solidarity with the Sandinistas took a big hit. On February 9, 2023, the government released 222 prisoners, mostly those who had been arrested in 2021. It expelled all but a few to the United States. The government took away their citizenship and that of a 100 or so others, and confiscated their properties. Criticism has resounded, for example, from the Economist magazine, the United Nations, to the left-leaning Colombian government.

Taking away someone’s citizenship surely is an extraordinary step, certainly in the United States, and only slightly less so in the U.K. The grounds would be treason. A rationale for such a judgment emerges out of Kovalik’s book.

One imagines a favored few in Nicaragua who are oblivious to decades of U.S. military attacks, violence, pay-offs, trickery and manipulations. They spurned the government’s long efforts at collaboration and coalition building. One equally imagines the grief attending decades of popular resistance against the U.S.-backed dictatorship and, afterwards, the U.S.-backed opposition.

What’s left is desperation, especially what with population elements who reject the idea of justice and dignity for all Nicaraguans and who once more are shown to be dependent on the U.S. government. Meanwhile, U.S. economic sanctions are non-stop.

The book’s basic point is that rescue and recovery of oppressed, marginalized, and poor Nicaraguans have required a very long process. It’s no wonder that some counterparts today of Tom Paine’s “summer soldier and the sunshine patriot” have dropped out.

### Panama

#### One cannot understand modern ‘diplomatic engagement’ without understanding the legacy of the Panama Invasion – military and humanitarian interventions operated as training grounds for the War on Terror and global democracy promotion – refuse extending the legacy of imperial engagement in Latin America.

Grandin, 2014 (Greg Grandin, GREG GRANDIN, a TomDispatch regular, teaches history at New York University and is the author of a number of books, including Fordlandia, a finalist for the Pulitzer Prize and the National Book Award, and The Empire of Necessity, which won the Bancroft Prize in American History. His new book, Kissinger’s Shadow: The Long Reach of America’s Most Controversial Statesman, will be published in August., "The Iraq And Afghanistan Wars Began In Panama," In These Times, https://inthesetimes.com/article/invasion-of-panama-anniversary, accessed on 4-29-2024)

As we end another year of endless war in Washington, it might be the perfect time to reflect on the War That Started All Wars — or at least the war that started all of Washington’s post-Cold War wars: the invasion of Panama.

Twenty-five years ago this month, early on the morning of December 20, 1989, President George H.W. Bush launched Operation Just Cause, sending tens of thousands of troops and hundreds of aircraft into Panama to execute a warrant of arrest against its leader, Manuel Noriega, on charges of drug trafficking. Those troops quickly secured all important strategic installations, including the main airport in Panama City, various military bases, and ports. Noriega went into hiding before surrendering on January 3rd and was then officially extradited to the United States to stand trial. Soon after, most of the U.S. invaders withdrew from the country.

In and out. Fast and simple. An entrance plan and an exit strategy all wrapped in one. And it worked, making Operation Just Cause one of the most successful military actions in U.S. history. At least in tactical terms.

There were casualties. More than 20 U.S. soldiers were killed and 300-500 Panamanian combatants died as well. Disagreement exists over how many civilians perished. Washington claimed that few died. In the ​“low hundreds,” the Pentagon’s Southern Command said. But others charged that U.S. officials didn’t bother to count the dead in El Chorrillo, a poor Panama City barrio that U.S. planes indiscriminately bombed because it was thought to be a bastion of support for Noriega. Grassroots human-rights organizations claimed thousands of civilians were killed and tens of thousands displaced.

As Human Rights Watch wrote, even conservative estimates of civilian fatalities suggested ​“that the rule of proportionality and the duty to minimize harm to civilians… were not faithfully observed by the invading U.S. forces.” That may have been putting it mildly when it came to the indiscriminant bombing of a civilian population, but the point at least was made. Civilians were given no notice. The Cobra and Apache helicopters that came over the ridge didn’t bother to announce their pending arrival by blasting Wagner’s ​“Ride of the Valkyries” (as in Apocalypse Now). The University of Panama’s seismograph marked 442 major explosions in the first 12 hours of the invasion, about one major bomb blast every two minutes. Fires engulfed the mostly wooden homes, destroying about 4,000 residences. Some residents began to call El Chorrillo ​“Guernica” or ​“little Hiroshima.” Shortly after hostilities ended, bulldozers excavated mass graves and shoveled in the bodies. ​“Buried like dogs,” said the mother of one of the civilian dead.

Sandwiched between the fall of the Berlin Wall on November 9, 1989, and the commencement of the first Gulf War on January 17, 1991, Operation Just Cause might seem a curio from a nearly forgotten era, its anniversary hardly worth a mention. So many earth-shattering events have happened since. But the invasion of Panama should be remembered in a big way. After all, it helps explain many of those events. In fact, you can’t begin to fully grasp the slippery slope of American militarism in the post-9/11 era – how unilateral, preemptory ​“regime change” became an acceptable foreign policy option, how ​“democracy promotion” became a staple of defense strategy, and how war became a branded public spectacle – without understanding Panama.

Our Man in Panama

Operation Just Cause was carried out unilaterally, sanctioned neither by the United Nations nor the Organization of American States (OAS). In addition, the invasion was the first post-Cold War military operation justified in the name of democracy – ​“militant democracy,” as George Will approvingly called what the Pentagon would unilaterally install in Panama.

The campaign to capture Noriega, however, didn’t start with such grand ambitions. For years, as Saddam Hussein had been Washington’s man in Iraq, so Noriega was a CIA asset and Washington ally in Panama. He was a key player in the shadowy network of anti-communists, tyrants, and drug runners that made up what would become Iran-Contra. That, in case you’ve forgotten, was a conspiracy involving President Ronald Reagan’s National Security Council to sell high-tech missiles to the Ayatollahs in Iran and then divert their payments to support anti-communist rebels in Nicaragua in order to destabilize the Sandinista government there. Noriega’s usefulness to Washington came to an end in 1986, after journalist Seymour Hersh published an investigation in the New York Times linking him to drug trafficking. It turned out that the Panamanian autocrat had been working both sides. He was ​“our man,” but apparently was also passing on intelligence about us to Cuba.

Still, when George H.W. Bush was inaugurated president in January 1989, Panama was not high on his foreign policy agenda. Referring to the process by which Noriega, in less than a year, would become America’s most wanted autocrat, Bush’s National Security Advisor Brent Scowcroft said: ​“I can’t really describe the course of events that led us this way… Noriega, was he running drugs and stuff? Sure, but so were a lot of other people. Was he thumbing his nose at the United States? Yeah, yeah.”

The Keystone Kops…

Domestic politics provided the tipping point to military action. For most of 1989, Bush administration officials had been half-heartedly calling for a coup against Noriega. Still, they were caught completely caught off guard when, in October, just such a coup started unfolding. The White House was, at that moment, remarkably in the dark. It had no clear intel about what was actually happening. ​”All of us agreed at that point that we simply had very little to go on,” Secretary of Defense Dick Cheney later reported. ​“There was a lot of confusion at the time because there was a lot of confusion in Panama.”

“We were sort of the Keystone Kops,” was the way Scowcroft remembered it, not knowing what to do or whom to support. When Noriega regained the upper hand, Bush came under intense criticism in Congress and the media. This, in turn, spurred him to act. Scowcroft recalls the momentum that led to the invasion: ​“Maybe we were looking for an opportunity to show that we were not as messed up as the Congress kept saying we were, or as timid as a number of people said.” The administration had to find a way to respond, as Scowcroft put it, to the ​“whole wimp factor.”

Momentum built for action, and so did the pressure to find a suitable justification for action after the fact. Shortly after the failed coup, Cheney claimed on PBS’s Newshour that the only objectives the U.S. had in Panama were to ​“safeguard American lives” and ​“protect American interests” by defending that crucial passageway from the Atlantic to the Pacific Oceans, the Panama Canal. ​“We are not there,” he emphasized, ​“to remake the Panamanian government.” He also noted that the White House had no plans to act unilaterally against the wishes of the Organization of American States to extract Noriega from the country. The ​“hue and cry and the outrage that we would hear from one end of the hemisphere to the other,” he said, “…raises serious doubts about the course of that action.”

That was mid-October. What a difference two months would make. By December 20th, the campaign against Noriega had gone from accidental – Keystone Kops bumbling in the dark – to transformative: the Bush administration would end up remaking the Panamanian government and, in the process, international law.

…Start a Wild Fire

Cheney wasn’t wrong about the ​“hue and cry.” Every single country other than the United States in the Organization of American States voted against the invasion of Panama, but by then it couldn’t have mattered less. Bush acted anyway.

What changed everything was the fall of the Berlin Wall just over a month before the invasion. Paradoxically, as the Soviet Union’s influence in its backyard (eastern Europe) unraveled, it left Washington with more room to maneuver in its backyard (Latin America). The collapse of Soviet-style Communism also gave the White House an opportunity to go on the ideological and moral offense. And at that moment, the invasion of Panama happened to stand at the head of the line.

As with most military actions, the invaders had a number of justifications to offer, but at that moment the goal of installing a ​“democratic” regime in power suddenly flipped to the top of the list. In adopting that rationale for making war, Washington was in effect radically revising the terms of international diplomacy. At the heart of its argument was the idea that democracy (as defined by the Bush administration) trumped the principle of national sovereignty.

Latin American nations immediately recognized the threat. After all, according to historian John Coatsworth, the U.S. overthrew 41 governments in Latin America between 1898 and 1994, and many of those regime changes were ostensibly carried out, as Woodrow Wilson once put it in reference to Mexico, to teach Latin Americans ​“to elect good men.” Their resistance only gave Bush’s ambassador to the OAS, Luigi Einaudi, a chance to up the ethical ante. He quickly and explicitly tied the assault on Panama to the wave of democracy movements then sweeping Eastern Europe. ​“Today we are… living in historic times,” he lectured his fellow OAS delegates, two days after the invasion, ​“a time when a great principle is spreading across the world like wildfire. That principle, as we all know, is the revolutionary idea that people, not governments, are sovereign.”

Einaudi’s remarks hit on all the points that would become so familiar early in the next century in George W. Bush’s ​“Freedom Agenda”: the idea that democracy, as defined by Washington, was a universal value; that ​“history” represented a movement toward the fulfillment of that value; and that any nation or person who stood in the path of such fulfillment would be swept away.

With the fall of the Berlin Wall, Einaudi said, democracy had acquired the ​“force of historical necessity.” It went without saying that the United States, within a year the official victor in the Cold War and the ​“sole superpower” left on Planet Earth, would be the executor of that necessity. Bush’s ambassador reminded his fellow delegates that the ​“great democratic tide which is now sweeping the globe” had actually started in Latin America, with human rights movements working to end abuses by military juntas and dictators. The fact that Latin American’s freedom fighters had largely been fighting against U.S.-backed anti-communist rightwing death-squad states was lost on the ambassador.

In the case of Panama, ​“democracy” quickly worked its way up the shortlist of casus belli.

In his December 20th address to the nation announcing the invasion, President Bush gave ​“democracy” as his second reason for going to war, just behind safeguarding American lives but ahead of combatting drug trafficking or protecting the Panama Canal. By the next day, at a press conference, democracy had leapt to the top of the list and so the president began his opening remarks this way: ​“Our efforts to support the democratic processes in Panama and to ensure continued safety of American citizens is now moving into its second day.”

George Will, the conservative pundit, was quick to realize the significance of this new post-Cold War rationale for military action. In a syndicated column headlined, ​“Drugs and Canal Are Secondary: Restoring Democracy Was Reason Enough to Act,” he praised the invasion for ​“stressing… the restoration of democracy,” adding that, by doing so, ​“the president put himself squarely in a tradition with a distinguished pedigree. It holds that America’s fundamental national interest is to be America, and the nation’s identity (its sense of its self, its peculiar purposefulness) is inseparable from a commitment to the spread – not the aggressive universalization, but the civilized advancement – of the proposition to which we, unique among nations, are, as the greatest American said, dedicated.”

That was fast. From Keystone Kops to Thomas Paine in just two months, as the White House seized the moment to radically revise the terms by which the U.S. engaged the world. In so doing, it overthrew not just Manuel Noriega but what, for half a century, had been the bedrock foundation of the liberal multilateral order: the ideal of national sovereignty.

Darkness Unto Light

The way the invasion was reported represented a qualitative leap in scale, intensity, and visibility when compared to past military actions. Think of the illegal bombing of Cambodia ordered by Richard Nixon and his National Security Advisor Henry Kissinger in 1969 and conducted for more than five years in complete secrecy, or of the time lag between actual fighting in South Vietnam and the moment, often a day later, when it was reported.

In contrast, the war in Panama was covered with a you-are-there immediacy, a remarkable burst of shock-and-awe journalism (before the phrase ​“shock and awe” was even invented) meant to capture and keep the public’s attention. Operation Just Cause was ​“one of the shortest armed conflicts in American military history,” writes Brigadier General John Brown, a historian at the United States Army Center of Military History. It was also ​“extraordinarily complex, involving the deployment of thousands of personnel and equipment from distant military installations and striking almost two-dozen objectives within a 24-hour period of time… Just Cause represented a bold new era in American military force projection: speed, mass, and precision, coupled with immediate public visibility.”

Well, a certain kind of visibility at least. The devastation of El Chorrillo was, of course, ignored by the U.S. media.

In this sense, the invasion of Panama was the forgotten warm-up for the first Gulf War, which took place a little over a year later. That assault was specifically designed for all the world to see. ​“Smart bombs” lit up the sky over Baghdad as the TV cameras rolled. Featured were new night-vision equipment, real-time satellite communications, and cable TV (as well as former U.S. commanders ready to narrate the war in the style of football announcers, right down to instant replays). All of this allowed for public consumption of a techno-display of apparent omnipotence that, at least for a short time, helped consolidate mass approval and was meant as both a lesson and a warning for the rest of the world. ​“By God,” Bush said in triumph, ​“we’ve kicked the Vietnam syndrome once and for all.”

It was a heady form of triumphalism that would teach those in Washington exactly the wrong lessons about war and the world.

Justice Is Our Brand

In the mythology of American militarism that has taken hold since George W. Bush’s disastrous wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, his father, George H.W. Bush, is often held up as a paragon of prudence – especially when compared to the later reckless lunacy of Vice President Dick Cheney, Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld, and Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz. After all, their agenda held that it was the messianic duty of the United States to rid the world not just of ​“evil-doers” but ​“evil” itself. In contrast, Bush Senior, we are told, recognized the limits of American power. He was a realist and his circumscribed Gulf War was a ​“war of necessity” where his son’s 2003 invasion of Iraq was a catastrophic ​“war of choice.” But it was H.W. who first rolled out a ​“freedom agenda” to legitimize the illegal invasion of Panama.

Likewise, the moderation of George W. Bush’s Secretary of Defense, Colin Powell, has often been contrasted favorably with the rashness of the neocons in the post-9/11 years. As the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff in 1989, however, Powell was hot for getting Noriega. In discussions leading up to the invasion, he advocated forcefully for military action, believing it offered an opportunity to try out what would later become known as ​“the Powell Doctrine.” Meant to ensure that there would never again be another Vietnam or any kind of American military defeat, that doctrine was to rely on a set of test questions for any potential operation involving ground troops that would limit military operations to defined objectives. Among them were: Is the action in response to a direct threat to national security? Do we have a clear goal? Is there an exit strategy?

It was Powell who first let the new style of American war go to his head and pushed for a more exalted name to brand the war with, one that undermined the very idea of those ​“limits” he was theoretically trying to establish. Following Pentagon practice, the operational plan to capture Noriega was to go by the meaningless name of ​“Blue Spoon.” That, Powell wrote in My American Journey, was ​“hardly a rousing call to arms… [So] we kicked around a number of ideas and finally settled on… Just Cause. Along with the inspirational ring, I liked something else about it. Even our severest critics would have to utter ​‘Just Cause’ while denouncing us.”

Since the pursuit of justice is infinite, it’s hard to see what your exit strategy is once you claim it as your ​“cause.” Remember, George W. Bush’s original name for his Global War on Terror was to be the less-than-modest Operation Infinite Justice.

Powell says he hesitated on the eve of the invasion, wondering if it really was the best course of action, but let out a ​“whoop and a holler” when he learned that Noriega had been found. A new Panamanian president had already been sworn in at Fort Clayton, a U.S. military base in the Canal Zone, hours before the invasion began.

Here’s the lesson Powell took from Panama: the invasion, he wrote, confirmed all his ​“convictions over the preceding twenty years, since the days of doubt over Vietnam. Have a clear political objective and stick to it. Use all the force necessary, and do not apologize for going in big if that is what it takes… As I write these words, almost six years after Just Cause, Mr. Noriega, convicted on the drug charges contained in the indictments, sits in an American prison cell. Panama has a new security force, and the country is still a democracy.”

That assessment was made in 1995. From a later vantage point, history’s judgment is not so sanguine. As George H.W. Bush’s ambassador to the United Nations, Thomas Pickering said about Operation Just Cause: ​“Having used force in Panama… there was a propensity in Washington to think that force could provide a result more rapidly, more effectively, more surgically than diplomacy.” The easy capture of Noriega meant ​“the notion that the international community had to be engaged… was ignored.”

“Iraq in 2003 was all of that shortsightedness in spades,” Pickering said. ​“We were going to do it all ourselves.” And we did.

The road to Baghdad, in other words, ran through Panama City. It was George H.W. Bush’s invasion of that small, poor country 25 years ago that inaugurated the age of preemptive unilateralism, using ​“democracy” and ​“freedom” as both justifications for war and a branding opportunity. Later, after 9/11, when George W. insisted that the ideal of national sovereignty was a thing of the past, when he said nothing – certainly not the opinion of the international community – could stand in the way of the ​“great mission” of the United States to ​“extend the benefits of freedom across the globe,” all he was doing was throwing more fuel on the ​“wildfire” sparked by his father. A wildfire some in Panama likened to a ​“little Hiroshima.”

### Paraguay

#### US aid to Paraguay mystifies anti-communist intervention & extraction of natural resources

Whitney, 2015 (W. T. Whitney, W.T. Whitney Jr. is a retired pediatrician and political journalist living in Maine., "U. S. Interventions in Venezuela, Peru, and Paraguay," CounterPunch.org, https://www.counterpunch.org/2015/03/18/u-s-interventions-in-venezuela-peru-and-paraguay/, accessed on 4-29-2024)

Teams of U.S. military personnel purporting to deliver humanitarian aid represent slippage of yet another sort. Over many years the Southern Command has had U.S. soldiers settling down throughout the region to offer medical, dental, technical and/or engineering assistance. In 2012 military teams in Peru provided medical services in 11 locations for over six weeks. Since the 1980s this kind of military outreach has been called “New Horizons.” In 2008 the Southern Command adjusted terminology to “Beyond the Horizon.” Aid-dispensing soldiers have traveled to Paraguay, the Dominican Republic, Guatemala, Belize, Haiti, Chile, and elsewhere.

The Southern Command opened its Center for Emergency Operations in Santa Rosa, San Pedro department, in northern Paraguay on February 22, 2014. The U. S. ambassador attended the inaugural ceremony. The facility cost $1.7 million, and U.S. military personnel would be there to provide “help to the Paraguayan people in the event of emergencies and natural disasters.” The Southern Command notes the area’s history of “seasonal floods, droughts and wildfires that have driven thousands of families from their homes and threatened the livelihood of its inhabitants.” Medical and dental care would be available.

At the time, Southern Command humanitarian aid specialist Steve Carro indicated “the U.S. military forces had in mind a network of 100 [such] centers (…) in 25 Latin American and Caribbean counties.”

U.S. military planners, however, had not taken on a new worldview of beneficence. Two days before the opening, Paraguay’s defense minister met with U. S. Defense Attaché Bárbara Fick and Rear Admiral George Balance. They discussed increased military cooperation, and Admiral Balance requested that Paraguayan soldiers attend U.S. military schools on scholarships. Drug war cooperation was mentioned.

All along, according to a November 2013 news report, the Paraguayan government had been projecting its own $2 million military base in Northern Paraguay. Its purpose, said the same defense minister, was “to bring back peace to the people.” The project was in response to the increasing presence in the area of Marxist Leninist guerrillas known as the Army of the Paraguayan People. A local newspaper revealed that, “The initiative for fitting out a military base (…) came from the United States.” The Paraguayan soldiers presumably would be working in tandem with U.S. counterparts nearby, that is, if the latter could break away from their good works.

Pablo Ruiz of the School of the Americas Watch says U.S. interest in Northern Paraguay stems from the strategic importance of the underlying Guarani aquifer (largest in the world), copious natural resources, the vantage point provided for spying on nearby Brazil and Argentina, and growing peasant resistance in the area to a land monopolization for soy production.

Ultimately the larger story is of adjustable, slippery motives. The phenomenon seems to cover up the truth as to why the U.S. government meddles. A process of mystification ends up in lies and contradictions, little different in essence from explanations as to why sanctions were imposed against Venezuela.

Obfuscation is the order of the day. Southern Command head Major General John Kelly responded to a reporter’s question about whether or not events in Caracas on February 12, 2015 represented a coup attempt, as Venezuelan leaders allege.

“A coup? You know, I don’t know anyone that would want to take that mess over, but it might be that we see, whether it’s at the end of his term or whatever, I wouldn’t say — I wouldn’t (say) necessarily a coup, but there might be with — the same ruling party … some arrangements to change leadership.”

### Peru

#### The US allies itself with the Peruvian state against the revolutionary classes – military aid goes to counterrevolution & extraction of natural resources

Whitney, 12-31-2023 (W. T. Whitney, W.T. Whitney Jr. is a retired pediatrician and political journalist living in Maine, "The Implications of New US Troop Arrivals in Peru," CounterPunch.org, https://www.counterpunch.org/2023/06/09/the-implications-of-new-us-troop-arrivals-in-peru/, accessed on 4-29-2024)

Beginning in June, detachments of U.S. troops will be arriving in Peru and staying until December 31, 2023. Peru’s Congress, supported by only 6% of Peruvians, on May 26 approved a resolution introduced in January that “authorized the entry of naval units and foreign military personnel with weapons of war.”

U.S. military personnel are heading for Peru on a training and advisory mission. U.S. Army, Navy and Air Force troops will be active throughout that country. Most of them apparently will stay for less than the allotted seven months. They are bringing weapons and equipment. The U.S. Southern Command appointed a Peruvian general as “deputy commanding general-interoperability.”

They arrive following massive popular protests that erupted in reaction to Peru’s rightwing Congress on December 7, 2022 having ordered the arrest of the democratically-elected President Pedro Castillo. His politics were progressive. The protests provoked violent military and police repression; over 70 Peruvians were killed. Demonstrations peaked in February, but will revive in July, according to reports.

Castillo remains in prison, and his replacement, former Vice-President President Dina Boluarte, is widely reviled. The Inter-American Commission on Human Rights recently issued a report documenting “serious violations by the police and military” that took place shortly after she became president. Peru’s Public Ministry, investigating “the presumed crime of genocide,” required that Boluarte testify on June 6.

The U.S. troops will be arriving amid an upsurge of Peru’s underclass. Peru’s mostly rural, poor, and indigenous majority did elect the inexperienced Castillo as president in July 2021. They are now calling for Boluarte’s removal, new presidential elections, and a Constituent Assembly. Six of ten Peruvians regard the current political crisis as stemming from “racism and anti-indigenous discrimination,” according to a recent poll.

Resumen Latinoamericano reports that the U.S. forces heading to Peru will include 25 Special Forces troops arriving with weapons and equipment and 42 other Special Forces troops charged with preparing Peru’s intelligence command for “joint special operations;” 160 additional U.S. troops will be utilizing nine U.S. airplanes.

Eventually, 970 U.S. Air Force and Special Forces personnel will have taken part in the U.S. Southern Command’s so-called “Resolute Sentinel 23.” Previous U.S. military interventions in Latin America have been similarly named. The phrasing of this intervention’s official purpose is odd: “to “integrate combat interoperability and disaster response training in addition to medical exchanges, training and aid and construction projects.”

The coup government, under whose auspices the U.S. troops will be operating, is a creature of conservative political parties and the business establishment. In April it announced plans to privatize lithium mining, thus reversing President Castillo’s efforts to nationalize the processing of lithium. The government is easing the authorization procedures that enable foreign corporations to extract copper. Lawyer and former Castillo advisor Raúl Noblecilla cites control over Peru’s mineral wealth as to why U.S. troops are in Peru; their presence there reveals “how lackey and sell-out governments function.”

Academician Jorge Lora Cam states that “the usurper government” seeks to “deepen extractive plunder with blood and fire … unify the right with left-leaning elements infected by neoliberalism … and prepare for permanent political power.” He adds that under the auspices of “political criminals,” the country’s economy is newly “at risk because Peru’s foreign debt now amounts to $100 billion dollars.”

The imminent arrival of U.S. military forces provoked other criticism. Former foreign Minister Héctor Béjar insisted that, “the spurious government was using the presence of these troops to intimidate the Peruvian people who have announced new protests for July.”

A spokesperson for the Communist Party of Peru – “Patria Roja” explained that, “the entry of U.S. troops in Peru is an affront to our sovereignty and represents explicit backing by the U.S. government of the nefarious Boluarte regime, which is responsible for repression against the Peruvian people.”

The U.S. military, of course, has long interacted with its Peruvian counterpart. Instances include: military exercises in 2017, “Regional Emergency Operations Centers” in 2018, a “naval mission in 1920,” U.S. Army involvement “from 1946 to 1969,” and U.S. training of thousands of Peruvian military personnel from the 1940s on. TeleSur in 2015 reported that, “Hundreds of Peruvians protested Wednesday … against the [anticipated] arrival of 3,200 [U.S.]soldiers with ships, airplanes, and various kinds of weapons.”

Peruvians are hardly alone as a targeted people. Some 800 U.S. bases are distributed throughout the world, and “173,000 troops [were] deployed in 159 countries as of 2020.” The setting is of military intrusion extending over decades in Peru and now across the world. What’s the cost and how are payments arranged for?

The projected U.S. military budget for FY 2024 exceeds $1.5 trillion, according to a recent analysis. There are two sets of military activities and each requires its own funding approach. The U.S. government has to pay for potential war against enemies like China and Russia and for military operations elsewhere.

To portray China and Russia as threats to the U.S. status quo garners so much attention as to spark fellow-feeling for the military- industrial complex, and the funding flows. Rationales for the other kinds of involvement may lack crowd appeal. They are: shoring up the worldwide capitalist economy, serving corporate interests, and countering leftist insurgencies.

We conclude that congressional and tax-payer generosity in response to exaggerated threats to the U.S. status quo and to the worldwide capitalist system may translate into so much funding that enough is left over to pay for U.S. meddling in the other countries.

Panama may be one of them: The Biden administration may be on the verge of sending U.S. troops to the Darién region of Panama “to counter illicit drug trafficking, human trafficking, and irregular immigration.”

### Puerto Rico

#### The first question for Puerto rico is addressing the colonialism that incorporated it into the united states while denying it’s equal status as a country.

**Roman 98**

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As addressed previously, America's colonial prerogative has inevitably led to the alien-citizen paradox. n291 This paradox can only be eliminated by removing the subordinated status of the Puerto Rican people. Only through the full grant of U.S. citizenship with all the rights that traditionally go with it, or through a grant of independence to Puerto Rico, can these people end their unequal status. The grant of full U.S. citizenship, however, raises a host of thorny issues concerning the status of the territory. Possibly the most significant right currently unavailable to the people of Puerto Rico is the right to vote for President, Vice President, and for representation in Congress. Under the current colonial regime, not only is the right to vote for national elections unavailable, but further representation in Congress is reflected only through a single non-voting delegate to the House of Representatives. Thus far, full representation in Congress is provided only to the citizens of a state. Full representation in Congress would therefore seem to bring Puerto Rico a step closer to a status resembling statehood-a status that American Congressional leaders have been reluctant to promote for a century. Nonetheless, the incongruity of unequal citizenship under commonwealth status is apparent when one considers the following questions. How can United States citizens be considered full citizens if they do not have equal rights, if they cannot vote in presidential elections? How can one be an equal citizen if one cannot vote for and attain representation in Congress? Yet, how can one attain representation in Congress without statehood? n292 Thus, if the people of Puerto Rico are to approach equal citizenship, as a first step the incorporated/unincorporated territory distinction of the Insular Cases must be overturned. With these changes, Puerto Rico could attain a status more closely resembling statehood. Subsequently, the United States must commit itself to accept Puerto Rico as a state and provide a legitimate process where that status can be achieved. Conversely, if America refuses to fully accept these citizens, the only tenable solution consistent with an unsubordinated status is granting independence to Puerto Rico.

#### The alternative is not simply a theoretical exercise but is informed by activism and community networks like “Casa Publo’s” in Puerto Rico. Only a truly global anti-capitalist paradigm that is insurgent and community based can solve the modern ecocide of capitalism and genocidal violence.

**De Onís 2018** (“ES UNA LUCHA DOBLE” Articulating Environmental Nationalism in Puerto Rico by Catalina Maíre De Onís Ph.D., Indiana University. Assistant Professor of Civic Communication and Media. MBA)

While linking environmentalism and nationalisms allows for important recognitions about shared logics of domination that mark particular bodies (humans, water, and land) as disposable, and assists in broadening the concept of self-determination beyond political sovereignty, these relationships are complex. For instance, in Puerto Rico, disputes over how much influence the federal government should have in the Big Island’s environmental decision-making process have driven a wedge between pro-independence and environmental activists. During the 1970s, some movement actors viewed US intervention as necessary for enacting and enforcing environmental laws; others saw this as a betrayal of Puerto Rico’s potential for political sovereignty.46 Thus, as I have argued elsewhere, coalitional politics must grapple with complex movement histories, legacies, and tensions.47 Furthermore, enactments of environmental nationalism with respect to strategic eclipse may not always “delink,” or divest from, oppressive practices.48 Thus, while environmental nationalism and strategic eclipse can bring people together to create more livable communities, this articulation also has the potential to alienate others and deny vital interconnections.49 One of the ways I have tried to record and complicate articulatory movement practices involves engaging those on the front lines with a commitment to praxis. A decolonial approach to reading these movement efforts requires critically documenting the lived realities of community members, including their reflections on mobilization campaigns and outcomes. This approach resonates with Karma Chávez’s contention that we should “think about the courses of action that people have available to them, on the ground, as the starting points for theoretical analysis.”50 By accessing, assessing, and amplifying these discourses, activist scholars and other researchers can engage in praxis that values both academic and community expertise and the insights and imaginaries generated by these collaborations. A study of the pipeline defeat would be incomplete without a discussion of a negative outcome of Vía Verde’s demise—a proposed alternative “solution,” known as the Aguirre Offshore Gasport. While the project is currently in limbo, the local public energy utility, the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, and the US corporation Excelerate Energy are working to approve this gas port in southern Puerto Rico. According to Santiago, the project will detrimentally affect fishers’ livelihoods and coral reefs and increase the territory’s dependency on another fossil fuel (liquefied gas).51 This energy proposal demonstrates that grappling with colliding economic, energy, and environmental crises also involves determining what counts as a “successful” campaign, and for whom. In response to the disproportionate effects of energy colonialism experienced in the southern part of Puerto Rico, local community members were organizing for solar communities before the 2017 hurricane season and continue to do so. While Casa Pueblo has received attention for its commendable efforts to help distribute and implement solar devices and infrastructure, other, less well-known groups also are working hard in this area. For example, collaborators with the Iniciativa de la Bahía de Jobos have been planning Coquí Solar, a community solar project, for several years. Evincing the impure politics of colonial situations, the Sierra Club likely will fund this community project. Thus, despite the limitations of USbased organizations in Puerto Rico noted by Rosario and González, this solar project suggests that they can provide the financial resources necessary to give community members control over their own energy futures. Given our collective, though uneven, contribution to anthropogenic climate disruption and environmental degradation, it is not hyperbolic to argue that what happens in one part of the world carries global effects. The relationship between environmental advocacy and nationalisms is crucial for imagining and enacting more just, sustainable communities within and beyond Puerto Rico. To quote Rosario, “We have the means to change. We need to change what’s in our heads and in our hearts. [Life] is a creation. Let’s re-create it. Let’s start dreaming another one.” Let us, indeed.

### Uruguay

#### US aid to Uruguay cannot be disimbricated from the imperial legacy of military interventions and anti-communist global policing efforts

Jordan, 2015 (Brandon Jordan, Brandon Jordan is a freelance journalist., "Sowing the Seeds of War in Uruguay," CounterPunch.org, https://www.counterpunch.org/2015/10/08/sowing-the-seeds-of-war-in-uruguay/, accessed on 4-29-2024)

Sowing the Seeds

The blame cannot solely rest in the hands of the SIE as mainstream newspapers also stoked communist fears similar to the role American institutions and lawmakers, like Joseph McCarthy, played during the 1950s.

Major outlets like El País or El Día, tied to the major parties, warned of a communist conspiracy against the construction of a dam at the Rincón de Baygorra. The latter warned the sabotage of the project, based on evidence it reviewed, possibly had “communist ties.” Of course, much of it was an exaggeration and evidence suggests such allegations were actually created by the business community.

Simultaneously, the U.S. inflamed fears of communism in Uruguay, which could be found in military aid given to the country. In an essay for When States Kill: Latin America, the U.S., and Technologies of Terror, Jeffrey J. Ryan, a professor at the University of Arkansas, detailed how Uruguay rose up the ranks for U.S. military aid:

In the three years leading up to the 1973 golpe, the coup d’état that brought the military to power, the United States dedicated an average of 9.5 percent of its total Latin American military-aid budget to Uruguay, and in one year (1970) it was the second largest military aid recipient in the hemisphere…Between 1960 and 1976, Uruguay’s average rank among Latin American military aid recipients was seventh of twenty-four, while among economic aid recipients it averaged about fourteenth.

The CIA, meanwhile, played an active role on anyone they viewed as dissenters. García said the “CIA station [in Montevideo] worked with intensity in Uruguay” as, for example, the CIA secretly sent columns to newspapers across the country to influence the public. Of course, this intensity was driven by an external actor—the Soviet Union.

CIA agents knew Uruguay had relations with communist countries. It helped, however, when Uruguayan police authorities who shared the same vision as the agency.

After the Cuban Revolution, President Dwight Eisenhower toured four Latin American countries—Uruguay, Chile, Argentina, and Brazil— in 1960 to ensure they did not pivot toward Cuba. As a result, the four countries dismissed concerns about U.S. intervention in the region. Furthermore, the four countries snubbed a Cuban-hosted event on hunger and strengthened ties to the U.S. CIA whistleblower Philip Agee verified this U.S. strategy on an appearance for Democracy Now! on October 2, 2003 as U.S. policy “was to isolate the Cuban Revolution in Latin America.” Interestingly, the CIA planned this trip after the rise of Jacobo Árbenz in Guatemala, although the exile of Árbenz to Uruguay led them to scrap the idea.

Additionally, the CIA station in Montevideo submitted a document to Uruguayan officials and suggested groups like the Communist Party of Uruguay or Revolutionary Workers Party should not receive “permission to assemble or [hold] public rallies” the day Eisenhower visited. Uruguayan officials complied and broke up any demonstration it deemed a threat to Eisenhower’s visit.

The CIA’s role in Uruguay did not end there as, on October 20, 1960, a note sent to a SIE official provided the location of a school for local communists. Tom Flores, a CIA agent stationed in Montevideo, possibly submitted the note, although no definite proof exists. Regardless, the school did exist and communists did attend. Although, youths there primarily learned Marxist material. While the SIE assumed weapons were stored at the school, none were ever found.

All of this, consequently, made youths more committed to the cause of communism. As noted in Espionage and Politics, youths like Ismael Weinberger (later tortured by the military regime) “became militant communists for the rest of their lives.” The state’s decision to constantly monitor, harass and wage an anti-communist campaign against youths led to committed leftist revolutionaries like the Tupamaros. Thus, the cycle continued until the rise of dictatorship coinciding with Operation Condor throughout Latin America.

“Democratic Strength”

Uruguayan officials, on August 5, held a ceremony to reflect the three decades since the dictatorship. Vice President Raúl Sendic, son of late Tupamaros founder Raúl Sendic, cited Uruguay’s “democratic strength” ever since the fall of the military government. Sendic praised the resilience of Uruguay for sustaining itself for “three decades without exceptional measures, without suspension of individual rights, without interruptions and great frights.”

Uruguay achieved a remarkable level of stability relative to its neighbors since 1973. Although, the same can be said during the early twentieth century where SIE’s anticommunism fears, along with experience in spying and repressing students as well as workers, helped build the path for a military dictatorship in Uruguay. Indeed, Mario Aguerrondo and Alberto Ballestrino were just two who participated in such activities and later played a role in forming the dictatorship.

While a dictatorship is hard to imagine in Uruguay’s future, it will take more than a commission to remove the decades of anti-communism hysteria in the shadows of its institutions.

### Venezuela

#### US aid under the guise of humanitarian or military support has heightened political tensions to a point of crisis – movements are calling for disengagement now in favor of anti-imperialist solidarity across Venezuela.

Lander, 2019 (Edgardo Lander, Edgardo Lander is a sociologist. He is a retired professor from the Universidad Central de Venezuela (Carácas) and a visiting professor at the Universidad Andina Simón Bolívar (Quito). He is also a Fellow at the Transnational Institute (Amsterdam), where he currently participates in the New Politics Project., "Preventing Civil War And Us Intervention In Venezuela," ROAR Magazine, https://roarmag.org/essays/edgardo-lander-venezuela-crisis-conflict/, accessed on 4-29-2024)

For almost two months now, Venezuela has been caught in a tense stand-off between the incumbent government of Nicolás Maduro and the US-backed right-wing opposition leader Juan Guaidó, who proclaimed himself president in January and who has since been trying to force Maduro from office with the active support of the Trump administration and various right-wing regional leaders. Over the next weeks, ROAR will be publishing a series of interviews with Venezuelan activists and intellectuals to help share local perspectives on the origins of the current crisis, the risks of an escalation in the conflict, and possible ways out for radical-democratic forces.

The first interview, published below, is with the Venezuelan sociologist and left-wing intellectual Edgardo Lander, who is a Professor Emeritus at the Central University of Venezuela and a Fellow at the Transnational Institute (TNI). Lander was a critically constructive supporter of former president Hugo Chávez, and served as a consultant to the Venezuelan commission negotiating the Free Trade Area of the Americas. He was one of the organizers of the 2006 World Social Forum, and is currently involved in TNI’s New Politics program. In this interview, he calls on the international left to recognize the complexity of the situation, and not to conflate the need for firm opposition to the ongoing US intervention with unconditional support for the Maduro government.

As the perceptive reader will notice, Lander’s position differs in several important respects from the reading offered by the Venezuelan sociologist and former government minister Reinaldo Iturriza in our second interview, published here. We offer these different perspectives on the assumption that the critical and intelligent reader will be able to make up their own mind as to which reading they find most persuasive, and which position they are most comfortable to align themselves with. We are currently preparing two more interviews with Venezuelan activists that we hope to publish over the next weeks. We consider these grassroots perspectives particularly important in the present context, given the international media’s systematic inattention to (and active marginalization of) the voices of ordinary Venezuelans.

In the process, we hope to relay some of the complexity of the present situation on the ground, while at the same time continuing to insist on the importance of the key principles of anti-militarism, non-intervention, self-determination, radical democracy, and solidarity with the marginalized and oppressed.

Professor Lander, thank you for agreeing to this interview. Could you please tell us a little bit about everyday life in Venezuela right now? What is the situation like on the streets, and how do people experience the current crisis?

The situation is extremely tense. Everyday life is becoming more and more difficult, more and more complicated. Inflation last year was over a million percent. Just this January it was estimated to be over 200 percent. People’s salaries have absolutely dissolved. There is no way people can afford to buy basic necessities. Oil production, the source of 96 percent of the value of the country’s exports is just a third of what it was six years ago. Public services have severely deteriorated.

Venezuela’s GDP is today just 50 percent of what it was five years ago. Per capita GDP is lower that it has been for quite a few decades. There is a profound health crisis. Severe child malnutrition will have a long term impact on the country’s future. According to the International Red Cross, the two countries in the world that worry them most today in terms of their respective social crises are Yemen and Venezuela.

There is such a high level of discontent and desperation among the population and the threats to their well-being that they are facing are so severe that all this could lead to an extremely negative outcome. We know from history that desperation is a breeding ground for fascism. People who are really desperate are willing to accept any alternative to the present state of things. A US military invasion and/or civil war are today real possibilities. Many people are just so fed up and so desperate that they are willing to accept basically anything, which makes for an extremely dangerous situation.

Venezuelan society today is not only extremely divided; people seem to live in two completely different realities. There is widespread distrust and fear of the “other.” In this context, people are willing to believe anything said by “their side.”

How did the situation get to this point?

The government seems decided to try to remain in power by any means necessary. And this has only been possible — so far — because of the backing from the military, which up until this point has shown no signs of fragmentation, divisions or doubts about its support for the government. But this is something that could change as external pressure increases.

On the other hand, as US policy has demonstrated in the cases of Iraq, Libya and Syria, the number of people who suffer or are killed as a consequences of economic sanctions or military intervention are not a matter of much concern to the hawks (figures like John Bolton, Elliot Abrams, Mike Pence) who, along with Donald Trump, are today in charge of US foreign policy. The new level of economic sanctions is leading to an even more catastrophic situation.

In a policy characterized by extreme cynicism, the US government is simultaneously worsening an already dire situation for the population by strangling the Venezuelan economy, with a cost of tens of billions of dollars, and offering a few million dollars in “humanitarian aid” to alleviate the socio-economic crisis to which it is actively contributing.

These two opposing forces — the Maduro government with the backing of the armed forces, and the National Assembly with the backing of the US, including the threat of armed intervention — are slowly moving the country towards the brink of war.

On February 8, 2018, Guaidó declared that he would call for a US military intervention “if necessary.” He also announced that he would organize “volunteers” to open up a “humanitarian corridor.” This could easily have led to a confrontation with the Venezuelan military controlling the border between Venezuela and Colombia. After the failed attempt to bring in US aid into the country on February 23, “no matter what,” he has been actively asking the United States government to “use force” to oust the Maduro government.

Military backing makes Maduro believe that he has no need to negotiate. US backing make the opposition present in the National Assembly think that it is just a matter of time before they can overthrow Maduro. The risk of more violence — by February some 40 people had been killed, according to the United Nations Human Rights Office — increases by the day. At this moment both sides are playing a zero-sum game in which they want to annihilate the other. Some form of negotiation or agreement is urgently needed if this escalation of violence is to be stopped.

The Maduro government still has some popular support. It is not true that the support for the government among the popular sectors of Venezuelan society has completely disappeared. But it is smaller than it used to be two, or even one year ago, and certainly much, much smaller than it used to be during the Chávez years. The humanitarian crisis, the difficulties in everyday life, as well as the government’s authoritarian and repressive policies continue to erode popular support.

According to UN sources, 3.4 million people have fled the country over the last five years, representing more than 10 percent of the total population. A large proportion of Venezuelan families have close relatives — their sons, their brothers and sisters, as well as dear friends — that have left the country. This family fragmentation is a source of widespread pain.

How does Guaidó legitimate his claim to the presidency?

It is really important to highlight that the rest of the opposition coalition was not really aware about the fact that Guaidó was planning to declare himself president at the rally of January 23. But the US, in contrast, was absolutely aware of what was about to happen. A few minutes — literally less than ten minutes — after Guaidó declared himself president, there was an official public statement put out by the Trump administration recognizing Guaidó as the legitimate president of Venezuela. So it is clear that this has all along been a highly coordinated script written in strict collaboration with the US government.

It is impossible to imagine that the US government could have put out an official statement — not just a tweet by Trump, but an official written statement — just a few minutes after Guaidó declared himself president if this had not been coordinated beforehand, with the US being fully aware of what was about to happen. This was absolutely prepared: the largest flag at the podium of self-proclaimed president Juan Guaidó’s rally on February 2 in Caracás was the US flag. They knew because they were involved in writing the script. I have no doubt in my mind that all this was designed in Washington.

There are several constitutional and legal issues regarding whether Guaidó had or did not have the right to declare himself president. And that has to do with whether Maduro is a legitimate president or not, or whether there was a “power vacuum,” the main justification used by this opposition.

These are complicated issues. On the one hand there has been no power vacuum. Whether you like him or not, Maduro heads the government and is in control of the armed forces. In May last year, we had presidential elections. The elections were supposed to be carried out seven months later, in December, but the government decided that they should be held in May. Practically all the main opposition parties had been outlawed by the government, because Maduro had the so-called Constitutional Assembly approved an arbitrary retroactive law, according to which political parties that had not participated in the previous (municipal) elections that had been held a few months before were no longer recognized as legal political parties that could participate in elections. This implied that to be recognized as legal political parties they would have to go through a long complicated process of, once again, gathering signatures across the country. It was in this context that the Electoral Council convened these elections seven month before they were due.

It was clear that the main opposition parties would not have time to re-register as officially recognized parties in order to participate in those elections or hold primary elections to select a single opposition candidate as they had done in previous elections. So these were not, by any stretch of the imagination, free elections. The conditions were highly controlled to ensure that Maduro would be re-elected. The whole process was a fraud. You cannot have free democratic elections if the government decides when they are convened, regardless of what the Constitution and the electoral law dictates, if it gets to decide which parties and which candidates can participate and which cannot. Ever since the government lost the elections for the National Assembly in December 2015, the government has taken an increasingly anti-constitutional route.

In those parliamentary elections, the opposition parties won two thirds of the National Assembly, which gave them a tremendous amount of state power. According to the Constitution, they had enough votes to select the members of the Supreme Justice Tribunal as well as to decide the composition of the National Electoral Council. At that moment, Maduro and his government were confronted with a crucial dilemma. Should they recognize these election results, the will of the people, and respect the Constitution, or decide to remain in complete control of state power, no matter what? They clearly opted for the second option.

Since early 2016, Maduro has been governing by means of successive decrees of State of Exception and Economic Emergency. This means that he attributed powers to himself to decide on practically anything he wants. According to the Constitution, the president can decide on a sixty-day state of economic emergency, which can be extended for a further sixty days if approved by the National Assembly. Currently, the state of emergency is in its third year.

How has this affected the country, and how have the people of Venezuela responded to this?

This permanent government by decree has had severe consequences. One particular negative consequence with potentially disastrous long-term effects was the decision to create the Orinoco Mining Arc (Arco Minero del Orinoco), opening up more than 120.000 square kilometers — 12 percent of the national territory, approximately the size of Cuba — to transnational mining corporations. This is a very critical part of the country. It includes the territories of several indigenous people, is the most biodiverse part of the country, the most important source of water and hydroelectricity. It is part of the Amazon basin, with its absolutely critical global role in limiting climate change.

As a consequence of this decree, there are now tens of thousands of miners who are rapidly carrying out an accelerated process of large scale socio-environmental devastation. This is probably the most serious socio-environmental crisis in all of Latin America today. All this is the result of a decree issued by Maduro, with no public debate, with no involvement from parliament, and in direct violation of the country’s Constitution and its environmental, indigenous peoples and labor laws.

Since 2016 the government has become more and more authoritarian. It has completely closed the door to the possibility of free trustworthy elections where the population is able to decide on the present and future of the country. At the same time it has become more and more repressive.

In this increasingly desperate situation, it is not surprising that the population is open to solutions that would have previously been completely unthinkable. Even the presence of US troops is seen by many as an acceptable possibility because they see no other way out of the crisis. This is not only a middle-class phenomenon; it shows how deeply the country has changed. Now, unfortunately, part of the population is no longer particularly scandalized by this possibility, simply because they see no other way out.

What are the implications of this for the future of Chavismo and the Bolivarian revolution?

The immediate future is open, but extremely dangerous. There are high degrees of uncertainty. As long as Maduro stays in power, the destruction of the country’s economy will continue, living conditions will continue to deteriorate and repression will increase. As I said before, there is still a significant, though much reduced, hardcore support for Maduro and his government. Many seem to be willing to take up arms if necessary to defend their government and their country.

The top brass of the armed forces has so far shown no signs of division and repeatedly reaffirmed their backing for the government. The upper echelons of government and the military have much to lose if they have to give up power, so they will not give up without a fight. The government’s discourse has become more militaristic by the day. They are willing to participate in negotiations as long as nothing much changes — that is, as long as Maduro remains president.

For the extreme right wing of the opposition — and this obviously involves the US government — the “solution,” or the salida (exit), is not only to get rid of Maduro, but to crush the Bolivarian experience. For the far right, the so-called “transition to democracy” is not just to have an election and have another president. They want to completely destroy the Bolivarian experiment. The aim is to teach the Chavista popular movement a lesson: you cannot confront capitalism or try to even imagine an alternative. The collective and personal costs are simply too high.

In this tense situation, in which neither side seems willing to yield, the space for talks and negotiations has been greatly reduced. As opposed to the interventionist policy of the US government, as I said before, we welcome the offers by the Secretary General of the UN, as well as those of the presidents of Uruguay and Mexico, to mediate for a peaceful, constitutional, electoral alternative to violence, military intervention and civil war.

How likely is the possibility of an actual US invasion at this point?

The threat of a US military intervention is more than just paranoia. The US government has stated again and again that every option is on the table, and President Donald Trump has explicitly stated — and repeated almost daily — that one of those is a military intervention. The recent experience of Iraq, Libya and Syria would indicate that this is not a far-fetched possibility.

For the objectives of US policy (regime change), a direct military intervention might not even be necessary if — as a consequence of economic sanctions and blockades — there is a total collapse of the economy. Additionally, the presence of troops is not a necessary requirement for state-of-the-art military interventions. Missiles and drones could do the job, as they did in Libya.

The economic blockade that was recently intensified by the US government will no doubt have very serious implications, not only for the Maduro government, but also for the Venezuelan population who are already facing a severe humanitarian crisis. This is the reality we are facing today, and it could lead to a complete collapse of the country. Besides a strict financial blockade, all oil-related trade has been prohibited. CITGO, the Venezuelan-owned subsidiary of the national oil company (PDVSA) has been practically taken over by the US government.

The decisions to boycott the oil company will have a serious impact that will increase the already severe social crisis. It is expected that in no more than a few weeks this could lead to a general scarcity of gasoline in the country. There will also be shortages of medicine and food at even higher levels than we have right now, because the government will lack the cash required to pay for these imports and most of its credit lines are closed.

In recent weeks, there has been increasing tension on the border between Venezuela and Colombia, near the city of Cúcuta. So-called “humanitarian aid” has been concentrated by the border and Maduro has said repeatedly that it will not be allowed into the country. Guaidó has called for volunteers to create a “humanitarian corridor” in order to get these USAID packages into the country. This could easily lead to an armed confrontation. It could even be the spark that starts a civil war.

When after the failed attempt to introduce US “humanitarian aid” into the country on February 23, the Lima Group met in Bogotá with the participation of Guaidó and Pence, the group put out an official statement against military intervention in Venezuela. The US government promptly declared that it did not belong to the Lima Group, and thus was not bound by its decisions. That was something for Trump to decide.

What do you propose as a way out of the crisis?

We, as the Citizen’s Platform in Defense of the Constitution (Plataforma Ciudadana en Defensa de la Constitución, PCDC), and the newly created coalition, the Alliance for a Constitutional Consultative Referendum (Alianza por el Referéndum Consultivo), are pushing for an alternative to this path that is leading to an escalation of violence and the possibility of a civil war or a US military intervention.

The first step on this alternative peaceful path would be a basic agreement between the two sides to name a new transitional National Electoral Council in other to carry out a Consultative Referendum to ask the population whether general elections should be convened for all levels of government, in order to achieve a peaceful, democratic, constitutional and electoral solution to the present crisis. Most importantly, it would put the decision in the hands of the people.

In practical terms this is a very simple process with one question: yes or no. The National Electoral Council has all the required infrastructure. It could be carried out in less than a month, as opposed to the organization of national elections, which would take at least six months. This negotiated option is quite different from what Guaidó and the so-called “international community” have as their route: first to get rid of Maduro and then to convene elections. This would require the unconditional defeat of the Maduro government, something that is not likely to happen without a foreign military intervention.

It was in our pursuit of this path towards a negotiated peaceful solution to the crisis that we, as the PCDC, had a meeting with Juan Guaidó as President of the National Assembly — not as president of Venezuela, since we do not recognize him as such. Basically, we told him that the route of a parallel government, increasing confrontation and the threat of US military intervention could lead to a civil war in Venezuela for which he and Maduro would be responsible. To avoid this scenario, a negotiated alternative is urgently required. We have been trying — so far unsuccessfully — to arrange a meeting with President Maduro for the same purpose.

We have been calling on international progressive activists, intellectuals and organizations, governments and multilateral organizations to recognize the threat represented by this escalation of violence, and step in to contribute to an end to this descent into death and destruction. We celebrated the initiative taken by the governments of Uruguay and Mexico to call for an international conference on Venezuela in Montevideo to contribute to a non-violent, electoral solution to the current crisis facing the country. We also value the statements by the Secretary General of the United Nations, who has repeatedly declared his willingness to contribute to a peaceful negotiated solution.

A negotiated alternative based on a consultative referendum, where the Venezuelan population can decide on the way out of this crisis in free and trustworthy elections, with a new consensus-based Electoral Council, is absolutely critical at this moment to avoid a violent outcome.

What do you expect from the international left, in this respect?

The historical experience has been that at least part of the left tends to analyze conflicts like the present one in Venezuela today in Cold War terms — imperialism vs. anti-imperialism — and thus give backing to governments like the one in Nicaragua that have a radical, leftist, anti-imperialist rhetoric, even if at the same time they carry out policies and engage in practices that have nothing to do with the principles of the left: corruption, repression, blocking democratic expressions, a neoliberal opening up to transnational corporations, and so on.

We expect the left internationally to understand the complexity of the situation we are facing in Venezuela, a confrontation between a corrupt, increasingly repressive, undemocratic militaristic government on one hand, and active US intervention on the other. A rejection of imperialist intervention can in no way justify unconditional support for the Maduro government. Support for the Maduro government from the international left will do profound harm to the future of popular struggles, because, as was the case with the Soviet Union, people will identify this repressive regime as constituting “the left.” For this reason, unconditional solidarity with the Maduro government can do much harm, both to the Venezuelan population and to the future of popular anti-capitalist struggles.

What we need today is not solidarity with Maduro, nor support for an imperialist intervention, but solidarity with the Venezuelan people. At this moment this means basically two things. First, to do everything possible to prevent a civil war or a military invasion in Venezuela. This means actively rejecting economic sanctions and the threat of military intervention and pushing for a negotiated solution with multilateral participation, not unilateral intervention. And second, to recognize that there is an extremely severe social crisis in the country, that a multilateral solidarity effort has to be made to help provide Venezuelan’s with food and medicines, as an alternative to the politically motivated, militarily backed “humanitarian” US aid that is today threatening the country.

## Cap

### Link-general

#### Diplomatic engagement in Latin America is driven by geopolitical goals of sustaining capitalism. History of occupation, military intervention, and crushing anti-capitalist revolutions in favor of U.S. imposed authoritarian regimes.

Wilson 23 (Wilson, S. A., (2023). Stacey-Ann Wilson, “Obama in the Americas: The Politics of Hope and Disappointment.” J Poli Sci Publi Opin, 1(1): 103. doi: <https://doi.org/10.33790/jpspo1100103>. PhD Senior Lecturer, Department of Government, Faculty of Social Sciences, University of the West Indies, Mona Campus, Jamaica. Pgs. 3-4.) klb]

It is important to place Obama’s approach to foreign policy in the Caribbean and Latin America in historical context. The U.S. has been the regional hegemon intervening directly and indirectly into the lives, the economic welfare, and political developments of just about every developing country in the region. U.S. influence is felt in regional organization like the Organization of the America States (OAS) and the Inter-American Development (IDB) and in international financial institutions like the World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF). The U.S. has been the regional (and global) promoter of a kind of democracy, one partial to American influence and neoliberal economics. The U.S. has very little tolerance for democracies in the developing world that do not prioritize capital, as Winter [7] notes, “when a leader tries to do something for the poor and downtrodden of his country, instead of serving Washington and the IMF and other powers that be, there will be demonising and economic squeezes and coup attempts” (p. 257). There is global recognition that U.S. foreign policy “underwrites” U.S. corporate interests “in its search for natural resources, cheap labour, export markets, and profits from obtaining control of privatized state enterprises and sectors of the economy previously reserved for national capital” [8](p. 20).

Furthermore, Klein [9] argues that neoliberal free market capitalism as advocated by Milton Friedman and his followers has been able to spread because such policies are often instituted when economies are at their weakest, specifically when there is an economic disaster. The type of policies introduced, so-called “shock therapy,” are enacted when citizens are least able to coordinate and mount resistance because they are preoccupied with trying to navigate the economic disaster. This allows neoliberal policy makers to exploit the economic crisis to benefit private capital. Where necessary, the U.S. deploys its military as “the guardians” of the world capitalist system [8] (p. 21). Up to the early 1960s, Latin America and the Caribbean were important to U.S. foreign policy due to Cold War geopolitics. The region was flooded with military regimes that violently ended revolutionary attempts and eliminated every vestige of democracy, rule of law, and social development. In the few countries where the armed forces and the far right did not seize control of the state, reforms faded from the public agenda under the party-cratic reign of Demo-Christian and Social Democratic regimes. While dictatorships swallowed democracies, U.S. attention shifted away from the region toward other areas of the globe [10](p. 132).

Starting in the mid-1960s, under U.S. President Johnson, the U.S. gradually shifted focus from Latin America and the Caribbean to Southeast Asia. The shift did not prevent the U.S. from orchestrating a number of counterinsurgencies in the region in its effort to contain communism. However, as Chomsky has pointed out, it was not necessarily about containing communism, it was about containing any movement that is antithetical to U.S. interests. U.S. foreign policy and U.S. influence seeks to “prevent the rise of nationalist regimes, which are responsive to pressures from the masses of the population” [11](p. 64). He also argues that “what the U.S. wants is ‘stability,’ meaning security for the upper classes and large foreign enterprises” [12].

Fidel Castro’s overthrow of U.S. aligned Cuban dictator President Batista and his installation of a socialist government in Cuba has been a thorn in U.S. foreign policy since 1959. “The portrayal of Cuba in Western press since the 1959 Revolution has bordered on the ridiculous to anyone who has visited there and talked to the Cuban people. The demonization of Cuba and the Castro brothers has been among the most successful propaganda campaigns in the world over the past sixty years” [7] ( p. 250). The U.S. policy toward Cuba has been attempted isolation, an attempt to strangle the economy through economic and travel sanctions and even accusing the Cuban state of participating in global terrorism, with U.S. President George W. Bush listing Cuba within the so-called “axis of evil.”

In 1965, the U.S. invaded the Dominican Republic (they were also invading Vietnam during this time). The U.S. intervened in the Dominican Civil War under the pretext of preventing another Cuba. The U.S. had previously occupied the Dominican Republic (1916- 1924) over concerns that the Germans would use the country to launch attacks against them. The U.S. oversaw covert operations in Chile in the 1960s into the 1970s. It orchestrated a military coup in 1973, deposing of the socialist President Salvador Allende and replacing him with U.S. puppet Army Chief Pinochet. U.S. intervention in Colombia has been ongoing for 50 years as part of their “war on drugs” and war on Marxist counterinsurgents. The U.S. invaded and occupied Grenada in 1983 under “Operation Urgent Fury,” to protect their interests against economic and social interventions that would have been for the betterment of the Grenadian people. In Jamaica, the U.S. orchestrated a series of covert activities through the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) to destabilise the country in the 1980s, to undermine the democratic socialist, Cuba-aligned, Prime Minister Michael Manley.

In Central America in the 1980s and 1990s, U.S. interference and military intervention as part of their Cold War containment policy has been devastating. The U.S. endorsed far-right candidates, offered military assistance to authoritarian governments, armed them and trained their military, and remained silent when those trained soldiers formed death squads, committed atrocities and human rights abuses against unarmed civilians. In Panama, the U.S. intervened in 1989 with “Operation Just Cause,” under the pretext of maintaining the neutrality of the Panama Canal and safe guarding the lives of Americans, countering drug trafficking and money laundering. In Haiti, the U.S. has occupied (1915-1934), invaded (1994 and 2004), and intervened at will. In the 1994 “Operation Uphold Democracy,” the U.S. used the United Nations (UN) Security Council as cover to remove the military regime that overthrew the elected President Jean-Bertrand Aristide. A decade later, the U.S. orchestrated a coup in Haiti deposing President Aristide who was in his second term of office, and forcing him into exile in Central Africa.

With the end of the Cold War, “migration, drug trafficking, and organised crime, along with democratic intervention … became the focus of the U.S. agenda; they were approached not as economic problems but as ‘security issues’” [10](p. 132). With the advent of the U.S. “war on terror,” the region became even less important [13](p. 111-112). Hernandez [10] argues that Latin America and the Caribbean are not priority countries for U.S. foreign policy, there is no coordinated strategy and the interests and relationships “serve particular short-term, country-specific agendas that really reflect not regional or bilateral but global interests” (p. 132).

#### Latin America is experiencing a potential leftist invigoration, but success of broad movements depends on not capitulating back into neoliberal trade collaboration

Martinez 3/1 [Bianca, Writer for Focus, Power Dynamics and Progressive Movements: Lessons from Latin America to the Philippines, https://focusweb.org/power-dynamics-and-progressive-movements-lessons-from-latin-america-to-the-philippines/]

Across the globe, peoples and communities continue to reel from the impacts of multiple crises—rising costs of food, increasing hunger and food insecurity, deepening inequalities, worsening climate crisis, escalating conflicts and wars, and the intensifying use of repression and violence in the name of profit and wealth accumulation.

In the Philippines, while different factions of the political elite fight over power and control—jockeying for key posts, securing economic deals for their own benefit, pushing for self-serving policy proposals—their mainstream responses to these crises fail to address the structural roots and only serve to perpetuate a corporate-driven development model.

Meanwhile, in Latin America, the left is facing a crisis of legitimacy. During the periods in which the left was in power, it was captured by the capitalist and extractivist agenda that has perpetually destroyed the environment, undermined peoples’ access to resources, and thereby aggravated economic inequalities. As such, there is an urgent need for the Latin American left to reinvent itself in order to regain its legitimacy.

In this context, Focus on the Global South Philippines organized a forum on Power Dynamics and Progressive Movements last February 2, 2024. Presentations were made by Focus staff Raphael Baladad and Bianca Martinez as well as Pablo Solon—director of Fundación Solón, former executive director of Focus on the Global South, and former Ambassador of Bolivia to the UN. Bianca and Raphael’s presentation focused on the rift between the ruling Marcos and Duterte dynasties and its implications on the Philippine political landscape, especially with the upcoming 2025 elections. Meanwhile, Pablo focused on some of the circumstantial and principal errors committed by the Latin American left and how these have contributed to the emergence of the extreme right. Towards the end of the forum, participants reflected on key lessons that Philippine progressive movements could learn from the experience of the left in Latin America as the former is presented with a critical opportunity to challenge dynastic and elite politics and to make strides towards a truly democratic governance system from below. This event report summarizes the key points that came out of the forum.

An opportunity for the left in the Philippines

In the Philippines, the Marcoses and Dutertes—two of the most powerful dynasties that brokered an electoral alliance in 2022—are now embroiled in a power struggle. On the one hand, the Marcoses have harnessed their political capital to tighten their grip on Congress and form “supermajority” blocs. With their control over the supermajority, they were able to launch an all-out offensive against the Dutertes. The allies of President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. have exposed and investigated Vice President Sara Duterte’s questionable use of confidential funds, ousted the Dutertes’ allies from the House leadership, threatened to cooperate with the International Criminal Court in investigating the human rights violations under the drug war of former President Rodrigo Duterte, and resumed peace talks with communist rebels, thereby undermining Duterte’s violent anti-insurgency campaign that was hinged on the indiscriminate political repression and persecution of progressive movements. The success of the Marcos-led offensive can be seen in the mass defection of politicians from Duterte’s political party towards that of Marcos, thereby further consolidating the Marcoses’ political capital.

Given the vast influence that Marcos and his allies now wield especially in the House of Representatives, they are now pushing for Charter Change to amend or possibly even revise the constitution. While the pretext used by proponents of Charter Change is to liberalize economic provisions in the constitution, this is simply used as a veil to conceal the true political motives behind Charter change—that is, either to push for term extensions or to institutionalize a unicameral parliamentary form of government. There are allegations that House Speaker Romualdez—cousin of President Marcos—has a personal stake in pushing for a parliamentary form of government in order to pave the way for him to become Prime Minister.

Despite this, however, Sara has remained more popular than Marcos. Knowing the extent of her influence, she has tactically used her mass support base to rally against Marcos and his allies. For instance, when the Marcos government decided to resume the peace talks with communist rebels, she stingingly described it as an “agreement with the devil,” tapping into the deep-seated anti-communist sentiments of many Filipinos.

The elites’ preoccupation with politicking while majority of Filipinos suffer from the economic and climate crisis has served to undermine the establishment’s legitimacy. With the Marcoses and Dutertes engaging in mudslinging and the liberal democrats having lost their legitimacy owing to the anti-liberal sentiments fomented by the Dutertes, the left and progressive movements are thus presented with a critical opportunity to challenge dynastic politics and to advance an alternative development agenda grounded on human rights and social justice.

However, one challenge for progressives is the Dutertes possibly projecting themselves as the “new opposition” to the Marcoses. As early as now, each side is already co-opting elements of the human rights and social justice agenda and weaponizing these against their political rival. For instance, the Marcoses are using the ICC investigation into the drug war as leverage against the Dutertes, thereby reducing it as a tool for politicking. These political theatrics erase the trauma, poverty, and instability caused by the drug war on communities and families of victims as well as the need to exact accountability from those who designed and operationalized the drug war.

On the other hand, the Department of Education under the leadership of Sara Duterte “encouraged” public schools across the country to hold commemorative activities in honor of the 1986 People Power Revolution that restored democracy and ousted Ferdinand Marcos Sr., the late dictator and father of the current President Marcos. However, this pro-democracy stance of Sara Duterte is nothing but smokescreen. It was not long ago when the Dutertes supported the massive disinformation campaign that helped whitewash the Marcos dictatorship, while vilifying the legacy of activists who fought hard to defend democracy during the time of Marcos. The Dutertes have also been at the forefront of eroding democratic institutions, systematically violating human rights, and persecuting human rights defenders especially during the presidency of Rodrigo Duterte.

In this context, the key challenge for progressive movements is how they will distinguish themselves and their narratives amid the political infighting of the elites and defend the human rights and social justice agenda from cooptation.

The crisis of the left in Latin America

On the other side of the world, in Latin America, the political landscape has constantly shifted, with the seat of power rotating between the left and the right-wing. However, with the passing of each political cycle, the pendulum has been swinging more strongly towards the right. The Latin American left is facing a crisis of legitimacy for a number of reasons, and this has provided more opportunities for the right-wing to reclaim and cement their hold on power.

The first “pink tide” or turn towards left-leaning governments in Latin America came as a reaction to the negative impacts of neoliberal policies introduced in the 90s, which left several countries in the region with high levels of unemployment, inflation, and rising social inequality. During its first wave, pink tide governments sought to institutionalize a welfare state. They implemented initiatives that mitigated the impacts of neoliberal policies such as by increasing wages, increasing public subsidies in essential services, and offering conditional cash transfers to marginalized populations. The initial results of the welfare policies implemented by the first pink tide governments included a decline in income inequality, unemployment, extreme poverty, malnutrition, and hunger.

However, the welfare state was largely underpinned by the rise of various commodity prices in the early 2000s owing to the rising demands from emerging markets. To take advantage of increasing demand, pink tide governments increased commodity trade with these emerging markets, most especially China. Given the increasing demand and prices of metals, chemicals, and fuels, other Latin American governments also ramped up mineral resource extraction, thereby degrading the environment, hampering land reform, undermining people’s access to resources, and worsening inequality.

But as commodity prices began to decline in 2010, Latin American governments that became dependent on it saw a decline in public revenues, thereby eroding the very foundation of their welfare policies. Supporters thus became disenchanted, eventually leading to the decline in popularity of left-leaning governments and the embrace of the right-wing.

Despite there being a resurgence of the pink tide in the late 2010s and the early 2020s, this is smaller in scale, less radical, and does not have as deep of a mass base as compared to the initial pink tide. At the same time, the wave of conservatism in other parts of Latin America continues, such as in the case of Argentina which, for the first time in the country’s history, elected a far-right neoliberal candidate, Javier Milei, as president during the 2023 elections. In Ecuador, many people have supported increased militarization and the intervention of the US military in order to restore peace and order amid the ongoing narco gang violence.

The conservative wave in Latin America and the dilution of the pink tide can largely be attributed to the left’s failure to make significant changes in the economy, to move away from extractivism, and to pursue radical land reform. At best, it institutionalized a welfare state that still largely relied on the volatile dynamics of global capitalism. Another big mistake committed by the left is that when left-leaning leaders came to power, social movements became complacent, less autonomous, more dependent on the state, and, in some cases, even corrupted by power. Grassroots organizing also declined, thereby weakening the left’s critically conscious mass base.

Lessons from Latin America to the Philippines

While seemingly different at first, the political contexts of the Philippines and Latin America in fact complement each other. The Philippines has never had a progressive leader, yet it is now presented with an opportunity to challenge elite rule and make headway towards grassroots democracy as the political contest between major dynasties intensifies. In this pursuit, Philippine progressive movements stand to learn lessons from the Latin American experience, which has seen the left rise to power but also unfortunately lose its legitimacy owing to some of the strategic mistakes it made along the way. Below are some of the key lessons that came out from the discussion among the forum presenters and participants:

The left in the Philippines has been fixated on gaining influence at the national level. Meanwhile, local politics continue to be dominated by clans. Dynastic politics take root at the village level, where local politicians serve as power brokers for provincial, regional, and national political clans. As such, progressive movements must consider seriously contesting local politics and elections if it hopes to challenge dynastic politics at the national scale.

While it is necessary for progressives to gain seats in government by winning the elections, it must be done with cautiousness. The experience of the Latin American left has clearly shown that the seat of power can corrupt more than it can serve as a vehicle for meaningful systemic change. In order to mitigate this, mechanisms for accountability and “counter-power” from social movements must be institutionalized. And for these mechanisms to be effective, movements must remain autonomous and independent—not just against the state but also within the left. Social movements should not be blinded by the notion that electoral victory is the be-all-end-all of advancing the progressive agenda. Rather, it should be regarded as one strategy complemented by many others.

Social movements should not be reduced into a mere vehicle for power. Rather, they should serve as the means to ensure that representatives in government follow the will of the people. Any progressive government that comes to power must thus necessarily ensure that the integrity of people’s direct participation in governance—not just through their representatives—is maintained and protected.

It is of paramount importance for progressive movements both in the Philippines and Latin America to reinvigorate grassroots organizing, build a critical mass base, and generate social pressure from below. Political parties—no matter how progressive their principles are—will not be enough if they have no critical mass base.

For any progressive movement that will come to power, it is inevitable (and at times even necessary) that they will negotiate or bargain with other forces that they are not politically aligned with. When it comes to negotiating with other countries, governments led by progressives or by the left should be careful not to fall into the trap of “camp thinking,” which fosters group-based identities that in turn lead to exclusionary politics. This means that they should not refrain from criticizing other countries that are politically aligned with them or that also embrace anti-imperialist sentiments. Meanwhile, when it comes to national politics, the necessity of elite bargains is a bit more complex. There are times when the formation of broad coalitions and strategic compromises are necessary in order to prevent political and economic crises from going further downhill. In the case of Brazil, for example, Lula had to forge alliances with the radical left and even right-wing neoliberal forces in order to win against Bolsonaro. At the time, this was viewed by many as strategic because it was crucial for Brazil to prevent Bolsonaro from further destroying the Amazon, rolling back protections for indigenous peoples, and intensifying neoliberal and pro-market policies. But while broad coalitions can at times be necessary to ward off bigger evils, progressive social movements that support these formations also need to be honest with themselves in addressing the deep contradictions that will inevitably emerge from negotiations and bargains with different political actors.

One of the hardest challenges for progressive and left-leaning movements that come to power is how they will change the neoliberal system from within the government and ensure the sustainability of systemic alternatives and its elements against a global context still dominated by the capitalist world order. In Latin America, one of the key questions for the left was how to reverse neoliberal policies, especially privatization. The general belief among the left is that once they enter the government, they will have to put everything under the control of the state in order to reverse privatization. However, nationalization is not the only way to push back against privatization. The state cannot and should not be in control of everything. Rather, different industries, services, and resources should be regarded as commons. Viewed from this light, the key role of the state is thus to facilitate the process of distributing ownership of these to communities and social movements.

#### U.S.-Latin-American diplomatic reform continues authoritarian exclusion of subaltern perspectives. This democracy is sustained through the expansion of global capitalist accumulation and colonialism.

Salgado 22 [(Pedro Salgado, “Embedded Authoritarianism1 Sovereignty, Coloniality, and Democracy in Latin America,” in *Global Authoritarianism: Perspectives and Contestations from the South.* International Research Group on Authoritarianism and Counter-Strategies, transcript Verlag, *Political Science*, Vol. 132, 2022, <https://doi.org/10.14361/9783839462096>. Pgs. 32-35.) klb]

These new practices of sovereign authority play a crucial role in the expansion of capitalism throughout the globe (Wood 2003), but their more important aspect (for the object of this chapter) is the rise of the nation as the legitimation of sovereign power. Sovereignty is still centralized (although not personified) and exercised through a body of representatives that correspond to an abstracted collective will associated with this idea of a culturally-homogenous nation (Anderson 2006; Buzan and Lawson 2015). The construction of such homogeneity draws upon a variety of context-specific elements, but one of its more general aspects is certainly the geocultural identities established through colonial domination (Dussel 1985; Quijano 2000). The coloniality of power described by Aníbal Quijano corresponds to the way in which different subjectivities are constituted by racial categories formed according to specific regimes of labour control, and to their place within colonial structures of geopolitical domination. Therefore, constructing the nation as a homogenous cultural identity implies a series of violent processes and disputes within these colonial powers themselves, but one that also takes place within a context in which a fundamental difference is created between such powers and the victims of their colonial domination throughout the world.

The colonial foundations of modernity that survive far beyond direct colonial domination (through Eurocentric conceptions of the world and racially-differentiated subjectivities, for instance) are understood as coloniality. This lens is essential for addressing any conception of the Global South, since the experience of colonial domination is the cornerstone that makes such a category possible. Precisely because the concrete colonial legacies in each case vary according to their experience of colonial domination, the notion of Global South is itself limited in terms of how exactly this common experience unites such a variety of cases. The key for maintaining such broad categories (like ‘coloniality’ and ‘Global South’) in an analytically useful way is to mobilize them not only as a set of particularities, but to give them meaning that goes beyond the empirical. The categories employed in the analysis must themselves take coloniality into account, rather than being formulated from the starting point of an abstract society with no geopolitical ties beyond itself (Bhambra 2007; 2014; Rosenberg 2016). Of course, this is not to say that coloniality is itself a structural condition from which we are able to derive logical conclusions about types of state and political organization. The geopolitical strategies employed in the exercise of such domination are varied, so that the implications for the way in which the resulting subjectivities are produced from the exercise of colonial power in each scenario must be allowed to vary accordingly. History still matters.3

Authoritarianism in Latin America: Colonial and Neoliberal. How to take coloniality into account in an analysis of Latin American authoritarianism? The analytical impact of coloniality is twofold. First, it highlights the fact that those changing practices of sovereignty, which in the Latin American context correspond to the long political disputes in the 19th and early 20th centuries, did not shy away from reinforcing their colonial enterprises. In the words of Miguel Centeno and Agustin Ferraro (2013, 3), the institutional transformations in this period never truly rejected “colonial ways of life”. They actually became more closely integrated into capitalist networks of accumulation and became a key element in shaping the international states-system (Wood 2003; 2012; Bezerra, Salgado, and Yamato 2019).4

Second, the colonial lens denounces how the notion of cultural homogeneity is presented as a condition of the possibility for democracy, which legitimates the violent exclusion of alternative political subjectivities through practices of bordering and policing (Bhattacharyya 2018; Ferguson and McNally 2015). These sovereign powers are necessarily premised on authoritarian practices, as long as they are required to reinforce an idea of ‘nation’ through the exclusion of those who do not ‘belong’. Quijano highlights the devastating effects of this form of legitimation in racially-divided societies to the point of making this form of nation-state “impossible” (Quijano 2000, 565–70), while others point out in more detail how this plays a role in the social composition of property regimes (Bhandar 2018; Smith 2008). In fact, both can be brought together through the critique of liberal democracies as regimes designed for the rule of propertied elites and capital accumulation (Wood 1991; 1995; Sitrin and Azzellini 2014). In that sense, if property rights are explicitly designed along racial lines, the exclusion of the dispossessed from politics also implies a movement towards the cultural homogeneity required by nationalism. Authoritarianism can be said to be embedded in the practice of sovereign power precisely because such exclusion has been a common aspect of statehood in the region since the formal declarations of independence in the early 19th century.

However, to simply speak of an embedded authoritarianism as a constant of Latin American states is dangerously close to an essentializing transhistorical view of the region. By bringing coloniality in, it is somewhat tempting to leave all the explanatory power to this concept, which results in that notion of 1492 as the eternal present which the entire region is condemned to repeat endlessly. It was pointed out earlier that bringing such a broad historical perspective makes it harder to speak of a recent ‘authoritarian turn’. To avoid such reductionism, it is necessary to encompass the ways in which the exercise of such authoritarianism changes across time, along with the practices of sovereign power.

In a closer dialogue with Tansel and Bruff, even if one does not entirely agree with the characterization of “neoliberal authoritarianism” proposed by them, the influence of neoliberalism over the region during the past 30 or 40 years cannot be neglected. But it also cannot be conceived as an authoritarian era which follows the ‘pink tide’, through a resurgence of the far right. Even if neoliberalism as a whole is framed as an authoritarian project, it cannot be said to have brought authoritarianism back (as it never left). The neoliberal project in Latin America coincides in many cases with violent military dictatorships (Chile being the main example) and continued throughout the 1990s with the region’s redemocratization (Collor and Cardoso in Brazil, Menem and De la Rúa in Argentina, Fujimori in Peru, et al.). The difference between its dictatorial and democratic versions cannot be described through the absence or presence of authoritarianism. Instead, it must be understood as a change in how the authoritarian exclusion of subaltern (dispossessed, racialized) subjects from institutionalized politics operates.5

The most important implication for this argument is perhaps that all progressive governments in the regions associated with the pink tide also relied upon these authoritarian practices to some extent. This becomes clear when addressing the issues raised by the critiques of a neo-extractivist model of development in Bolivia (McKay 2020) or how Brazil under Partido dos Trabalhadores (PT) governments carried out extensive infrastructural projects with huge environmental implications (the Belo Monte dam being the most notorious among them) under the banner of modernization and progress. In many cases throughout the region, armed forces were mobilized by left-wing governments against urban and rural protests. The political situation deteriorated especially after the commodity crises in the 2010s resulted in austerity politics being mobilized, with variations from case to case, by these left-wing governments. The situation is aptly described by Jeffery Webber (2017): “the last day of oppression, and the first day of the same”.

These regimes still mobilized the state apparatus to isolate key elements of political decision-making from democratic scrutiny, exacerbating the exclusion of subaltern subjects from institutionalized politics. Despite the reduction of poverty, the “new Latin American left did not challenge the underlying class structures of its societies or the systems of capitalist accumulation that fundamentally reproduce the basic patterns of simultaneous wealth and poverty, of luxury among misery” (Webber 2017, 104–5). There were many important achievements in this period. The point is made here not as a denial of their relevance, but as a discussion about the inherent limitations presented by how they rely on violence against peasants and native populations, or by imposing strict limits around what is or is not subjected to democratic oversight. The existing attempts of improving and enhancing direct participation through social assemblies and popular consultation were designed in ways that can be abandoned before reverting to the more traditional decisionmaking structures of the state or that can be disciplined and controlled by the ruling social forces. This form of including subaltern populations through invitations from the sovereign effectively conditions their political participation to the ‘domestication’ of their radical transformative projects in the name of order precisely because, otherwise, it can be easily reversed. This remains clear by how easily the important achievements of the period were erased by the subsequent political growth of the Right in the region through a series of elections and coups. This is therefore not a return to a previous state of authoritarianism, but a continuation of the exclusion of subaltern subjects through the mobilization of sovereign power against its subjects in innovative (and sometimes more explicit) ways.

### Link-Instability

#### Neoliberalism makes Latin American instability structurally inevitable – turns the aff

**Pineo ‘13** (Ronn, Senior Research Fellow at the Council on Hemispheric Affairs, and Professor and Chair of the Department of History at Towson University – Posted on April 11, 2013 - See more at: http://www.coha.org/22227/#sthash.L5CsywQs.dpuf)

Poverty in Latin America has been reduced substantially in the last three decades. In the late 1980s, nearly half of Latin America’s population lived in poverty. Today the fraction is about a third. [21] This marks important progress, and it has continued in some area nations. However, it is worth noting that between 2002 and 2008, poverty contracted most in Venezuela, Bolivia, Nicaragua, and Argentina, countries which had largely **abandoned neoliberalism**; in Brazil, which had at least partially rejected neoliberalism; and in only two other states, Honduras and Perú, which still remained, at least partially, committed to free market polices. [22] It was mostly factors **beyond economic policy** that helps to account for recent declines in the rate of Latin American poverty. One factor was increasing remittances from Latin Americans laboring in the developed world, especially in the United States. Total remittances from Latin American workers rose from $12 billion USD in 1995, to $45 billion in 2004, and $68 billion in 2006. [23] However, “by far the main contributor to the reduction in the poverty rate,” as Jaime Ros has noted, was “the fall in the dependency ratio.” [24] The indicator measures the number of non-working age people—children and the elderly—who are supported by the working age population. The higher the dependency number, the greater the economic burden. Source: foreignpolicyblogs.com Latin America’s past demographic history underlies this shift in the dependency ratio. The late 1940s in Latin America witnessed lower overall death rates (the number of people who died a year divided by the total population), especially due to lower infant and childhood mortality rates. Initially, birth rates stayed high even as death rates fell, but after a generation passed Latin America’s birth rates began to drift downward to match the lower death rates. The time gap between the fall in death rates beginning in the late 1940s and the eventual fall in birth rates by the late 1970s resulted in an unprecedented population explosion. Latin America’s population rose from 167 million in 1950 to 285 million by 1970. As this population cohort has aged, Latin America’s dependency ratio fell too, dropping from a very high rate of 87.3 in the years 1965-1970, to 55.0 for 2005-2010, an all-time low for the region. The people born during the population explosion are of working age now, bringing the region a historic but one-time economic advantage, the “demographic bonus” or “demographic dividend.” As a result, Latin America temporarily enjoys a situation of a very large number of workers providing for a greatly reduced number of dependent people. The region’s demographic bonus means that there is, for the moment, less poverty due, in large part, to the increased number of working age people per household. [25] A drop in the dependency ratio carries with it greater female participation in the workforce, for lower fertility means there are fewer children to care for, freeing women to enter the paid workforce. Lower fertility also means better overall lifetime health for women, resulting in more years spent in the paid workforce for adult females. The fertility rate (the number of children born per woman per year) fell in Latin America from 5.6 for the years from 1965 to1970, to 2.4 for the years 2005 to 2010. The resulting demographic bonus has provided a significant, but fleeting, economic asset. By 2025, as the current population ages, Latin America will need to support a very large elderly dependent population. [26] It is fair to conclude that the reduction of poverty in Latin America in recent years was produced mainly by some short-term victories in the commodity lottery (as explained in Part I, the commodity lottery refers to short-term price rises for selected raw material exports), as well as a spike in remittances, and most of all, a one-time reduction in the dependency ratio. Income inequality data for Latin America is less positive. In the 1980s and 1990s, inequality increased significantly in Latin America. For example, from 1984 to 1994, the income of the top 10 percent of the Mexico’s population rose by 21 percent, while the income of the country’s bottom 10 percent fell by 23 percent. Nevertheless, there have been improvements, albeit modest ones, in lowering the Gini coefficient (a measure of economic inequality with 0 being the least inequality—everyone has the same income, and 1.0 being the most inequality—one person has all the income). Source: norlarnet.uio.no From 2002 to 2008, the Gini coefficient improved in seven Latin American states; five of these seven countries—Venezuela, Argentina, Bolivia, Nicaragua, and Paraguay—have traveled the farthest in rejecting neoliberalism. Outside of these nations inequality stayed the same or even increased, including in the largely neoliberal states of Colombia, the Dominican Republic, and Guatemala. In 1970, the richest 1 percent of Latin Americans earned 363 times more than the poorest 1 percent. By 1995, it was 417 times more. Latin America continues to show, by far, the greatest income inequality of any region in the world. Of the 15 most unequal economies in the world today, 10 are in the area. If Latin America’s income were only as unevenly distributed as that of Eastern Europe or South Asia, its recent economic growth, though sometimes anemic, would have reduced the percentage of those living in poverty to 3 percent of the population. [27] The Economist, in its 2010 review of the Latin American economic situation, concluded that the region was “well on the way to building middle-class societies.” [28] The evidence, however, contradicts this assertion. The informal sector—where people arrange irregular employment in itinerant retail sales, as day workers, or other loosely arranged jobs—today accounts for more than half of all workers in Latin America. More than eight of ten new jobs in Latin America are in the informal sector. [29] Informal sector workers enjoy no protective regulation or benefits. They live by their wits, striving to scratch out a living, day by day. Meanwhile, union membership among active workers in Latin America fell from around one-fourth in the 1980s to under one-sixth in the 1990s. Source: laht.com Moreover, significant areas of severe poverty remain in Latin America, expressed along class, racial, gender, and regional divides Poverty underlies poor health, contributing to elevated rates of infant, childhood, and maternal mortality. Of those living in poverty in Latin America, nearly half are children. Due to their undernourishment, a quarter of Latin American children (and as many as half in rural Perú and Guatemala) are stunted in their development. Across Latin America malnutrition is an underlying cause in more than half of the deaths of children under the age of five. In Guatemala maternal mortality among indigenous women is 83 percent higher than the national average. Among the poorest fifth of the Perú’s population, 85 percent of births are not attended by trained personnel, compared to only 4 percent among the wealthiest fifth. Two-thirds of Latin American municipalities do not treat their sewage prior to dumping it into adjacent rivers or the sea. In Panamá, three in ten homes lack access to improved sanitation (sewage disposal), and in Perú, nearly four in ten lack this essential service. Yet with all this effluvium flowing out, still three-quarters of Latin America municipalities do not check public drinking water supplies for impurities. One-quarter of Latin Americans do not have in-home potable water. [30] In Latin America nearly two-thirds of hospital admissions are due to diseases related to the lack of sanitation. Diarrhea accounts for six of every ten deaths of children under the age of five in Latin America. Fresh water can save lives; for each percentage point increase in potable water coverage, the infant mortality rate drops 1 death per 1,000 live births. Yet, Latin America is falling behind in terms of life expectancy. Life expectancy in Latin America was five years longer than East Asia in the mid-1960s, but by the mid-1990s, it was 1.2 years shorter. [31] The weight of this evidence leads to an inescapable conclusion. Cambridge economist Ha-Joon Chang has put it most succinctly, “Over the last three decades, economists…provid[ed]…theoretical justifications for financial deregulation and the unrestrained pursuit of short-term profits…[T]hey advanced theories that justified the policies that have led to slower growth…[and] higher inequality…[**E]conomics has been worse than irrelevant. Economics, as it has been practiced in the last three decades, has been positively harmful for most people**.” [32] The Twilight of Neoliberalism “There is no alternative [to free market policies],” the late British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher once pronounced, but across Latin America, there has been a steady erosion of support for the free market model. At present three-quarters of Latin America governments can be fairly characterized as being governed by center-left or left-oriented leaders. Moreover, there has been a far-reaching reassessment of the relevance of IMF advice, especially after the organization’s punishingly controversial response to the 1997-1998 Asian economic crisis. The Asian economic meltdown brought the reflexive recommendations from the IMF in the form of harsh austerity measures. However, the pro-cyclical policies demanded by the IMF of its client states so plainly worsened the economic situation and needlessly caused considerable human misery that the IMF’s reputation was badly damaged. In the wake of IMF’s subsequent mishandling of the 1998 economic crises in Russia and Brazil, large private lenders, especially among the European ones, stopped requiring IMF assurances that borrowing nations follow neoliberal strictures. As Richard Peet has noted, “the…[IMF]’s reputation has never recovered, even in circles that the Fund values. [...] The power of the IMF has been reduced by failed crisis management, [with] countries paying up as quickly as possible and distancing themselves” from the IMF. [33] European lenders concluded that new loans to non-neoliberal Latin American states would perform handsomely, which, in fact, they have. The IMF’s power to impose neoliberal policies on debtor nations has been seriously compromised. Source: herslookingatyousquid.worldpress.com Argentina, following its severe economic crisis in 2001-2002, proved that a nation could successfully challenge the IMF. Argentina defaulted on its $100 billion USD foreign debt and renegotiated its obligations, paying off its loans at a fraction of the original cost. Buenos Aires finished retiring its debt to the IMF in 2005, benefitting greatly from Venezuelan assistance. In offering the money, the late Hugo Chávez promised that, “if additional help is needed to help Argentina finally free itself from the claws of the International Monetary Fund, Argentina can count on us.” [34] Other Latin American nations looked on as Argentina defied the IMF, and continued to watch as Argentina’s economy soared, growing faster than any other nation in the Western Hemisphere after it abandoned IMF-imposed economic policies. Soon a stampede of those flouting IMF mandates followed, with each new defection providing courage to all those nations rejecting neoliberalism. Other international lenders appeared as well. Venezuela loaned money to other countries in the region, including Bolivia, Ecuador, and Nicaragua, but only if they ignored the counsel of the IMF. The Bank of the South, established in 2007, joined Venezuela with Brazil, Argentina, Ecuador, Bolivia, and Paraguay as an alternative source for credit. China, which does not particularly care what the IMF recommends, is also supplying capital. Furthermore, some primary commodity export prices have increased, in part due to the demand for Chinese imports (for example, Argentine soya). This has allowed several Latin American states to build up their financial reserves, making new foreign borrowing less pressing. Today the IMF can coerce only the most feeble economies, mainly now in sub-Sahara Africa. The political landscape has shifted too. By the late 1990s, many of the aging left-wing political parties built around organized labor had been flattened by the assault on unions mounted under neoliberalism. At first voters were willing to give candidates who supported the neoliberal program a chance; nevertheless, as it became increasingly clear that these policies were failing, those who spoke out against neoliberalism were elected in growing numbers. The trouble was that once in office they too often carried out neoliberal programs anyway, as for example with Abdalá Bucaram (1996-1997) or Lucio Gutiérrez (2003-2005) in Ecuador, either because they secretly favored such policies, because the IMF persuaded them to do so, or both. With the traditional left-leaning parties marginalized in several countries and the abandonment of anti-neoliberal promises by elected politicians, ordinary citizens had to develop new political methods to defend themselves. Neoliberal policies so savaged the working class, as well as the urban marginalized and the hard-pressed peasantry, that they had no choice but to organize and fight back. To this end, they created new organizations and, in some cases, used them to seize power. By pressing the neoliberal agenda, the Latin American élites appeared to have overplayed their hand, and they paid for it by losing control of governments that they had controlled for many years, in **Venezuela**, Ecuador, Bolivia, and beyond. A 2009 Latinobarómetro Survey found that support for democracy (as preferable to all other forms of government) was the strongest in countries that flatly rejected neoliberalism. Of the top five nations in popular support of democracy, four were governed by progressive leaders: Venezuela, Bolivia, Uruguay, and El Salvador. [35] Hope for the Future? Supporters of the free market approach have continued to counsel patience. They argue that stronger economic growth will eventually come, and that all will benefit in the long run. While neoliberal reforms might cause some short-term belt tightening, defenders explain that such adjustments, though sometimes painful, are necessary for the greatest good. We should not give in to “reform fatigue,” but should stay the course. [36] But neoliberal policies have been in place for over 30 years now. How long is the long run? How long must we wait? As John Maynard Keynes famously observed, “In the long run we are all dead.” In 1937 U.S. President Franklin D. Roosevelt observed, “We have always known that heedless self-interest was bad morals. We know now that it is bad economics.” [37] The age of neoliberalism is ending. It is time for some good economics.

### Links – Venezuela

#### The 1ac perpetuates myths of capitalist efficiency that frames Venezuela through a lens of Western capitalism while ignoring true barriers to relations – turns the aff

**Bonfili ‘10** (Christian Bonfili December 21, 2010 41: 669 Security Dialogue The United States and Venezuela: The Social Construction of Interdependent Rivalry)

The present article is framed by a constructivist perspective, as it combines Alexander Wendt’s social constructivist theory with the Copenhagen School of security studies. Social constructivism offers a rather sophisticated theoretical apparatus that illuminates the foundations of state agency in world politics and, most notably, the mutual constitutiveness of social structures and agents. The work of the Copenhagen School enhances social constructivism’s explanatory power, as it provides important insights into the fundamentally relational character of security, as well as how actors may form a distinctive scheme of interaction as a result of a particular distribution of power and historical relations of amity or enmity. Insofar as US–Venezuelan relations presuppose the collective construction of threat perceptions that are translated into extraordinary measures, bilateral interaction reveals the weight of intersubjective understandings. This assumption allows the chosen theoretical perspective to offer a comparatively better account of the emergence of conflict in bilateral relations vis-à-vis liberal and neorealist approaches. The latter are unable to explain why conflict (namely, security dynamics based on rivalry) has evolved in the first place. Liberal-based explanations are unable to assess this phenomenon against the background of a longstanding and institutionalized cooperation in the economic/energy sector. For instance, interdependence literature assumes that economic cooperation leads to peace, because this is the ‘functionally efficient policy’ for states that share ‘a common goal in the maximization of capitalist profits’ (Sterling-Folker, 2009: 104–109). Yet, such an assumption fails to explain why in the case of the US–Venezuela relationship concerns over less rational aspects such as the autonomy, ideology, and identity of the state have come to be sufficiently powerful as to co-exist with ‘rational selfinterest in capitalist profit’. For its part, neorealism is unable to explain the extent to which such concerns have framed the appraisal of external threats and informed foreign policy choices in recent times. The fact that neorealism is a systemic theory not only means that foreign policy is not its focus of analysis but also, more importantly, that the ultimate cause of state behavior within its framework is not to be found at the level of the unit but, rather, at the level of the international structure. Accordingly, the unaffected character of structural variables before and after the Chávez and Bush administrations emphasizes the need for alternative explanations. These are to be found, for instance, in looking at how certain understandings about existential issues, and the resulting process of constructing threat perceptions, played a decisive role in prompting the reassessment of Venezuela’s foreign strategy and goals following the attempted coup of 2002. Sectors The study of bilateral relations is based on a sectoral approach in an attempt to ‘disaggregate’ the whole structure of interaction. Though they are inseparable parts of a single social reality, sectors reflect distinct patterns of behavior and ideational constellations that sustain co-existence between rivalry and interdependence. Geographic Proximity and Interdependence These concepts refer to the incidence of territoriality in security dynamics, as well as understandings about costs and vulnerabilities derived from interdependence. The logic of territoriality is strong in the realm of security, because physical adjacency tends to increase security interaction among states, which means that ‘threats travel more easily over short distances rather than over long ones’ (Buzan & Wæver, 2003: 12). In the context of the US–Venezuelan energy relationship, proximity is reflected mostly in terms of the density of the two countries’ transactions. The question of geographic adjacency draws attention, in turn, to the interrelated aspect of interdependence. This notion not only refers to the density of interactions (mutual dependence on a m a terial basis), but also to the particular way actors’ major perceptions and concerns are linked (mutual dependence on an intersubjective basis). Politicization and Securitization Politicization is here understood as the process whereby certain issues become part of the political agenda because they are now taken into consideration, debated, or assessed, yet without attempts being made to justify their urgency or existential nature. By contrast, securitization refers to the praxis by which agents construct an existential threat to an entity or shared value (referent object) conceived of as being worthy of defense by means of an extraordinary response that, in turn, is legitimized by a significant audience. In this way, securitization entails a specific discursive structure – the security speech act – in virtue of which an issue is dramatized and designated as a matter of supreme priority (Buzan, Wæver & de Wilde, 1998: 26). Securitization relies heavily on the ‘social milieu’ within which it operates, as the latter provides the content for, and contributes to, the required acceptance by the audience. For the securitizing actor’s claim to be accepted, securitization has to be ‘part of a discursive, socially constituted, intersubjective realm’ (Buzan, Wæver & de Wilde, 1998: 31). Role Identity The concept of role identity refers to the position an actor fills within a social structure and the actor’s adherence to social norms when interacting with others who display counter-identities (Wendt, 1999: 226). The social character of role identities stems from the fact that the agent’s position presupposes certain expectations, on the basis of values and norms that are shared by members of a social structure. The concept of role identity provides a more differentiated classification of patterns of behavior vis-à-vis the simple dyad of enemy or friend offered by the Copenhagen School. For instance, it allows for a specific kind of identity in the economic/energy sector, namely, that of a partner in a partnership internalized by interest, which can be regarded as a middle position between those of friend and enemy. The Economic/Energy Sector: Partnership Based on Interest US–Venezuelan energy interdependence is at base reflected in the rate of transactions, degree of interconnection, and investment ties between the two countries’ oil sectors. Geographic proximity is largely responsible for this, as Venezuelan oil is only about 5 days away from the US Gulf Coast by tanker, compared to about 30 or 40 days for oil from the Middle East. 2 Conventional and heavy crude oil from state-owned oil and gas company Petróleos de Venezuela Sociedad Anónima (PDVSA) reaches US consumers via the interconnection between PDVSA’s subsidiary CITGO Petroleum Corporation and the downstream portion of the US system. Indeed, a significant level of energy integration is illustrated by the fact that Venezuela was the fourth-largest exporter of crude oil and the third-largest exporter of petroleum products to the United States from 2002 through 2009. 3 In addition, most Venezuelan oil is a heavy, sour type of crude oil, which means that only a small number of US refineries can process it. In the event of potential disruptions to this supply, these same refineries would face significant difficulty in finding replacements, as they are specifically configured to run most economically with Venezuelan oil (Shore & Hackworth, 2003).

#### Western engagement with Venezuela is a ploy for neoliberal and imperial expansion

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It is interesting to note that Chavez’s foreign policy was consistent with his domestic policies and was based on the same principles. He knew very well that the local big business, media giants and his political opponents were not working in isolation. He observed that they were backed and discreetly supported by the US imperialism. In my view, there were two principal pillars in his foreign policy, namely (1) unconditional opposition to US imperialism and aggression; (2) the formation and strengthening of the united front of Latin American countries. He characterized the US as No 1 enemy of the poor and marginalized people in the world. It was no secret for him that the so-called campaigns for democracy and human rights had been now reduced into techniques of governmentality deployed by the US imperialists and their lackeys. This perspective led to understand the complexity of the new situation in the Arab World. Hence Chavez opposed the US intervention in toto wherever and whenever it was in action. When Obama responding to Chavez’s death informed that the US can now have new kind of engagement with Venezuela, he tried to single out Chavez from the movement he built since 1994. The US imperialists might have thought that the main obstacle for their aggressive policy in Latin and Central America was now removed.

### Link – Mexico

#### US intervention in Mexico is a ruse to increase foreign domination of markets and exploitation

**Hart 02** – John and Rebecca Moores Distinguished Professor of History at U Houston, (John Mason, Empire and Revolution: The Americans in Mexico since the Civil War, 04/2002, eBook

The American experience in Mexico offers a partial answer to the question of why the United States has so frequently supported oppressive tyrants with material aid, even while criticizing other governments for doing the same. Over1'iding material concerns, specifically the desire to extract wealth without opposition despite moral pronouncements, prompted financiers, railroad men, and ranchers to support military strongman Diaz against democratically elected Lerdo. Subsequently they backed Victo1'iano Huerta. Wilson supported Huerta with arms for over six months, hoping that the Mexican dictator could restore order; because he respected American property interests. Next the American financial elite briefly supported Francisco Villa but then shifted to Carranza as the lesser of two evils. Finally they lent their support to Alvaro Obregên Salido and Plutarcho Elias Calles. In every case the powerful Americans in the private sector had a far-reaching influence on official U.S. policy. During the 19905 those sectors of the American business community seeking relief from the demands of American labor supported President Bill Clinton and Treasury Secretary Robe1't E. Rubin in the approval of NAFTA. Meanwhile, they rushed to help Presidents Carlos Salinas de Gortari and Ernesto Zedillo Ponce de Leon in their p1'ivatization efforts. The American elites' continuing interest in access to strategic resources in other parts of the world is an integral part of U.S. policymaking. The interests of elite American property holders and investors has been the most important factor in relations between the United States and other nations throughout the Western Hemisphere, outweighing objections to dictatorships in the countries in question even in the cases represented by "Papa Doc" Duvaliel; the Somoza patriarchs, and the Argentine, Brazilian, Chilean, Uruguayan, and Central American generals of the 19705 and 19805. Although the CIA-supported overthrow of the democratic government of Guatemala in 19 54, the boycott of Nicaraguan products in 1980, and the ensuing support for the Contras were explained by the U.S. government in purely political terms, it is clear that a perceived nationalistic danger to the elaborate structure of American land ownership and trade hegemony in Central Ame1'ica was the deeper concern. Cooperative collaborating elites gained power as a result of U.S. intervention. In Africa, Ame1'ican support for the deployment of Belgian troops in Zaire by the North Atlantic Treaty Organization du1'ing the early 19605 provides another example of a misleading political emphasis given to strategies rooted in the effort to control strategic resources. Zaire contained one of the world's largest copper producing complexes, and American support for the creation of a client state run by a right-wing dictator instead of his nationalistic and left-wing counterpart ensured continued Western ownership of the copper mines. The violent, CIA-supported overthrow of the Sukarno government in oil-rich Indonesia underscores the mix of political and economic considerations behind American activism in the creation of client regimes. American corporate leaders and liberal and conservative U.S. administrations have worked with these antidemocratic regimes, including Nigeria in the mid 1990s, because they supported private enterprise and free trade, which were controlled by American elites. Middle-class Americans were also a strong cultural force in Mexico, and they remain so today. During the twentieth century their actions and attitudes reinforced the Mexicans' need to participate more fully in public affairs. Today American immigrants-retirees, spouses, scholars, students, and workers-continue to bring the American dream to Mexico. Their complexity of interests and activities sometimes creates an impression of fractionalization. Yet if we remember that most applied themselves to an occupation in order to survive, then we will understand why the main thrust of day-to-day middle-class American activity in Mexico has been in the workplace and in home life. This vision of individualism, competition, efficiency, religious practice, free markets, social mobility and democracy was and continues to be passed to Mexico's people with an intensity possible only between neighbors. As Americans have immigrated to Mexico on a massive scale, Hollywood movies, television shows, fast-food joints, baseball, blues, disco, jazz, and folk and rap music have permeated Mexican culture. The American dream represents a unique mix in which Western ideas about progress and individualism combine with a preoccupation with individual perfectibility and a belief that consumerism represents the ultimate path to human happiness. These American values and ideals transcend even the attraction of electoral democracy and political liberty. At its deepest level the American dream teaches that individuals are perfectible when emphasis is placed on education, personal and public hygiene, and physical fitness. The search for individual happiness has an even more common course. It is achieved through the materialism that developed alongside the growth of American businesses, first in Mexico during the late nineteenth century and now in the rest of the Third World. Happiness through consumerism is achieved by competition, efficiency and productivity. In daily life the people of Mexico and the Third World learn these lessons via advertising, television programs, and Hollywood movies that promise fulfillment through the acquisition of elegant clothing and sporty cars. The new individualism has replaced the community and family economic and cultural commitments once found in the traditional villages of the countryside.A major cultural component of the change has been the rise of Protestantism. The American Protestant sects that grew in Mexico during the nineteenth century are now flourishing in Brazil and Guatemala and spreading to the rest of Latin America. It relieves individuals of the responsibility to donate their savings to community welfare through fiesta rituals, and it offers them the right to communicate directly with God, removing the village priests from their mediating role between the deity and the people.2 America is an imperial force in Mexico because U.S. government authorities and privileged American citizens assert their power there in search of advantages. Beyond their personal resources, they use the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, and multinational banks and corporations as instruments of that power. With their demands for reducing investment in social programs that would benefit Mexico's citizens and awarding budget priorities to debt payments for foreign creditors, the leaders of these institutions emphasize the goal of development. This ideology distinguishes them from middle-class Americans who hold more democratic beliefs. The elites who participate in these institutions are distinct from their counterparts during the age of European colonialism, when the rich and powerful sought the direct exploitation of openly enslaved peoples. The attempts to link the economies and peoples of Mexico and the United States have always been problematic and sometimes disastrous, but they have also been mutually beneficial. The benefits, howeven are lopsided, since the continuing relationship indicates roles for Mexican labor in American inclustrialism and American capital in the Mexican marketplace. Probable benefits include an increased per capita output for Mexico, which could potentially relieve the Mexican government of its onerous national debt by creating a larger economic base and providing a substantial marketplace for both A1ne1'icans and Mexicans. The challenge of and problem with NAFTA, however, lie in the idea of economic growth induced and effectively controlled by capitalists from out-side Mexico rather than from within. Under the coordinated plan of trade and investments represented by ADRs and NAFTA, the Mexican leaders are attempting to bypass the gradual, centuries-long, internalized process of commercial and then industrial growth that acculturated the peoples of Western Europe, the United States, and Iapan. Mexican prosperity, like that of the Four Tigers of Asia, depends upon outside investments and buyers and oscillates accordingly. In Mexico's case the outsiders are Americans. Unlike the Four Tigers, Mexico is a geographically large and socially diverse nation. It has the world's thirteenth largest economy and a population of approximately 1oo,ooo,ooo, half of whom live in what the government admits is extreme poverty. The rural population-30 percent of Mexico's citizens-lacks educational opportunities and will not be able to participate in an economic expansion in either the short or the mid term, except as menial laborers.

## Coloniality

### Link-general

#### U.S. political reforms incorporate Latin American nations into Western liberal projects, while suppressing decolonial movements interrogating colonial matrices of power. Non-Western rhetorics of anti-imperialism are key.

Mignolo 22 [(Mignolo, Walter D. "Second Thoughts on the Historical Foundations of Modernity/Coloniality and the Advent of Decolonial Thinking." A Companion to Latin American Literature and Culture (2022): 9. Pgs. 12-14.) klb]

The return of the history of Peninsular colonialism is not a desirable project for the present moving towards the future. Furthermore, the return of the history of ancient civilizations of Mesoamerica and the Andes would imply subsuming them into the legacies of liberalism, neoliberalism, and Marxism (all manifestations of Western cosmology). The limits and problems of cultural “Indigenismo,” which impinged upon the spheres of economic and political cultures, are not desirable either (see Chapter 23). Equally problematic would be to make the same move vis-à-vis the current resurgence of Afro-diasporic cultures in Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, and the Insular Caribbean. The difficulties here are that there are three cosmologies (Western, African, and First Nations) entangled in a historical power differential (see Chapters 13 and 32). “Latin” America so far mutates between the struggles to end dependency to Westernization and the complacencies of submitting to it. In the first case, there is no need for the return of history. History has been there from the moment of independence from Spain and Portugal to turn toward France and England first and to the US later. In the second case, the problem is the lack of grounds on which to claim the return of history. Perhaps one way out would be to engage seriously with the teaching of Rodolfo Kusch in his relentless search for América Profunda (1962), accepting that deep America is the compound of three diverse demographic languages and cultures, including political and economic cultures: Pueblos Originarios, African Diaspora, and European Diaspora. The task is not an easy one because the return of history cannot be claimed only by actors from the European Diaspora.

After these clarifications, let’s return to the argument that the so-called turn to the left was indeed a turn towards de-Westernization minus the difficulty of the return of history. Why? It was first de-Westernization and not decoloniality, because none of the nation-states involved questioned the political and economic foundations of the nation-state. The confrontation with the West was propelled by a rhetoric of antiimperialism that was foremost a confrontation with the United States, for obvious and justifiable reasons. However, Westernization is a systemic rather than a conjunctural phenomenon in which the nation-state is an institution deeply ingrained in the structure and functioning of the colonial matrix of power, which I addressed in the previous Preamble. “Socialismo comunitario” which was announced during the former Evo Morales-Álvaro García Linera presidency could not have been sustained in the same way that “socialism with Chinese characteristics” was and is. In the case of Bolivia, the return of history was blocked by the prevalence of the European model of the nation-state patterned on Marxism rather than on neo-liberalism as it was the previous state under Gonzalo Sánchez de Losada that preceded Evo Morales. The opening in the Constitution to the plurinational state, instead of one nation/one state, was a good opportunity to engage in a serious return of history in which all parties involved could participate. But that did not happen, and this is perhaps one of the reasons that propelled the judicial coup in November 2019 when a significant number of Indigenous in Bolivia did not support the state that claimed to support them. In spite of the local differences of all the nation-states engaging in the turn to de-Westernization (although this word was not in their rhetoric that underscored “left” and “socialism”), the failure of the turn to the left and the rise of the return of the right was largely due to the difficulties, if not the impossibility at this point, of the return to history in a subcontinent formed by the cohabitation of Latin America, Abya Yala and La Gran Comarca. Abya Yala is the territory inhabited by the majority of the Indigenous populations according to their own name for the territory. The Great Shire is the territoriality of Afro-descendant organizations and populations in continental South America. Latin America is the territoriality which Euro-descendant people and institutions inhabit. There is still a power differential that maintains the privilege of confusing the subcontinent with territoriality. The subcontinent is the same one in which three territorialities coinhabit, the last one maintains the privilege of controlling the power differential. 7

The end result is that while the Asian hemisphere has seen remarkable economic growth, with all the good and bad consequences of their achievements, “Latin” America did not find its way. I believe that in “Latin” America the return of history (the state, the university, and culture in general) is difficult because the “Latin” component is trapped in Western history where its return is not necessary because it was always there, since the invention of America. The return of history would imply a delinking from the political and economic cultures of development and engaging in a political culture of sustainable economies. The italics underscores the plural since the singular “sustainable economy” is the goodwill project of the IMF and the Davos Economic Forum.8 Which means that sustainable economy is a new disguise to save development, while sustainable economies in plural implies that development has run its course and has created many of the problems that we – across the planet – are enduring today. The return of David Choquehuanca to the vice presidency of Bolivia has already introduced a narrative that points towards the return of history. Although drastic changes in the near future should not be expected, what is no doubt irreversible is the return of history as told in this case from the perspective of First Nations in the Andes. However, the limits of the nation-state to advance on the return of history to guide the political and economic cultures should not be overlooked.

Parallel to the reconfiguration of the global order prompted by the end of the Cold War and the increasing interstates’ political and economic cultures’ confrontations of de-Westernization and re-Westernization, the turmoil impacts the sphere of public culture. Covid-19 has made it clear that the economic and political cultures managed by mainstream mass media spill over into the general sphere of culture in the public arena. The current global disorder is more than just another crisis in the linear unfolding of history in which change was the mantra of the era of Westernization (1500–2000). We are experiencing a change of era, no longer an era of changes. The general sphere of Culture (daily life, but also the so-called “high culture”: literature, art, cinema, museums, universities) is not detached from the impact of the global disorder.

The signs of the closing of the era of Westernization are mostly the emergence of a multipolar world order manifested in the political and economic cultures of the interstate system, on one hand, and on the other, the rise of the global political society active in the sphere of culture. “Social movements” was a useful concept during the era of changes but it is no longer appropriate to capture “people in movement” globally. Decoloniality is both a sector of the political society of people in movement and a conceptual and existential framework to understand the change of era. My own argument here is a decolonial one. While the cultures of the interstate system are displacing the unipolar world order dominant for the past 500 years, the culture of the people in movement is displacing the belief in abstract universals (truth, democracy, science, capitalism) and installing the pluriversal as the necessary global project. “Transition” is no longer a useful concept to account for the change of era, because the change of era cannot be narrated and encapsuled in a linear time frame. The “explosion” of the era of Westernization opens up a universe of possibilities, none of them reducible to a single abstract universal. “Latin” American Studies cannot be released from the responsibilities of thinking, acting, and confronting the change of era.

#### Foreign policy is a tool to otherize – creating an insider and outsider group in order to justify particularized responses and violent control of populations

Leira 19 [Halvard Leira, Norwegian Institute of International Affairs, The Emergency of Foreign Policy, International Studies Quarterly, Volume 63, Issue 1, March 2019, Pages 187–198, https://academic.oup.com/isq/article/63/1/187/5307236#132443628]

Meanings of Foreign Policy

In much international relations scholarship, foreign policy is a taken-for-granted term, defined for example as “the sum of official external relations conducted by an independent actor (usually a state) in international relations” (Hill 2003, 3). This kind of understanding underpins most foreign policy analysis, regardless of whether the focus is on studying the content of foreign policy, the pursued policy, or the process leading up to such policy (Hudson 2012). Such a conceptualization has also been considered as historically commonsensical in much academic work. From the notion of foreign policy as perpetually different follows a specific need for secrecy in the handling of it. The need for secrecy has two causes in the literature. First, public opinion is fickle and uniformed and thus untrustworthy. Second, open discussion allows for internal dissent, which weakens the state in international interaction. The basic assumptions are that polities have always had foreign policies and that the fundamentally different character of foreign policy demands secrecy.

Scholars questioning the categorical and naturalized distinction between the inside and the outside of the state have challenged this understanding of foreign policy over the last thirty years. They have instead stressed the very historical practices that had given rise to this distinction, looking at identity and boundaries (Shapiro 1988; Walker 1993). Thus, Richard Ashley (1987, 51) suggested that foreign policy should be considered as “a specific sort of boundary-producing political performance.”2 The basic assumptions in this literature is that foreign policy became possible with the spatial demarcation between inside and outside, sometime around 1600, that foreign policy proper sprung from the analysis of interests, that is, reason of state, around 1650 (Bartelson 1995, chap. 5) and that foreign policy has always been concerned with identity and difference (Doty 1993, 1996; Weldes 1996, 1999; Milliken 1999, 2001).

In this critical literature, identity has crowded out history; politicizing the concept of identity has implied a reification of the concept of foreign policy. In a move that relies on the multiple meanings of “foreign” in the English language, foreign becomes privileged over “policy,” and foreign policy is assumed to have been about identity politics since it became possible to distinguish inside from outside. Thus, in a somewhat ironic twist, the critical definition of foreign policy mirrors the traditional understanding of the phenomenon in being an analytical concept, rather than a practical one. The attempt to turn the understanding of foreign policy as boundary-drawing into an explicitly defined analytical concept takes the move to its logical conclusion (Hellmann, Fahrmeir, and Vec 2016, chap. 1–3).

But how did a practice concept of foreign policy emerge in the first place, and what was the condition of possibility for being able to discuss something like foreign policy? While I share the historicizing impulse of the critical approaches, my basic assumption here is that the emergence of foreign policy must be sought in later developments than the seventeenth-century distinction between inside and outside. We must explore the eighteenth-century emergence of civil society, a public sphere, and public opinion.

Approaching the concept of foreign policy, at the threshold of modernity, it makes sense to draw on existing conceptual analyses of the period (Koselleck 1985, [1959] 1988; Foucault 2007, 2008, compare Berenskoetter 2017, 161–64, 167–70). I rely on the notion of concepts as inherently ambiguous and the overarching claim that the period from 1750 to 1850 witnessed a radical transformation of political language.3 Studying conceptual change, I look for the introduction of new concepts around which meaning can congeal and ask why they emerged and how they enabled action. More specifically, when approaching the emergence of foreign policy, I focus on the many terms that feed into the concept, if the concept implied change or simply a new name for existing practice, why the concept emerged when it did, how the concept was applied to direct conduct, and how it was challenged as a naturalized concept. Answering these questions necessitates locating foreign policy in its wider web of meaning.

### Link- War on Drugs

#### The affirmative’s construction of a “war on drugs” is not neutral, but rather a perpetuation a form of cultural militarism that constructs certain spaces as war zones, necessitating violent intervention.

**Gregory ’11** (Derek, Professor of Geography at the University of British Columbia, “The Everywhere War”, The Geographical Journal vol. 177 No. 3, September 2011, pgs. 5-7)

The United States–Mexico borderlands are an ambiguous space too, ‘Amexica’, famously described by Anzaldúa (1987, 25) as ‘una herida abierta [an open wound] where the Third World grates against the First and bleeds.’ Before a scab can form, she continued, ‘it hemorrhages again, the lifeblood of two worlds merging to form a third country – a border culture’. Coleman (2005) sees the border as a trickster ﬁgure, at once being opened to the passage of capital and commodities under the sign of neoliberalism and closed to the movement of migrants who are often themselves victims of neoliberalism, and he is right to treat ‘de-bordering’ and ‘re-bordering’ as a tense and countervailing constellation of transnational, national and local practices. But Anzaldúa’s original sanguinary metaphor seems ever more appropriate as the border has come to be performed as the front-line in what Vulliamy (2010, 12) calls ‘the ﬁrst real twentyﬁrst century war’ because, he says, it is also a ‘postpolitical war’. What he has in mind is the trans-border ‘war on drugs’, but his characterisations fail to capture the twentieth-century histories that are embedded in the conﬂict, the intimate connections between narcotrafﬁcking and the Mexican state, and the ways in which this increasingly militarised campaign forms one plane in a multi-dimensional battlespace where drug trafﬁckers and undocumented migrants are being transformed into insurgents and terrorists. All of these violent geographies are freighted with political implications In the 1980s the major drug trafﬁcking routes into the United States from Central and South America ran through the Caribbean, and there have been persistent claims that CIA support for the Contra rebels in Nicaragua involved at least tacit support for an ongoing arms-for-drugs exchange. The increasing public scrutiny of these arrangements combined with the success of counter-narcotics operations to prompt Colombian drug cartels to develop new trafﬁcking routes through Mexico’s border cities. These routes were controlled by one major Mexican trafﬁcker, Félix Gallardo, but when he was imprisoned in 1989 he had his lieutenants divide the border into territories and reach an accommodation with Mexican authorities so that they could concentrate on ﬁghting what he saw as ‘the real enemy’: the agents of the United States. These arrangements soon broke down. Fighting between the new regional cartels spiralled into a battle for proﬁts through territorial expansion, and as the violence intensiﬁed the state militarised its response. Federal troops had long been used to destroy marijuana and poppy ﬁelds in rural areas, especially in the mountainous Golden Triangle that spans Chihuahua, Sinaloa and Durango, but despite their raids domestic production soared. The army was ill-prepared for the switch to interdiction in cities, where its record proved even more mixed and the consequences far bloodier: more than 35,000 people have been killed in the last 4 years, more than the toll in Afghanistan over the same period. Fifty thousand federal troops and thousands more private security contractors, many of them employed by US security companies, are now deployed. The conventional and I dare say dominant reading treats all these deaths as conﬁned to those caught up in the drug trade. Leaving on one side those who are literally caught, trapped in the trade by spiralling circles of poverty set spinning by the rapid neoliberalisation of the economy, some Mexican scholars insist that the victims include human rights activists, community leaders and labour organisers. Certainly, Mexico is no stranger to military repression. During the ‘dirty war’ from the 1960s through to the 1980s, the Army was given carte blanche to put down student demonstrations and guerilla groups, and it carried out ‘disappearances’ and illegal detentions, torture and killings on such a scale that the United States noted ‘an emerging security problem’. The cloak for these bloody operations was the Cold War, and some scholars believe that the ‘drug war’ now serves as a convenient cover for the renewed criminalisation of social protest. When President Calderon describes the campaign as ‘a war’, therefore, the word is freighted with layers of political meaning. He and his ministers constantly speak in these terms, and Calderon has even compared the ﬁght against the cartels to Mexico’s celebrated defeat of an invading French expeditionary force on 5 May 1862; but for many Mexicans the reverberations are more recent than Cinco de Mayo. Yet the declaration has to be seen as something more than the intensiﬁed militarisation of security. ‘It is no longer a matter of organised crime’, El Universal declared in a June 2010 editorial, ‘but rather of the loss of the state’. Calderon said much the same on 4 August 2010: ‘it [has] become a challenge to the state, an attempt to replace the state’, he claimed, because the cartels ‘are trying to impose a monopoly by force of arms, and are even trying to impose their own laws’. The United States had been ﬁghting its own narcowar even before President Nixon declared a ‘war on drugs’ in 1971, and its shots were ﬁred in September 1969 when the US–Mexico border was closed for several weeks and all vehicles entering the US were stopped and searched for marijuana. But it is the new political conjuncture in Mexico that has transformed America’s militarisation of its southern border. The process has a long history; the Mexican–American war of 1846–8 still casts long shadows, and the origins of the US Border Patrol lie in the mounted guards of the Immigration Service at the dawn of the last century whose patrols were intermittently reinforced by federal troops. Three moments index the emergence of a military–security nexus along the border. From 1978 the US Army’s doctrine for ‘low-intensity conﬂict’ was repatriated to the United States; in 1982 federal law restricting the role of the military in domestic policing was relaxed; and in 1989 President George H.W. Bush committed the Pentagon to the ‘war on drugs’ with the formation of Joint Task Force 6 (JTF-6) to support law enforcement along the border and, eventually, within the continental United States (Dunn 1996; Rosas 2006). The initial collaboration between the Border Patrol and the military targeted not only drug trafﬁckers but also undocumented migrants from Mexico. A cascading series of joint operations, from Operation Blockade in El Paso in 1993 through Gatekeeper in San Diego and Safeguard in Arizona to Rio Grande in Texas in 1997, was designed to capture undocumented migrants (who were held to be responsible for increased criminal activity in border cities) and to deﬂect countless others into remote desert areas where they were knowingly exposed to death; in what Doty (2011) indicts as ‘an endless deferral of human responsibility’, their deaths were (mis)attributed to ‘natural causes’ (Nevins 2002; Sundberg 2011). The risk of dying on the crossing has steadily increased (Jimenez 2009). 9/11 prompted and permitted the formation of a still more intensive military–security nexus that rendered undocumented migrants even more vulnerable to an emergent necropolitics by imaginatively placing them in a warzone where they become, in effect, unlawful combatants (Mbembe 2003; Castro 2007, 12). Many of the military units involved in border support now saw the mission as a pre-deployment exercise for combat in Afghanistan and Iraq, and this imaginative re-mapping was reinforced by a cascading series of institutional, technical and cultural developments. In 2004 JTF-6 was incorporated into US Northern Command as JTF-North and counter-terrorism and homeland security were added to its mission. It continued to operate in close concert with the Border Patrol, which was now part of the Department of Homeland Security, and it too deﬁned its priority mission as deterring and preventing ‘transnational threats to the homeland’. Then, in May 2006, even as Bush peddled the ﬁction that ‘the United States is not going to militarize the southern border’, he announced the deployment of 6000 National Guard troops to the border and what he hailed as ‘the most technologically advanced border security initiative in American history’. These measures hastened the rhetorical collapse of the alien into the terrorist and, as Rosas (2007, 97) observed, allowed ‘the violent subjugation of immigrants to the special relation of illegality’. The violence of this reduction is legitimated by a series of cultural productions that use the language of war. Here are three examples from the last year alone. National Geographic’s Border warsseries promised to take viewers to the ‘front line’; as in Iraq, camera crews were ‘embedded’ with the Border Patrol, and ﬁlmed its operations from Blackhawk helicopters and Forward Operating Bases. Afterwards its producer said that he had some sense ‘of what it must be like to come back from Iraq or Afghanistan’ (Cavanaugh and Heilbrunn 2010). Fox News’ War stories on the border: the third front took its viewers to the ‘front line of the war on narco-terror’; hosted by Oliver North, a central ﬁgure in the other Contra supply scandal of the 1980s, which involved covertly selling arms to Iran to fund the rebels; the series was advertised as exposing ‘the war for the border’ (my emphasis). Finally, in Gareth Edwards’ science-ﬁction ﬁlm Monsters, set 6 years after a NASA space probe crashes in northern Mexico and sets loose alien life-forms, the region becomes ‘the infected zone’, and an American photojournalist has to escort his employer’s daughter home through a landscape scattered with burned-out tanks and wrecked warplanes (‘Mexican and US military struggle to contain the creatures’) to the safety of the massively militarised border. It’s not difﬁcult (or paranoid) to view productions like these as moments in the staging of the borderlands as a liminal zone of danger that requires a militarised response. Popular culture has also assumed a more directly interventionist form through the mobilisation of right-wing citizen militias like the Minutemen, whose training manual provides volunteers with a ‘virtual lexicon of war’ in which military and paramilitary logics and languages are paramount and border watch is explicitly framed as combat (Castro 2007, 19–20; Doty 2007, 125).

#### The affirmative is merely an attempt to territorialize Mexico as a battleground against drugs. This is a form of transnational militarization that is at the heart of modern biopolitical violence

**Corva ’09** (Dominic, Professor of Geography at the University of Washington, “Biopower and the Militarization of the Police Function”, Acme Journal 2009 Issue, <http://www.acme-journal.org/vol8/Corva09.pdf>)

As Hardt and Negri point out, this model of warfare identifies its adversaries as foreign citizens and territorializes its battlegrounds as bordered places (2004, 37). It ends when soldiers surrender and territories are occupied. The biopoliticization of the military function happens when its transnational subjects are no longer specific people and places but abstract categories of dangerous abnormality. War as a global regime of biopower is war against categories of risk to society that could be produced by anyone, anywhere. “Terror” and “drugs,” to take the paradigmatic examples, are vectors of transnational danger to law-abiding, freedom-loving citizens of the global economy, rather than territorialized enemies of states and national populations. It is to the question of the war on drugs in the Americas that I would like to turn in order to examine the militarization, or thickening, of the biopolitical police function. I examine this question in order to take up and extend Hardt and Negri’s point about the increasing indistinguishibility between the war function and the police function, since they focus theoretically and empirically on the war function. It is primarily through the post-Cold War U.S. war on drugs that the transnational militarization of the police function, with the consent and cooperation of Empire’s aristocracy. The spaces of this militarization of the police function are radically uneven, occurring most drastically in the U.S. and Latin America. And it has been primarily leveraged by political economic processes of neoliberal governance through development aid (Corva, 2008).Scholars who focus on the intersection of poverty and penality often assert, though rarely explore, the claim that the war on drugs has become a primary justification for the militarization of the police function within the U.S. (see Wacquant, 2003, for example). By “militarization” I refer to the expansion of the criminal justice apparatus to intensify unprecedentedly harsh punitive sanctions and coercive practices, with attendant collateral damage, especially in urban centers and against socioeconomically excluded populations. This has been the expansionary sector of the federal budget during a time when welfare expenditures have been restructured along neoliberal lines (Peck 2001), especially since 1986 when the first omnibus Anti-Drug Abuse Act was passed. Gilmore (2002) calls it the warfare-welfare state, Peck (2003) calls it the penal state, Wacquant (2001) calls it the carceral state/prison society, and Andreas (1998) calls it the crimefare state. Whatever one calls it, this form of state restructuring has expanded police power (and firepower), prosecutorial discretion, mass incarceration, welfare conditionalities, employment qualification, and the erosion of civil liberties while downsizing citizenship rights and universal participation in public space. The war on drugs fundamentally alters the rights and responsibilities of the most vulnerable sectors of the U.S. population by normalizing what it means to be an economically productive body in society. This biopolitical discourse, in turn, has underwritten the highly repressive practices of the national penal state. However, the language of the 1986 Anti-Drug Abuse Act frames the production and consumption of illicit drugs as a transnational danger, and uses international legal frameworks4 to justify the extension and exportation of the police state to the postcolonial world. By partitioning global space into spaces of production and distribution (as well as identifying the U.S. as the main space of consumption), the stage was set to transnationalize the militarization of the police function. It also meant re-scaling the domestic territorialization of biopower to produce a transnational regime of accountability. In this discourse, global society must be defended through the responsibilization of governments of countries identified by the U.S. as major drug-producing or drug-transit zones. Those states include in principle every signatory to the UN prohibition treaties. However, as we shall see, the states to be held accountable are accountable to the U.S. government (including its domestic police forces), for reproducing as closely as possible the exceptionally punitive approach to their criminal justice subjects that characterizes the penal state.

### Link-Cuba

#### Their engagement with Cuba reduces it to an object of American desire. The affective depiction of Cuba as an indispensable tool for American interests has create a relationship defined by domination

Pérez 8 (Louis A., Ph.D. University of New Mexico, Professor of History at University of North Carolina, "Cuba in the American Imagination: Metaphor and the Imperial Ethos", https://uncpress.org/book/9780807872109/cuba-in-the-american-imagination/)

Cuba came to the attention of the world at large principally by way of figurative depiction, more precisely, in the form of metaphors imbued with colonial meanings: in the sixteenth century as "the Key of the New World" ("la Llave del Nuevo Mundo"), "the Key to the Gulf" ("la Llave del Golfo"), and "the Bulwark of the West Indies" ("el Antemural de las Indias Occidentales"); in the nineteenth century as "the Queen of the Antilles," "the Pearl of the Antilles," "the Gem of the Antilles," and "the richest jewel in the royal crown," by which time, too, it had earned the designation of "the Ever Faithful Isle" ("la Siempre Fidelisima Isla"). Metaphorical representation also developed into the principal mode by which the Americans propounded the possession of Cuba as a matter indispensable to the future well-being of the United States. To advance a plausible claim to a territory governed by Spain, and to which its inhabitants presumed rightful succession to rule, required the Americans to create a parallel reality by which they persuaded themselves-and sought to persuade others-that Cuba rightfully belonged to them, not only, however, and indeed not even principally, as a matter of self-interest but as a function of providential purpose and moral propriety. Metaphorical constructs were central to the process by which national interest was enacted as idealized purpose: at once a combination of denial and dissimulation, a source of entitlement, and a means of empowerment. To understand the North American use of metaphor is to gain insight into the use of cultural models and social relationships in which the U.S. imperial project was conditioned. Metaphors of Cuba served to advance U.S. interests and were, in turn, mediated by racial attitudes and gender hierarchies, on one hand, and prescience of destiny, on the other. They worked best within those belief systems from which Americans obtained their cues concerning matters of civic duty and moral conduct and, indeed, were the principal means by which intent of purpose and reception of meaning were transacted. Figurative depiction drew into complicity all who shared a common cultural system from which collectively to receive the meaning desired of metaphor, what Herbert Clark and Catherine Marshall described as "mutual knowledge based on com- munity membership?"

## Queer IR

### Queer IR Advocate

#### A Queering of International Relations is a way to push back against homonationalism

**Richman** (20**24**) Michelle Richman has a completed Master of Arts from the University of Wyoming. *the only way out is through: A trans tankie response to homonationalism* University of Wyoming; https://www.proquest.com/docview/3150988847?pq-origsite=gscholar&fromopenview=true&sourcetype=Dissertations%20&%20Theses 12-2-2024, Fuchs]

Put differently, **disentangling from homonationalism** **requires** not further accounts of the ~~paralyzing~~ halting effects of discourse, assignments of blame, or deconstruction of narratives and subjectivities, but **a theory** and practice—a strategy—**of trans/queer international relations.** So called “**queer IR**” is itself already an emerging field. According to Rahul Rao, “For many, queer international relations (IR) **entails investigating the ways in which rights claims in respect of sexual orientation and gender identity are articulated, contested, realized, and thwarted in international politics.**

## Afropessimism

### Border Reform

#### The 1AC’s attempt to reform border politics strategically ignores how immigration legislation is premised on anti-blackness-only leads to more racialized violence on the border.

Vilna Bashi 2004. (Vilna, Professor and Chair, Black and Latino Studies, Baruch College, City University of New York, Professor, Sociology Program, Graduate Center, City University of New York. Globalized anti-blackness: Transnationalizing Western immigration law, policy, and practice. Published in Ethnic and Racial Studies, July 2004.)

International migration scholarship acknowledges racism in Western nations’ immigration policies, but mainly in nation-specific writings that expound upon whiteness as the preferred category, or trace prejudices against groups both non-white and non-black (Kubat 1979; Solomos 1993; Boyko 1995; Ignatiev 1995; Salyer 1995; Bashi and McDaniel 1997; Clifford 1997; Paul 1997; Brodkin 1998; Lee 2002. Richmond 1994 and Bonilla-Silva 2000 are exceptions that offer a global perspective). Western preferences for ‘white’ immigrants construct ‘whites’’ position at the top of two intersecting hierarchical systems: one a racial system, and the other a hierarchy of nations that some refer to as the world system.1 Whiteness is not shaped in isolation, for the processes that construct the top construct a hierarchies’ bottom (Bashi 1998, Winant 2001). I focus on one group that has (arguably) hovered at the bottom of these systems for centuries, noting that disdain for black (and especially Caribbean) admittance characterized the migration policies of the English-speaking West, by examining antiblack Canadian, British, and American immigration policy. Here, I am less ‘proving’ anti-black intentionality than I am making a theoretical argument about the global nature of anti-blackness in Western immigration history,2 arguing that Western lawmakers’ denial of access to the privilege of immigration to phenotypically ‘black’ persons from ‘black’ nations functions as systemic and global anti-blackness.3 Several themes emerge in this portrait of transnationally anti-black immigration policy. One is a continuing reliance upon cultural and biological arguments in official statements declaring the unsuitability of Caribbean blacks to the demands of regular employment and cold climates. Another is the use of contract labour agreements and other forms of recruitment, temporary arrangements meant to ensure that black workers and warriors fulfilled immediate demands for labour, soldiers and seamen. Once the need was met, blacks were expected to return from whence they came, an expectation based on the certainty that black persons were inassimilable. Third, contradictory public policy that both has great disdain for black immigration yet also makes available opportunities to recruit temporary black labour establishes an ambivalence in immigration policy around blacks. This ambivalence, however, is tempered by fear of a permanent addition to the black population – a fear partially fuelled by the racial climate each nation sees in the others, and also the extent to which other nations successfully excluded blacks, or failed to do so. That is, governments monitored one another’s handling of the ‘black (immigration) question’. Fifth, over time, immigration policy has become less overtly racist in language, for Western nations now employ non-racial language to achieve similarly racialized ends.

### Cartels

#### Their cartel representations are racist constructions to justify military interventions—their “facts” are racialized fabrications

Carlsen 9 [03/09/09, Laura Carlsen, "Drug War Doublespeak," Americas Program Commentary, Washington, DC: Center for International Policy, http://dspace.africaportal.org/jspui/bitstream/123456789/26373/1/Drug%20War%20Doublespeak.pdf]

Through late February and early March, a blitzkrieg of declarations from U.S. government and military officials and pundits hit the media, claiming that Mexico was alternately at risk of being a failed state,1 on the verge of civil war, losing control of its territory, and posing a threat to U.S. national security.2 In the same breath, we’re told that President Calderon with the aid of the U.S. government is winning the war3 on drugs, significantly weakening organized crime, and restoring order and legality. None of these claims is true. Instead they are critical elements in waging the hypocritical drug war in Mexico. Drug-war doublespeak pervades and defines the U.S.- Mexico relationship today. The discourse aims not to win the war on drugs, but to assure funding and public support for the military model of combating illegal drug trafficking, despite the losses and overwhelming evidence that current strategies are not working. Sorting Reality from Hype Mexico, and particularly border cities and other key points along the drug routes, has a serious problem. In these places, violence characterizes daily life. But Mexico is not a failed state. It is a tragic example of the results of failed policies—on both sides of the border. Both governments want to obscure this simple fact. In the past, exaggerated risk assessments, amplified by the media and accompanied by dire warnings to the public, prepare the ground for military intervention. They usually pack hyperbole or outright lies, the most recent example being the “weapons of mass destruction” in Iraq. While military intervention in Mexico is not on the horizon, the recent hype has been accompanied by requests for military build-up on the border. Texas Governor Rick Perry jetted to Washington to ask for $135 million and 1,000 soldiers. Talk of sending more National Guard troops circulated, along with mentions of a border “surge.” The Texas state government announced a rapid-mobilization plan in case Mexico “collapsed,” replete with tanks and aircraft. After outgoing Homeland Security head Michael Chertoff spoke of a contingency plan for the border, the media wondered aloud whether incoming head Janet Napolitano would be tough enough. She responded by calling the situation a “top priority.” Secretary of Defense Robert Gates called the Mexican drug war “a serious problem.” He raised a maelstrom of protest in Mexico with the announcement that the disappearance of Mexico’s anti-Pentagon biases had cleared the way for tighter cooperation. The U.S. Embassy was forced to issue a press release declaring that the United States had no intention of sending troops into Mexico. Congress also leapt to respond to the rhetoric. Hearings have been called in both houses, including the Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee under Sen. Joe Lieberman (I-CT) who, according to news reports, will be looking for “potential implications for increased terrorist activity.” The committees will likely hear testimony primarily from persons who confirm the perceived threat in lurid and imprecise terms. The Mexican government has responded by lobbing counter-accusations at the United States. Calderon cites the U.S. role in gun-running, money-laundering, and demand for narcotics. The motivations behind the recent hype vary. Alarmist cries of a Mexican collapse help clinch the passage of measures to further militarize the southern border and obtain juicy contracts for private defense and security firms. Local politicians are finding they can be a cash cow for federal aid. The flurry of panic about the spillover of violence from Mexico also arises just as Congress considers the latest installment of the Merida Initiative, now tucked inside the omnibus spending bill. The Merida Initiative, designed by the Bush administration, is the $1.4 billion vehicle for bolstering the war on drugs launched by Mexican President Felipe Calderon in 2006. It provides military-to-military aid for the domestic battles being waged by some 40,000 Mexican Army troops, and imposes U.S. training in policing, forensics, penal, and judicial practices. Deconstructing Drug War Doublespeak Drug war doublespeak enables the architects of the drug war to justify the military responses it promotes, despite poor or counterproductive results, and serves to spin failure as success. The language of exaggerated threats infantilizes society with fear as it clears the way for militaristic, patriarchal measures. Now that the hype has taken control of the media agenda and wiggled its way into the public’s perceptions, it’s important to determine the true dimensions and nature of the problem by deconstructing drug war doublespeak. First, the “facts” used to prove the thesis of Mexico as a failed state or national security threat are mostly wrong. Here are a few examples: • “Mexico had more violent deaths than Iraq4 in 2008.” The Iraq Body Count5 calculates the 2008 civilian death total at between 8,315 and 9,028. The Mexican government puts the Mexico tally for the same year at 6,290, and that figure includes the deaths of soldiers and police excluded from the Iraqi count. • “70% of Mexicans are afraid to go outside for fear of crime.” This statistic has been cited without a source. It’s ridiculous. In a recent poll6 Mexicans nationwide named the economic situation over crime as the biggest problem in the country by a margin of two to one. I live in Mexico City with my family and our activities are virtually unaffected. • “The Mexican government has lost control over broad swathes of the country.” No facts are offered to back this up. There are some villages and neighborhoods where crime gangs collect payments from local business and provide services, but that does not mean there is no presence of the State and this affects a relatively small proportion of the country. Second, the facts used to prove that Mexican violence is “spilling over”—the phrase du jour—into the United States, when provided at all, are even more specious. • Phoenix now ranks second in the world7 in kidnappings for ransom at 366, behind Mexico City at 6,000. We’re supposed to assume that this is a per capita ranking but are not told where the ranking comes from, how it is done, or by whom. Sloppy journalism is important to propagating doublespeak. Beyond the lack of sources for the ranking or methodology, the inaccuracy of this claim lies in what is left unsaid. “Kidnap for ransom” conjures images of the abduction of wealthy denizens of society. Such is not the case. According to Claudine LoMonaco8 who covers the beat for Arizona Public Media, the vast majority of kidnappings are of undocumented workers by their own smugglers, in an attempt to extort more money from their families. That’s certainly a problem, and it’s certainly kidnapping. But it is a very different problem than the spillover of Mexican drug violence as it’s being portrayed. Here, another prohibitionist policy, this time one that prohibits human beings, has created an organized crime industry that insatiably feeds even on its own goods—the migrants themselves. The double bind of the victims is perhaps the most poignant example of perverse policy results in modern times. The 6,000 kidnapping figure9 for Mexico City has equally murky origins. The figure, from the Citizens’ Institute for Crime Studies, derives from taking the number of reported violent crimes, multiplying by nearly 10 to reflect the supposed rate of under-reporting, and multiplying by .05% to sort out kidnappings form the rest of the crimes. It’s a guesstimate, not a count. Moreover, the statistic includes thousands of cases of a common crime we don’t ordinarily think of as kidnapping. This is the “express kidnapping,” 2-3 hour abductions for the purpose of withdrawing money from cash machines. So what we really have in this number that has been picked up widely in the U.S. press and trumpeted as proof of Mexico’s descent into lawlessness, is a rough calculation, padded with the far more common robbery charge. In deconstructing drug war doublespeak, it’s important to always beware of statistics. Another common tactic in the press stories that led Sen. John McCain and others to call for hearings and make dire statements is to cite cases of gruesome violence— on the Mexican side.10 The stories then tag on declarations that this kind of violence could seep over the border, with no evidence that it has. Contradictory facts are sometimes mentioned, but take a back seat to the hype, which is considered the real news. For example, in a NYT article11 titled “Wave of Drug Violence is Creeping into Arizona from Mexico, Officials Say,” near the end of the article we are informed that homicide and violent crime in Arizona’s border Maricopa County has decreased over the past years. A few of the articles on El Paso’s panic attack over spillover also managed to mention that the city has one of the lowest homicide rates in the country, but buried the fact in a barrage of alarmist statements. Other evidence used to cite spillover from Mexican drug cartels defies logic. Operation Xcellerator—a sting operation in the United States that reportedly led to the arrest of over 700 individuals associated with the Sinaloa drug cartel—is spun as evidence of the danger from Mexico when it is a criminal network in the United States, operated by U.S. citizens, and dealing to U.S. buyers. Of course it has links to foreign supply, but that does not change the transnational— not Mexican—nature of the threat. When questioned following his testimony before the House Committee on Border and International Affairs Feb. 23, Homeland Security Director Steve McCraw stated that, “Yes, absolutely it (spillover violence) has occurred; there’s no question about it.” But the indicators of spillover discussed at the hearing in the absence of rising crime included U.S. citizens treated for injuries sustained in Juarez, asylum seekers, and threats against U.S. citizens. None constituted real Mexican crime infiltration of U.S. society. These claims and others like them, although unsubstantiated, accumulate into a critical mass to push a public consensus on implementing dangerous and delusional policies—this time not in far-off Iraq but on our doorstep. Like the model it mimics—the Bush war on terror—the drug war in Mexico is being mounted on the back of hype, half-truths, omissions, and outright falsehoods.

### I-Law

#### Internationalization of U.S. law spurs interventions and coopts international bodies causing mass war and suffering

Martinot, lecturer at San Francisco State University in the Center for Interdisciplinary Programs, 03 [Steve, “The Cultural Roots of Interventionism in the US,” Social Justice Vol. 30, No. 1 (2003), pp. 19-20, OG]

"Internationalization" of U.S. law was extended further by the 1991 bombing of Iraq, and later by the 1999 bombing of Yugoslavia. In those cases, the person named criminal had not violated U.S. law. Nevertheless, the U.S. government chose to proclaim a violation. Saddam Hussein was charged with aggression against Kuwait, though the reality of what had transpired between the two countries was left unspoken.(FN8) Slobodan Milosevich was charged with human rights violations in his own country, though NATO's involvement in Serbian internal affairs was similarly swept out of sight.(FN9) The two interventions had similar goals: to force Iraq out of Kuwait and to force Serbia out of Kosovo. Both were manifested through inappropriate international bodies. In the first case, a U.N. peacekeeping organization was used to make war; in the second, NATO used an international treaty organization to resolve an internal matter in a non-signatory sovereign nation. The first occurred in total rejection of Iraq's willingness to negotiate its withdrawal from Kuwait (it had, in fact, negotiated its invasion of Kuwait with the U.S.); the second was promulgated through ultimatums designed to nullify Serbian sovereignty (that is, that Serbia negotiate the erasure of its existence as a negotiant).(FN10) Ultimately, Kuwait and Kosovo were seized and occupied militarily by the U.S. (or NATO) after enormously destructive technological assaults, as if that had been the goal all along. In effect, international bodies designed to preserve sovereignty and oversee international peace were transformed into war councils against national sovereignty, in violation of the United Nations Charter (Articles 2, 33, and 42). Coopted as proxies for U.S. policy, they were, in effect, "nationalized" by the U.S. for its own international purposes. Thus, their transformation is consistent with the earlier "precedent" of conflating U.S. and international law with respect to Panama. The idea of U.S. "nationalization" of international law implies the subordination of international law to U.S. policy.(FN11) The attack sequence (Panama, Iraq, Yugoslavia), in marking the unilateral usurpation of international law as an extension of U.S. jurisdiction to the international level, and subsuming it to U.S. policy, constitutes a massive rejection of respect for sovereignty or the possibility of "due process" with respect to sovereign nations. Rather, it substitutes the capabilities of power for the rule of law implied in D'Amato's theoretics, namely, that might makes right. In the process, the concept of war has been transformed, reflecting this transformation of international relations. It has become something other than war. Aerial bombing from vast distances of nations like Afghanistan or Yugoslavia, which are incapable of carrying on an air war, cannot be considered a war. When only one side does any shooting, it becomes something else, something beyond war. Despite having no real opposition, the bombing was carried out to full destructiveness. The conventional bomb ordnance dropped on Iraq in 1991 was the equivalent of six Hiroshima-sized A-bombs. Among the first targets were electric power stations, desalinization plants, and sewage treatment plants; that is, civilian infrastructure along with military targets (Clark, 1992). This, too, is not war; it is a form of "clearing the land"--Guernica on a national scale. Finally, even the concept of "costs" was inverted. The U.S. transformed itself from a creditor nation to the world's largest debtor nation during the Reagan years. Military action is infinitely more expensive than diplomacy or negotiations, both in a monetary sense, and in the lives and psychic damage to all concerned. Yet the massive violence, the displacement of people, the terrible wounds to bodies and social space wrought by bombing, was somehow preferable, as if conspicuous extravagance would offset the cost rather than augment it. In sum, the bombing itself appears to have been one of the real motivations for the assault. A massive ethical inversion lurks here in the disparity between a real war and wanton destruction.

### Immigration Reform

#### The trope of the immigrant worker relies on a notion of productivity that is parasitic on the slave as disposable alterity and is only articulateble through the paradigm of anti-blackness

Nopper 2011 (Tamara, Assistant Professor at The University of Pennsylvania, “The Wages of Non-Blackness: Contemporary Immigrant Rights and Discourses of Character, Productivity, and Value”, InTensions Journal Issue 5 (Fall/Winter)

When articulating the psychological wage of whiteness, Du Bois provided a lengthier description than that given at the beginning of this article. Speaking of the white laborer, he posited: They were given public deference and titles of courtesy because they were white. They were admitted freely with all classes of white people to public functions, public parks, and the best schools. The police were drawn from their ranks, and the courts, dependent upon their votes, treated them with such leniency as to encourage lawlessness. Their vote selected public officials, and while this had small effect upon the economic situation, it had great effect upon their personal treatment and the deference shown them…The newspapers specialized on news that flattered the poor whites and almost utterly ignored the Negro except in crime and ridicule. (700-1) Du Bois’ characterization of a “public and psychological wage” (700) may read as incompatible with the lived experiences of most NBPOC immigrants living and working in the United States, and understandably so given the virulent racism, white supremacy, structural and interpersonal violence, and surveillance that immigrants of color experience (Brotherton and Kretsedemas). Thus, the wage that white laborers accrued in Du Bois’s account may not be easily recognizable for measuring the public and psychological compensation of post-WWII immigrants of color, particularly those working as low-wage earners. But one does not have to experience the exact same treatment as Whites to have access to the psychological wage of whiteness. One needs simply to have access to the subject category of worker, access to which requires a particular racial status. As Frank Wilderson reminds us, “work is a white category” (238). The worker, while exploited and demeaned, categorically exists within the logic of civil society. The slave, embodied in the Black, however, cannot be incorporated into the logic of civil society but rather exists as an antagonism and therefore “cannot be satisfied through a transfer of ownership/organisation of existing rubrics” (231). Whereas the “worker calls into question the legitimacy of productive practices, the slave calls into question the legitimacy of productivity itself” (231). Additionally, the grievance of the worker, i.e., exploitation, may be addressed through the mechanisms of civil society but the slave experiences a suffering, involving accumulation and death, which cannot be relieved through the same means as the worker (234). Of course, Wilderson notes, this does not mean that Black people don’t work: The fact that millions upon millions of black people work misses the point. The point is we were never meant to be workers; in other words, capital/white supremacy’s dream did not envision us as being incorporated or incorporative. From the very beginning, we were meant to be accumulated and die. Work (i.e. the French shipbuilding industry and bourgeois civil society which finally extended its progressive hegemony to workers and peasants to topple the aristocracy) was what grew up all around us—20 to 60 million seeds planted at the bottom of the Atlantic, 5 million seeds planted in Dixie…Today, at the end of the twentieth century, we are still not meant to be workers. We are meant to be warehoused and die. (238) The difference between the worker and the slave or whiteness/nonBlackness and Blackness is not simply a matter of distinctive formations. Rather, it is an issue of interrelation; it is the civil death of Blacks that girds notions of work—as well as character, productivity, and value. Or as Wilderson puts it, “where whiteness is concerned, work registers as a constituent element. And the black body must be processed through a kind of civil death for this constituent element of whiteness to gain coherence” (238). Whereas poorly paid immigrant workers of color experience a greater degree of vulnerability, exploitation, surveillance, and nativism than that of the white worker, the former’s presumed character, productivity, and value is amplified when their “work” or “willingness to work” is compared to African Americans. In other words, the recognition of immigrant labor as productive is articulated through anti-Black rhetoric and practice. As I have shown, such positive albeit at times condescending and disingenuous characterization of immigrants unites capitalists, managers, and immigrant rights’ advocates in a shared discourse that explicitly or implicitly casts immigrants as more akin to Whites and in turn, “not (like) Black(s).” With the addition of liberal and progressive people of color, such an alliance is reminiscent of what Du Bois posited as an ideology “uniting the planter and the poor white” (700). This is precisely why I consider the moral claims regarding character, value, and productivity that are invoked about—as well as by—NBPOC and immigrants as a wage of non-Blackness. If Asian and Latino immigrants, particularly those without documentation, have not yet achieved whiteness, or at least do not have the exact same material, political, and social experiences as that of the white laborer Du Bois described, they nevertheless are associated with character, productivity, and value that becomes amplified in relationship to the non-Black world’s perceptions and actual treatment of African Americans. Overall, those committed to social justice have a formidable task: articulating the value and rights of the immigrant without relying on prowhite, anti-Black, and pro-capitalist tropes. Such a demand for an ethical discourse of immigrant rights is most likely impossible within popular frameworks of work, productivity, and value as detailed here. Indeed, such discourses perhaps need to be totally taken off of the table as they can, to quote Hartman again, only become legible to the world through the expression of a “racial calculus and a political arithmetic that were entrenched centuries ago” (Hartman 6)

#### Their attempt to confront anti-immigration rhetoric fails to take into account the underlying anti-black sentiment that causes violence related to immigration in the first place.

Woods 2008(Tryon, Assistant Prof of Sociology, Anthropology, and Crime & Justice Studies at the University of Massachusetts, Dartmouth. The Plantation Society, circa 2008: Discussing Immigration through the Lens of Criminology. The Radical Teacher, No. 84, TEACHING AND IMMIGRATION (Spring 2009), pp. 31-41)

To be a fraudulent person, on the other hand, is to be caught impersonating a human being. There is only one such position in the anti-black world and it belongs to the black. As DuBois once put it, blacks are constructed not as people with problems, but rather as "a problem people."20 Slave codes in the southern United States demanded that slaves receive clothing, food, and lodging sufficient to their basic needs. Slaves, although dead to civil rights and responsibilities-social death-are reduced to nothing but the physical body, unprotected against mutilation or torture.21 The functioning of social death is, again, premised on the context itself as anti-black. The post-Emancipation era of the Black Codes, convict leasing, and lynching ensured that blackness meant social death not by virtue of enslavement, but instead as a product of criminality and imprisonment. Blackness remains to this day the essential marker of criminality and deviance.22 Black existence and its signifier "criminal," then, serve a central metaphori cal and structural purpose for a white supremacist bourgeois society. In the con temporary debates on immigration, it provides the menacing content for the construct "criminal" that gives the anti immigrant position its purchase in main stream society. To put it differently, we as educators cannot effectively undo the racism of anti-immigrant discourse with out also challenging the anti-blackness of crime and punishment. In concrete terms, moreover, we need to recall the destruction of the black community base, the deindustrialization of the political economy, dismantling of the welfare state, and the installment of the prison industrial complex. These processes collectively produced a black population available on a massive scale for social transfer to the living death of prison cages. These dislocations and debasements were the conditions of possibility for the political economy that draws immigrants to this country, while at the same time, the institutionalization of the (vanquished) black liberation movement serves as the pre requisite for the very struggles against the exploitation of immigrant labor that have, rightfully, gained momentum today.23 In other words, there would be no immigrant labor to speak of if the black libera tion movement had not been systematically destroyed, and, ironically, that very same social movement history would not otherwise be available to other oppressed groups to learn and benefit from. Needless to say, I have not been at all successful in realizing this kind of analysis with my students. In much of its practice, criminology is an exercise in bad faith in that it encourages students to flee a displeasing truth for a more com forting lie. The criminological discourse on immigration is an expression of bad faith as well. My students live this lie in their own ways. Although they know that "crime" is far more complex and messy than a simple case of immorality, the fact that the United States has the largest prison population in the world, both in total numbers and per capita, eighty per cent of whom are people of color, and that Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) holds some 23,000 people in immi gration jails on a given day and about 200,000 annually, does not, in any sincere way, trouble them much.24 At some level in their consciousness, perhaps they know that people (immigrant and non-immi grant alike) do not have what they need to survive in this society, and that in their capacities as law enforcers, they are not making things better for these millions of people. These are tough ethical problems for young people emerging from a context in which their futures are mortgaged ever more by the racial state's commitment to the needs of capital.

### International Relations

#### The 1AC is enmeshed in an approach to IR premised on a denial of the *longue durée* racial enslavement – Black captivity is the historical negative corollary of humanist sovereignty as an ontological position – this sovereign figure weaponizes temporality to forge a linear developmental timeline that indexes the value of international entities based on their modernization as a liberal nation-state – such entities are rendered coherent through the repetitious violent expulsion of Black people from humanity, time, and social existence

Agathangelou and Killian 16 (Anna M Agathangelou, Associate Professor of Political Science at York University, PhD in Political Science from the Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs, Kyle D Killian, PhD, family therapist on faculty at the Marriage and Family Therapy Program at Capella University, 2016, “International relations as a vulnerable space: A conversation with Fanon and Hartman about temporality and violence” in *Time, Temporality and Violence in International Relations: (De)fatalizing the Present, Forging Radical Alternatives*, pp 26-30, modified) gz

The division of intellectual labor among the forefathers of modern reason (Rousseau, Kant, Hegel, Marx, Foucault) allows punctuations of linearity, hierarchizations, and divisions of past, present, and future. At the same time, it permits dichotomized distinctions between time and space, masculine and feminine, mind and body to be mapped onto the anarchy/sovereign/interstate structure. These produced binaries exist as analogical correlates of time/timelessness, material/transcendental, mind/body, state of nature/sovereign, and security/insecurity, ultimately associating time and mind with order, health, and purity and associating timelessness with disorder, disease, and impurity. The projection of the sovereign’s time imaginary onto a territory and onto the territory of its ‘bodies’ produces intersecting borders dividing mind from body, modernity from non-modernity, and order from disorder. When time is a linear movement from segmented and bounded ‘past’ into ‘present’ and on to the ‘future’ and vice versa, a progressive or developmental model ‘convert[s] historically specific regimes of asymmetrical power into seemingly ordinary bodily tempos and routines, which in turn organize the value and meaning of time’ (Freeman 2007: 3). To problematize this linear understanding of time is to acknowledge that within the lost moments of official history, slavery time generates a discontinuous history best told through the entanglements of multiple ‘time[s] out of joint,’ ‘heterogeit[ies that] can be felt in the bones, as a kind of skeletal dislocation.’ Of course, in ‘this metaphor, time has, indeed is, a body’ (Freeman 2007: 1).

In its newer iterations, IR has systematically evaded grappling with slavery except for a few notable postcolonial theorists (Agathangelou 2009, 2001; Blaney and Inayatullah 2010; Du Bois 1999; Fanon 1967; Persuad and Walker 2001; Shilliam 2004, 2015; Vitalis 2010). Several scholars in other disciplines have written on the ‘Middle Passage’ as a form through which we can understand capitalism. Some work in the humanities argues the slave trade still haunts the market logic of the twentieth century; Baucom says temporality accumulates rather than recedes, and the ‘Middle Passage’ represents a passage into modernity (2005: 313). Thus, the slave ship, with all its overtones of illness, bodily corruption, and violence, is originary. A *lieu de mémoire*, it is the birthplace of a modern subjectivity at the junction of slavery and finance capital:

[It] needed not only a standard set of exchange mechanisms, but a standard imaginary, a standard grammar of trust, a standard ‘habit’ of crediting the ‘real’ existence of abstract values, such as credit, with abstract ‘slaves’ functioning as ‘a standard measure’ through which to express the value of the range of commodifies and currencies available for exchange.

(ibid: 89-90)

He connects this to the Zong case, when the ship’s captain murdered African captives by throwing them into the sea so as to translate their bodies and their potential for labor via insurance into currency and evacuated them of their singular characteristics by turning them into abstract (and universal) units of exchange. This facet makes it a ‘truth event,’ identifying ‘not a marginal or local abnormality within the system but the global abnormality of the system itself’ (ibid: 118-22). Baucom’s reading places the historian as a melanchoic witness to history’s aggrieved. History, he says, is not a ‘property of the past but the property the present inherits as its structuring material and the property (both affective and instrumental) the past holds in the present’ (ibid: 330).

The body politics and power relations made possible by working with time, then, link temporality and raciality, temporality and sexuality. As categories, raciality and sexuality are more complex when we think them from the vantage of the slave and slavery, especially the flesh of the enslaved woman. Spillers tells us:

I would make a distinction . . . between ‘body’ and ‘flesh’ and impose that distinction as the central one between captive and liberated subject positions. In that sense, before the ‘body’ there is the ‘flesh,’ that zero degree of social conceptualization that does not escape concealment under the brush of discourse, or the reflexes of iconography . . . If we think of the ‘flesh’ as a primary narrative, then we mean its seared, divided, ripped-apartness, riveted to the ship’s hole, fallen, or ‘escaped’ overboard.

(1987: 66)

Making these distinctions depends on the gratuitous violence upon the slave, the object to whom anything anytime can be done and whose life can be squandered. The timely erection of this New World Order, with its human sequence written in blood, represents for its African and Indigenous peoples a scene of *actual* mutilation, dismemberment, and exile. The enslavement *marks* a theft of the body and land and the willfully violent *severing of the captive body from its motive will* and its active desire, all the while generating fortunes for the captor. This gratuitous intimacy may take the form of a capture of a body, a source of irresistible, destructive sensuality, its translation into potential pornotroping, a thing, and/or property, as attempts to ‘emplot the slave in a narrative’ (Hartman and Wilderson 2003: 184) or to incorporate slaves as sovereign subjects within official nationalist discourses (Spillers 1987: 66-69) may obliterate them.

This distinction between body and flesh (the captive body) is significant for knowledge/power and has a temporal politics in the form of evolutionary notions of flesh, such as throwbacks or ‘remnants,’ with (white) sexuality’s development following a linear trajectory of heterosexual reproduction (Freeman 2007). What precipitates the possibility of a coherent story, Wilderson tells us, following Hartman, is the act of murder and enslavement. The only means of entry into civil society, history, and temporality are entitlements, sovereignty, and immigration or ‘narratives of arrival’ (Wilderson 2003: 236). However, within these narratives the ‘black American subject does not generate historical categories of Entitlement, Sovereignty, and/or Immigration for the record,’ as if this ‘flesh’ constituted through gratuitous violence is ‘off the record’ (Hartman 1997: 24; Wilderson 2003: 236). So how do we write those ‘impossibilities to illuminate those practices that speak to the limits of most available narratives to explain the position of the enslaved’ (Hartman and Wilderson 2003: 184)?

There is, in other words, a temporal gap in the production of a narrative that explains how discourses always articulate the slave as ‘lagging’ humanity, unable to be co-constituted even with work (Wilderson 2003) or integrated into civil society as a sovereign subject or sovereign laborer. These narrations bind labor in a way that keeps the afterlives of slavery (Hartman 1997) animated. How the black body is narrated has implications for the manner in which temporality becomes a dividing barometer of raciality: ‘From the very beginning, we were meant to be accumulated and die’ (Wilderson 2003: 238). The theoretical slippages from singular conditions to particularities or identities are one and the same, but Wilderson ruptures them, arguing beginnings in narratives do not entail the same kinds of ends for the slave (Wilderson 2010, 2003).

The ‘time of slavery,’ that is, ‘the relation between the past and the present, the horizon of loss, the extant legacy of slavery, the antinomies of redemption (a salvational principle that will help us overcome the injury of slavery and the long history of defeat) and irreparability’ (Hartman 1997: 759), has an afterlife. In assembling and narrating the ‘primal scene’ (Farley 2005: 54), the master inflicts violence on this almost-gone subject, turning it into flesh by appropriating it and transfiguring it into a ‘fiction of power’ (Hartman and Wilderson 2003: 184). In ‘narrat[ing] a certain impossibility,’ Hartman speaks to the ‘limits of most available narratives’ (ibid: 184). It is important that the writing of history not sneak in a liberal sequential registering of more slave entities that could potentially become integrated into a raciality matrix. By bringing the position of the unthought into ‘view without making it a locus of positive value,’ ‘without trying to fill in the void’ (ibid: 185), Hartman makes her own work, her own cultural history/literary genre, experiential rather than teleological, simultaneously challenging familiar stories and historical teleological accounts that presume slavery is a memory.

Devices such as focalizing the ‘unthought’ violences toward the making of slaves, the emphasis on the fifteenth century’s ongoing effect on the present, and graphic descriptions of the brutality on the ships from Africa to the Americas and Europe are pivotal in making the past present. A description of how the positionality of black and white women was understood and approached differently during the slave trade has implications for how their positionalities are read today, including their rights and possibilities of freedom. Certain technologies of governance consolidated around this time included the evolution of juridical, philosophical, and narrative structures, without taking into account the slave trade. Take the notion of consent, philosophically articulated as universal but apparently disarticulated by blackness. More specifically, descriptions of the lives of slave women in the United States point to how female slaves as fungible objects differed ontologically from white women who might be house servants – subordinated but with the possibility of being free:

Being forced to submit to the will of the master in all things defines the predicament of slavery. The opportunity for nonconsent [in this case, sex] is required to establish consent, for consent is meaningless if refusal is not an option . . . Consent is unseemly in a context in which the very notion of subjectivity is predicated upon the negation of will.

(Hartman 1997: 111)

Slavery’s temporality does not register in many of our accounts of juridical and international frameworks. Yet the ontological destruction of the body is achieved by violence, while value is formed to effect a complete disavowal of the body’s existence. The key to grasping the originary (violent and occluded) moment of the transmutation of flesh into some commodity and value into subjectivity is found in the reconciliation of the binarism that produces and is produced by value.

Discussing slavery is important for recognizing the procedural modalities functioning within the ontological disposition of modernity as it relates to blackness: the primacy of carnality and the denial of the flesh structurally. This distinction is nuanced and elusive, but it is important to understanding liberalism as a set of politico-economic discourses that mediate a kind of sovereignty, as well as an experiential protocol that, through its specified *a priori* version of sovereignty, animates and translates property relations. ‘Like women,’ writes McClintock, ‘Africans (both men and women) are figured not as historic agents but as frames for the commodity, valued for their exhibition alone’ (1994: 215). To this, she adds: ‘Value, beside itself, finds itself if only for a moment in the place of the Other, who or which is always without value’ (1994: 216). Value, then, as both form and force enters the world accompanied by its fungible commodity, but this commodity is effaced by violences of value, thereby suggesting ‘value is violence’ and ‘value is violence disguised or dis-figured’ (Barrett 1999: 219; also Marx 1965).

The ‘commodification of humanity’ was ‘grotesquely revealed’ in the colonials’ attempts to define the economic exchanges and ritual beliefs of other cultures as ‘irrational’ and without time, disavowing ‘them as legitimate systems’ (McClintock 1994: 228). The ‘systematic undervaluation’ of African systems ‘with respect to merchant capitalism and market values in the European metropolis’ (ibid: 231) obtained a kind of violence not easily framed by the knowledge systems of Enlightenment. Farley says:

The zero hour of exploitation, that moment, the moment of capture, was the moment we were marked as Black. Thus classified, marked, as Black, we became a class, white-overblack. That moment, the moment of white-over-black, is the moment in which we were constituted as a race.

(Farley 2005: 52)

This moment proffers the ‘dual existence of the slave as person and property’ (ibid: 52), when submission is required of the slave, not just to the will of ~~his or her~~ [their] master but to all white persons. At this time, the penal codes of the slave-holding states weighed much more heavily on slaves than on whites. The enslaved, captive body had no rights, no humanity, not only before the law but also within civic existence.

Today, the extent to which the racially marked body was formerly given no means of redress in civil society has been forgotten, as has the extent to which ownership was extended to every white person. Yet the Middle Passage represents the primal ‘scene that became these United States . . . Without the colorline there is no market. The market requires ownership and this ownership is an ownerships of people that is displaced onto an ownership of things . . . The Black is capital’s faculty of imagination’ (Farley: 58-59). Similarly, Hartman notes the submission of the slave to all whites, ‘prefigured’ an exacting submission that extended to ‘bloodshed and murder’ and ‘furnish[ed] a pretext’ and an inducement to ‘patiently endure every species of personal injury, which a white person, however brutal or ferocious his disposition . . . may choose to offer’ (Hartman 1997: 24).

From the vantage of the temporal co-theorization of the continuity of slavery and black ‘flesh’ as producing social value rather than its resolution, Hartman says ‘if the past is another country,’ she is part of it: ‘I, too, live in the time of slavery, by which I mean I am living in the future created by it. It is the ongoing crisis of citizenship . . . If the ghost of slavery still haunts our present, it is because we are still looking for an exit from the prison’ (1997: 133). For some, slavery is an event of the past, especially those who punctuate a linear progressive developmental unfolding of events, but Hartman insists slavery’s afterlives are present in all our governance approaches and structures.

# Counterplan Ground

## Actor CPs

### Other Country CP

#### There’s counterplan ground based on other countries, like Canada, engaging Latin America instead of the United States

CBoC 4-23-25 [Conference Board of Canada, “Middle power thinking: How Canada needs to engage with the world”, <https://www.conferenceboard.ca/insights/how-canada-needs-to-engage-with-the-world/>]

Global relationships are in upheaval as the United States is now engaging in coercive diplomacy with former allies. In short, the US is directly using its economic and military power to force changes in the behaviour of others. Few countries face the implications of this change more acutely than Canada, but we are not alone in the world. The U.S.’s new foreign policy means Canada must expand our relationships with other countries and seek new ways to engage with the world.

For much of our history, Canada has been deeply connected with the global superpower of the day, from our birth as country up until the early 20th century it was initially the United Kingdom, and then subsequently the United States since then. That dynamic is set to change. While geography dictates that our relationship with the U.S. will always be important, Canada must embrace its role as a global middle power to forge new opportunities.

Canada has a lot to offer as a partner and can demand a lot back. A partial list of our assets includes:

We are the world’s 10th largest economy and are growing faster than many other advanced economies.

We have immense natural resource wealth, including the world’s third largest oil reserves, major agricultural capacity, large reserves of many minerals, vast forests, and significant water resources.

We have significant energy potential beyond oil and gas, including one of the cleanest electricity grids in the world.

We have a strong and internationally growing services sector, with particular strengths in financial and information services.

We are among the most educated countries and are highly attractive for skilled immigrants.

In short, Canada is a country that most countries should be happy to be friends with: A highly educated, self-sufficient, democratic middle power with an enviable abundance of natural resources and access to three oceans.

Understanding these strengths is critical in developing a new “elbows up” foreign policy. We need to be laser focused on addressing our own interests as we engage with the world. Partners should be nourished based on three criteria:

Building economic resilience through diversified, reliable and like-minded trading and investment partners.

Maintaining security through building our military capacity and alliances.

Addressing domestic needs through reliable imports.

Canada must maintain a balance between these three needs. Not all partners need to meet all three criteria, but those who meet none should be deprioritized. This will be a major shift, as the U.S. has historically been the major partner for all three of these needs. No country can reliably do that today, so instead we must build a web of new and expanded relationships. To do this, Canada will ultimately need to join, or lead, a group of middle powers centered in Europe and extending into Asia.

There are four main categories of partners that Canada needs to strengthen relationships:

The first are developed democracies, like the U.K., Europe, Japan and South Korea where security relationships are established and where economic opportunities exist.

The second are emerging countries, in Asia, Africa and Latin America. In these cases, economic opportunities are clear, but security co-operation is likely to be more limited.

The third are China and India, which are large and growing economies, with strong trade opportunities but a challenging security and diplomatic environment.

And the last is the United States, with which we will always feel a gravitational pull.

This report is part of our Canada in a Changing World series. In upcoming research we will delve into different issues about how Canada can adapt to a changing world. Here we provide a summary of our current relationship with key countries and regions, and how our relationships can evolve to help meet our needs.

Developed democracies: We have lots of opportunities with our traditional allies

European Union

The European Union is well positioned to play a much larger role in Canada’s economic and foreign policy moving forward. Canada shares a long-standing economic and defense relationship, we have a free trade agreement in place, and ideologically we are well aligned, as demonstrated by measures of geopolitical distance¹ and democratic freedoms.²

There is lots of room for the relationship to grow as both Canada and the E.U. recognize the severity of the crisis. Europe is quickly increasing defense spending and sees Canada as a possible partner in the endeavor. While procurement is currently limited to European nations, Canada has been signalled as a preferred partner who could be part of the rearmament program.³ This could allow Canada to engage with Europe’s industrial-military complex in new ways and could boost our own military production capabilities. Things are moving quickly, with Canada already re-opening discussions around the next generation fighter program and being asked by Norway and Germany to join their submarine program. Given the need for Canada to build its own military capacity, look for new export opportunities, and re-enforce the existing defense relationship, Canada should do everything it can to take part in the rebuilding of Europe’s militaries.

As highlighted in our trade partner series⁴ , Canada and the E.U. make for natural trade partners. Europe has a shortage of resources, something Canada has in abundance. Meanwhile, Europe is a leader in manufacturing machinery, something Canada mostly buys from the U.S. The Canada-European Union Comprehensive Economic and Trade agreement (CETA) is a starting point to boost trade, but the relationship can be expanded.

Canada, for its part, could position itself as a major source for European energy. Environmental concerns have long held back the relationship, given Canada’s high emissions to GDP ratio, but several European leaders have specifically asked Canada to increase its LNG exports to Europe. Canada could try to position itself as a reliable energy partner and seek exemptions from Europe’s carbon border adjustment policy in exchange for building incentives for European investment into Canada’s energy sector, as well and Atlantic-oriented infrastructure to get it to market.

United Kingdom

Canada has a long-standing relationship with the United Kingdom (U.K.), as evidenced by the Monarch continuing to be our head of state. Prime Minister Carney made his first foreign visit to London, highlighting the importance of the relationship going forward. Prime Minister Starmer of the U.K., meanwhile, hosted a “coalition of the willing” meeting on Ukraine, in which Canada was the only non-European country attending.

Both countries have a strong history of security alignment, including NATO membership and intelligence sharing through the “five eyes” agreement, but there is room to grow. The U.K. is boosting its defense spending to 2.5 per cent of GDP by 2027. Canada, for its part, provides a potential market for the U.K defense companies. Currently, only 0.3 per cent of Canada’s military equipment imports come from the U.K, but as Canada increases its military spending, there is opportunity to deepen this relationship.

Despite the diplomatic and military relationship, the trading relationship is small. The U.K. is Canada’s fifth largest trading partner, accounting for only 3.6 per cent of exports and 1.3 per cent of imports. Gold makes up the bulk of exports, though export growth over the past decade has also included mineral fuels, aerospace products, agricultural products and uranium. Canada, meanwhile, imports mostly advanced machinery and pharmaceutical products from the U.K. The two countries have a trade agreement that is an extension of CETA that makes trade mostly free outside of agricultural products. Room for growth exists for Canadian resource exports, while Canada could import more transportation equipment parts (both for aircraft and motor vehicles) and medicine.

Overall, the U.K. has been and will continue to be a reliable partner for Canada. The two countries could play a bigger role globally if both increase the size of their military, and given alignment on most issues, could present a unified front on global issues. For now, the relationship needs to be nourished by seeking trade, investment, diplomatic and military alignment across the frameworks that are already in place.

Asia Pacific

Canada maintains a strong relationship with many countries in the Asia-Pacific region. Countries with the strongest opportunities to expand trading and security relationships are the large, developed democracies, namely Japan, South Korea, Australia, and New Zealand. Canada has a free trade agreement in place with all of these countries, either through the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CTPP), or bilaterally in the case of South Korea.

There’s more room to grow the relationship in light of threats the Asia-Pacific faces with China. Canada has defense arrangements with all four countries and maintains close collaboration with Australia and New Zealand through the Five Eyes partnership. Canada could look to procure more military goods from the four countries, as it did with the radar system recently purchased from Australia.⁵ South Korea and Japan have both been ramping up their production of military equipment of late⁶ , and Canada could help build economies of scale by joining in on purchasing some of these capabilities.

Beyond that, more trade opportunities exist, as the four are only modest trading partners with Canada, despite their large economies. The opportunities for trade are more obvious for South Korea and Japan, who typically produce things we need (high tech product and machinery) and import things we produce (natural resources). Both countries could also further invest in Canada, with Japanese investments into Canada’s automotive industries potentially offering it access to Canadian consumers.

Other developed democracies

Outside of the European Union, the United Kingdom and the large Asian and Oceanic democracies, there are other smaller partners that Canada could also work with. Notably, European countries such as Norway, Iceland and Switzerland are all among the richest countries in the world, who are bigger players in foreign direct investment than their size would suggest. In the case of Norway, especially, the countries could find common ground in arctic security and combine funding for the purchase of arctic-oriented defense equipment. Meanwhile, high wealth levels in Switzerland and Iceland could provide export opportunities for Canadian-made luxury goods and through tourism promotion.

Emerging markets: Driving export diversification for the future

Canada has long built trading relationships with emerging markets. Through the CTPP, Canada has a free trade agreement with large growing economies like Chile, Peru, Vietnam and Malaysia. These trade agreements are on top of others Canada shares with countries in Latin America, such as Honduras, Panama, Columbia and Costa Rica.

The value of these trade agreements is clear for improving bilateral trade and investment flows. Canada should continue to seek out even more agreements with emerging markets given the opportunities they provide through their well-above average economic growth. There is already momentum in Indonesia and the Philippines, among the fastest growing economies in the world, but Canada should cast a wide net.

Many of the world’s fastest growing economies are in Africa and Asia, and underlying growth trends, notably productivity improvements and population growth, suggest that many of these countries are becoming more important to the global economy. For example, the IMF projects that emerging markets in Asia will grow at an average annual rate of 5.8 per cent between 2024 and 2029, while emerging markets in Latin America and the Caribbean (2.6 per cent), and those in sub-Saharan Africa (4.2 per cent) will outpace growth of just 1.6 per cent growth in G7 economies. that the region that accounts for most of Canada’s current exports.

That means that as the world changes, building trading relationships with emerging markets will be a key growth catalyst. Canada already has success in this regard, particularly through its mining and banking sectors, and should build upon those industries to expand investment and trading relationships with emerging markets across all regions through foreign direct investment in resources, the export of services, particularly financial services, and building infrastructure.

Now is a key time for Canada to seize these opportunities and build relationships. The retaliatory tariffs imposed by the U.S. administration hit many of these countries hard and they are likely to be seeking more reliable partners. This is despite the success many have had in building their manufacturing sectors, with Vietnam being among the hardest hit by tariffs but also among the fastest growing economies in the World. Canada should seek to find new opportunities that have emerged with the change in U.S. behavior to build long-term trading relationships. For example, negotiations with the ASEAN block is a positive development, as are negotiations with MERCOSUR (South American nations), and opportunities should be expanded into Africa as well.

### EU CP

#### EU-Latin America engagement CP

Mazarredo 25 [Rafael Dezcallar de Mazarredo, chairman of Ayuda en Acción since October 2024. A career diplomat, he served as the Spanish ambassador to China, Germany, and Ethiopia and held key roles in international organizations, including the United Nations and Spain’s Secretariat for International Cooperation and Ibero-America. 2-18-2025, "Opinion: How strengthening an EU-Latin America partnership is a win-win", Devex, https://www.devex.com/news/opinion-how-strengthening-an-eu-latin-america-partnership-is-a-win-win-109426?skip\_optional\_steps=true, Accessed 4/25/25, AWright]

The recent freeze of U.S. foreign aid under U.S. President Donald Trump, including cuts to programs funded by the U.S. Agency for International Development and the U.S. Department of State, marks a critical turning point for Latin America and the Caribbean, given the region's ongoing socioeconomic challenges. As the U.S. reduces its contributions, the European Union faces an unprecedented opportunity to step up as a key global player in Latin America and the Caribbean and deepen its engagement in the region.

The region grapples with significant structural challenges. Limited access to affordable financing, high inequality, slow economic growth, and widespread violence shape the region’s complex socioeconomic landscape.

These difficulties are especially pronounced for young people, who face increasing job market insecurity. Recent research by the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean and Ayuda en Acción estimates that more than 1.8 million young people will transition into the service sector in the coming years — posing evident challenges for education and social welfare systems.

Traditionally, Latin America and the Caribbean has not been a top priority for EU development cooperation. However, the geopolitical landscape is shifting. The EU’s growing emphasis on promoting a rules-based multilateral system and defending democratic values provides a strong foundation for enhancing ties with the region.

The 2023 EU-LAC Summit, held in Brussels after a seven-year hiatus, underscored the shared commitment to democracy, human rights, and collaboration on pressing issues such as climate change and trade. Notably, the EU’s “Global Gateway” strategy — which aims to mobilize up to €45 billion by 2027 to support sustainable development in Latin America — represents a pivotal initiative to address these challenges.

Now more than ever, the EU must seize the opportunity to strengthen its partnership with Latin America, ensuring it is both resilient and sustainable. This will require a reassessment and reinforcement of its development strategies, prioritizing poverty reduction, human rights, and climate justice while pursuing long-term, mutually beneficial objectives.

A fundamental aspect of this renewed partnership is tackling inequality and fostering social inclusion. Inequality in Latin America is systemic, undermining social cohesion and economic growth. Young people, women, and Indigenous populations are particularly vulnerable to social exclusion in education, labor markets, and political institutions. A more integrated and holistic approach — one that simultaneously addresses climate change, migration, and inequality while placing young Latin Americans at the center of shaping the region’s future — is essential for sustainable development.

#### EU is poised to act in Latin America

Holguin 23 [María Ángela Holguín Former Colombian Minister of Foreign Affairs She is a political scientist with specializations in Public Administration and Administrative Institutions from the Universidad de los Andes and in Diplomacy and Strategy from the Center for Diplomatic and Strategic Studies (CEDS) in Paris. She was Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Colombia to the United Nations and Ambassador of Colombia to the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, Secretary General of the Ministry and First Secretary of the Embassy in Paris. She was also private secretary to the Attorney General and Representative of the Development Bank of Latin America- CAF in Argentina., European Union-Latin America: a new opportunity? https://www.uno-magazine.com/uno-40-european-union-latin-america-new-times-new-alliances/european-union-latin-america-a-new-opportunity/]

Relations between the European Union and Latin America have traditionally been characterized by history, language, religion, and political, social and economic values. There are many reasons for our excellent relations. However, for decades we have struggled to build a solid, long-lasting, mutually beneficial and trusting relationship, but without success. It’s reasonable to ask why we have failed to achieve this –that is a very relevant question.

We have been unable to build long-term commercial, cultural or thematic relations. History shows that this has always been the result of specific situations in both Europe and Latin America. When the European Union is not confronted with conflicts or immediate regional challenges, its connections with Latin America tend to strengthen. EU-LA relations flourish whenever like-minded governments are in power in Latin America or when visits by foreign affairs officials from a Latin American country, like Federica Mogherini in the past and now Josep Borrell, invigorate discussions on revitalizing our relations.

Latin America is facing more challenges today compared to previous decades, further exacerbated by the ongoing pandemic. Issues such as poverty, inequality, and a significant digital divide pose significant hurdles to progress. The fact that less than 50 % of the population has access to broadband in this digital age is a significant handicap. A lack of cohesive leadership among regional presidents impedes collective efforts to address these problems and engage in fruitful dialogues with other regions.

Throughout history, Latin America has consistently failed to come together to work in a cohesive and systematic way that goes beyond short-term goals. We have created mechanisms for dialogues that have yet to be convened

Throughout history, Latin America has consistently failed to come together to work in a cohesive and systematic way that goes beyond short-term goals. We have created mechanisms for dialogues that have yet to be convened, yet they have failed to listen to each other. Differences in political and economic models have posed challenges, but efforts were made in recent years to convene talks and promote inclusive discussions. In recent years, however, instead of attending Summits, Latin American Presidents simply create dialogue mechanisms that exclude anyone who does not share their political position, for example Prosur, which was created in 2019.

Undoubtedly, the situation in Venezuela has had a significant impact on regional integration and dialogue mechanisms. It has contributed to the erosion of forums such as the OAS, CELAC, and Unasur, which were once important platforms for political discussion and diplomacy. The Venezuelan regime is still in place today, and even recognized by almost the entire region –yet Latin American integration remains hindered. As a result, the EU-CELAC dialogue and the Summit of the Americas, which served as spaces for dialogue with the United States and Canada, have lost momentum and effectiveness.

With the return of Lula to Brazil, it would seem that integration in the region is back on track. We can only hope that they do not relapse into past mistakes of ideologizing dialogue. Hopefully, steps towards integration will continue.

Latin America has undoubtedly expected more from the European Union than it feels it has received. In turn, the EU feels that Latin America is neither progressing as expected, nor behaving with the democratic values it would like to see. In addition, there is little interest in the region, except by Spain and Portugal.

The European Union has failed to adopt a long-term vision that focuses on specific crises in the region. We must nevertheless move forward, maintaining an ideologically neutral dialogue that will lead to growth and leave Latin America in better condition. Let’s not forget that we are 700 million people, with a very young population and great natural resource wealth. However, there is still a long way to go. Not only should the EU continue to be the largest direct investor, but new programs should focus on current problems and support the region in its emergence from historical disadvantages.

We continue to face global challenges, including the preservation of multilateralism. The two regions are undoubtedly great advocates of multilateralism. The fulfillment of the Sustainable Development Goals, green energy, new sources of clean energy, transnational drug trafficking crimes, migration, etc., are all issues that require global, concerted efforts.

It is crucial that the European Union understands the diversity of Latin America and that expecting a unified response is unrealistic. The EU simply must understand the setbacks and, why not say it, the inconsistencies in which it lives, without paralyzing the relationship with every situation that arises.

The European Union’s recent commitment to strengthen ties with the region is promising, and Spain’s upcoming Presidency of the Council in the second half of 2023 presents a favorable opportunity to advance this agenda. My experience as Colombian Foreign Minister during the peace process gives me faith because I lived it, that we can work together with the EU, achieving great things.

In these challenging times, I may seem optimistic, but I believe there is an opportunity for Latin America to contribute substantially to address global issues, including those that are critical for Europe’s future. For example, Latin America is a region rich in raw materials (lithium, cobalt, copper) that are indispensable for a sustainable energy transition. In addition to its immense renewable energy generation capacity, the region also holds large areas of land with the potential for agricultural development necessary to ensure global food security, as well as forests that are crucial for CO2 capture in the fight against global warming. The potential of this wealth presents an opportunity for collaboration between Latin America and Europe, working hand in hand to address these challenges.

## Private Aid CP

### Red Cross CP

#### Giving aid to the Red Cross organization solves the aff and doesn’t violate humanitarian prinicples

**Storey ND**

(Henry Storey works as a political risk analyst and was formerly an editor at Foreign Brief and Young Australians in International Affairs.Humanitarian Advisory Group, accessed 4-29-2024, "Going about it the wrong way: US ‘Humanitarian’ aid in Venezuela", <https://humanitarianadvisorygroup.org/going-about-it-the-wrong-way-us-humanitarian-aid-in-venezuela/>

Even if the US is justified in pointing the finger at Maduro for Venezuela’s woes, its response to the humanitarian emergency has been far from helpful. Alongside implementing sanctions, the US has violated humanitarian principles by deliberately politicising aid. Instead of funding the work of organisations like Red Cross who have existing operations within the country, Washington has insisted upon delivering aid through Juan Guaidó, Venezuela’s self-declared interim President. Guaidó who has been recognised as interim President by fifty-one countries, has attempted to use aid to directly undermine Maduro. By receiving and distributing US shipments of aid, Guaidó aims to bolster his claim to lead an alternative government. More cynically, Guaidó has also banked on the fact that Maduro will attempt to stop the deliveries of aid with the help of the armed forces. The White House and Guaidó had hoped that this would decrease Maduro’s popularity even further as well as sparking mass defections from the armed forces, one of the embattled regime’s key power bases. The end goal of this process is to remove Maduro from power.

## Coercion

### Sanction CP

#### There is a rich debate (covered in the engagement definitions section, specifically look for the Haass and O’Sullivan article for context) regarding how “engagement” requires positive approaches and is distinct from coercion/sanctions.

#### Considering this, if the affirmative is constrained to ‘positive engagement’ the neg would have an arsenal of alternative options to engage with the selected countries in a negative manner. The Sanctions CP is an example of this, and would induce countries in Latin America to reach the same result the plan intends to produce by sanctioning them until they change their behavior.

#### A few timely examples:

#### Venezuela

Tobin 1-23 [William Tobin, "‘Maximum pressure’ sanctions on Venezuela help US adversaries, hurt Venezuelans", Atlantic Council, 1-23-2025, https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/in-depth-research-reports/issue-brief/maximum-pressure-sanctions-on-venezuela-help-us-adversaries-hurt-venezuelans/]

The incoming Trump administration should avoid the reimposition of sectoral sanctions on the oil industry in Venezuela. Instead, the existing system of specific licenses should be maintained. To punish Maduro, the administration should continue targeting individuals who enable his illegitimate rule, adding to the more than two hundred individuals already sanctioned by the Treasury Department. Additional sanctions or coercive measures can also be employed to provide the right incentives to the Maduro regime without benefiting US strategic rivals. These measures include the following:

• freezing new investments or licenses in Venezuela until democratic conditions improve;

• sanctioning the network of Chinese, Iranian, and other vessels operating outside of the licensing system;

• continuing strategic engagement on US interests such as advancing democracy, but refusing to recognize Maduro as the legitimate president; and

• issuing criminal indictments against those who stole the election. A targeted sanctions policy—not maximum pressure—is the most effective way to ensure that US actions to confront the Maduro regime do not play into the hands of Beijing, Moscow, or Tehran.

#### Nicaragua

Rhodes 24 [Brennan Rhodes, "Nicaragua is consolidating an authoritarian dynasty. Here’s how US economic pressure can counter it.", Atlantic Council, 12-17-2024, https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/new-atlanticist/nicaraguas-government-authoritarian-dynasty-us-economic-pressure/]

On November 22, the Nicaraguan National Assembly all but solidified the country’s dynastic dictatorship, led by President Daniel Ortega and his wife, Rosario Murillo. The legislature approved a constitutional reform providing the regime power over all sectors of government, extending the presidential term from five to six years, and elevating Murillo from vice president to “co-president” alongside Ortega. The reform strengthens the Ortega-Murillo regime’s pressure campaign against civil society, the Catholic Church, and the media, all while it claims to protect the country from “foreign interests.” This constitutional reform has caused serious concerns among international watchdogs over a further escalation of human rights and civil liberties abuses.

All the while, the regime has grown economic and strategic ties with China and Russia as well as weaponizing vulnerable migrants against the United States. As Nicaragua’s top trading partner, the United States is well-positioned to leverage economic policy to push more against the country’s brand of dynastic authoritarianism. Applying stronger economic pressure would hold Nicaragua’s co-presidents accountable for their human rights violations, help promote democratic reform, and prevent further consolidation of the regime.

Nicaragua’s malign activity

The China-Latin America and the Caribbean Business Summit, held in Managua in November, marks the culmination of China and Nicaragua’s growing economic ties over the past year. With Nicaragua having joined the Chinese Belt and Road Initiative in January 2022, relations between the two countries have developed considerably. In January, China and Nicaragua signed a free trade agreement, which was followed by the inauguration of their first direct maritime trade route from Tianjin, China, to Corinto, Nicaragua, in August. Furthermore, the ship that inaugurated the trade route was carrying materials for the Chinese-sponsored construction of Punta Huete International Airport.

Even more recently, Nicaragua sent a delegation of thirty-one business leaders, led by Laureano Ortega Murillo, son of the two co-presidents, to the China International Import Expo. During the event, he stated, “Our government is fully open to Chinese investment. We are under the guidance of our president to facilitate everything we can do for Chinese businesses.” Chinese foreign investment oftentimes undermines US geopolitical interests, which has made curbing such investment a key foreign policy priority of the incoming Trump administration. For example, Nicaragua severed diplomatic ties with Taiwan right before joining the Belt and Road Initiative. China’s willingness to engage with authoritarian actors like Nicaragua greatly impacts US hemispheric goals for democracy.

On the national security front, military cooperation between Nicaragua and Russia has intensified. Over the past decade, nearly 3,500 Russian military personnel have entered the country, and Moscow has been providing the regime with military equipment and training since 2016. In March, the legislature, which is dominated by Ortega’s ruling party, permitted the construction of a police training center run by the Russian Interior Ministry. This deal builds upon previous espionage concerns associated with Mokorón Base, claimed as a hub for Russian espionage, and the Russian Global Navigation Satellite System. At the beginning of December, the Russian government approved a draft proposal establishing a joint military working group and extending military cooperation. In reference to Russia’s military presence, Laureano Ortega Murillo stated, “Nicaragua is Russia’s strategic ally in Central America. We position ourselves as its regional platform in all fields and we are committed to enhancing Moscow’s influence and action in the region.”

Furthermore, the Nicaraguan government traffics migrants to systematically increase migration pressure and fuel remittance payments, which comprise 30 percent of Nicaragua’s gross domestic product. In an effort to protest existing sanctions, the regime loosened visa restrictions for countries across the Caribbean, Asia, and Africa and sold ninety-six-hour visas to migrants looking to bypass the treacherous journey through the Darién Gap. The Nicaraguan government organizes charter flights for migrants through third-party airline companies while creating a million-dollar enterprise charging migrants predatory visa fees. Between May 2023 and May 2024, an estimated 200,000 migrants arrived in Augusto Sandino International Airport on “pseudo-commercial flights.” Approximately 10 percent of all migrants arriving at the United States’ southern border start the trek in Nicaragua.

Countering Chinese influence, curtailing immigration, and bolstering national security are issues that President-elect Donald Trump campaigned on. Since Nicaragua poses a threat to all three of these goals, the question becomes: What tools are at the disposal of the Trump administration?

Go for the gold

One option for the incoming administration is to enact wider sectoral sanctions, but there are pros and cons to this approach.

Following the 2018 antigovernment protests in Nicaragua, the first Trump administration issued Executive Order 13851 sanctioning key officials, including Ortega and Murillo. These individual sanctions did not have a significant impact on the regime. Therefore, the Trump administration should consider imposing wider sectoral sanctions on key economic sectors, such as gold and precious metals. The Biden administration slowly began to target the gold sector, designating multiple private companies and a government-run mining organization. All the while, the Biden administration still negotiated through diplomatic channels to release 135 political prisoners.

However, the sanctioned companies comprise only 1 percent of Nicaraguan mining concessions. Broader sectoral sanctioning on the gold industry would send a strong message by targeting one of the country’s top exports, serving as a bargaining chip to release remaining political prisoners and to promote democratic reform. Gold exports already outnumber Nicaraguan production rates, hinting at illegal gold mining and smuggling, which gold sector sanctions would likely exacerbate. As such, the administration must prepare a holistic framework to tackle illicit gold trade from artisanal and small-scale mining operations through commodities tracking, custody ledgers, or even chemical trace analysis measures. Lastly, the Trump administration should harmonize sanctions programs with allies such as the United Kingdom and the European Union to increase their efficacy. Considering that the United States imports the majority of Nicaraguan gold, targeting this sector would eliminate a large cash flow for the regime.

Push where the regime feels pressure: Trade

In recent years, some policymakers have proposed expelling Nicaragua from the Central America-Dominican Republic Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA-DR) to increase pressure on the Ortega government. For example, the first Trump administration considered it in 2019, seeing the agreement as providing an economic lifeline to an authoritarian regime. The Biden administration also considered expelling Nicaragua in 2022. But without an expulsion clause, there is no feasible avenue to expel Nicaragua without dismantling the entire agreement.

As Trump discusses the renegotiation of the US-Mexico-Canada Agreement (USMCA), sights could turn to CAFTA-DR. Any potential renegotiation of CAFTA-DR could include tougher restrictions on member countries’ interactions with Chinese investors while excluding Nicaragua from an updated CAFTA-DR to help prevent Chinese transshipment of goods into the United States. However, a review pathway for Nicaragua would need to be made available pending significant democratic reform.

Alternatively, the Trump administration could keep the CAFTA-DR in place while presenting the opportunity for accession of other qualifying members to the USMCA agreement. In this scenario, Nicaragua would not qualify, considering its rebuke of democratic principles, centralization of power, and strong ties to China. If Nicaragua’s neighbors choose to join the USMCA, Nicaragua would become susceptible to Trump’s proposed blanket tariffs, losing favored access to US markets. However, prior to the official disruption of CAFTA-DR, Trump should continue the US Trade Representative’s Section 301 investigation into Nicaragua’s adherence to labor rights, human rights, and the rule of law, which is a pathway to increased sanctions. The United States could also consider mobilizing the Department of Labor’s Bureau of International Labor Affairs in conjunction with the CAFTA-DR oversight commission to review labor and environmental requirement adherence.

Trade plays a significant role in Nicaragua’s economy, which makes these approaches a likely effective way to increase pressure on the government.

Keep the end in mind

Avenues exist to increase pressure on the Nicaraguan government, but it should be pressure with a point. Any new measures from Washington should be tied to specific calls for the regime to carry out democratic reforms, ensure human rights, and/or take steps to address security concerns emanating from its dealings with Russia and China.

In addition, the Trump administration should be aware that new punitive economic measures would likely result in an increase of Nicaraguan emigration. More than a fifth of Nicaragua’s population has already left the country and this will likely increase if the economic situation gets worse. To confront the regime’s exploitation of migrants, existing programs such as the Department of Homeland Security’s Operation Sentinel should be bolstered to investigate migrant trafficking operations and further explore their connections to the Ortega-Murillo regime.

Finally, the Trump administration will need to decide whether to continue the Biden administration’s policies toward Nicaragua, including the reallocated quota on imports of Nicaragua’s sugar, as well as existing export controls pursuant to the International Traffic in Arms Regulations and Export Administration Regulations.

The incoming Trump administration has consequential choices ahead of it, but the sooner it acts the better. The Nicaraguan regime’s increasing collaboration with China and Russia is providing the economic backing to crack down at home and make Nicaragua increasingly dangerous to the region. If Trump wants to meet his foreign policy campaign goals while reaffirming hemispheric human rights, Nicaragua is a good place to start.

#### AFF Answer---Sanctions have harmed Latin American economies and worsened migration crises.

Alejos 25 [Karyme Alejos CHCI-Public Policy Fellow, "How U.S. Foreign Policies Shape Latin America's Future", CHCI, March 2025, https://chci.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/04/Alejos\_Karyme\_La-Sombra-de-las-Sanciones-How-U.S.-Foreign-Policies-Shape-Latin-Americas-Future.pdf]

In response to this act of corruption, the Trump administration imposed a new set of sanctions aimed at crippling the Maduro regime by cutting off access to U.S. capital markets.[22] The goal was to prevent the Venezuelan government from raising new funds to service its debt and, ultimately, to force President Nicolás Maduro from power.[23] However, between 2014 and 2021, Venezuela’s economy shrank by nearly three-quarters, and inflation skyrocketed, reaching an annualized rate of more than 1 million percent.[24]

The Venezuelan economy also heavily relies on oil, which accounts for more than 90 percent of exports and more than half of fiscal revenue.[25] After rising for more than a decade, oil revenues fell by 93 percent between 2012 and 2020, and GDP plummeted by 75% between 2014 and 2021.[26] During this same period, per capita income declined by 72 percent.[27] This all mirrored the time when the U.S. hit Venezuela with the first oil sector sanctions in 2017, which were the most debilitating sanctions.

The sanctions had devastating effects on the Venezuelan population, contributing to one of the longest periods of hyperinflation in recorded history. [28]

As inflation soared, Venezuelan salaries plummeted, and foreign banks, citing overcompliance with the sanctions, refused to do business with Venezuelan companies. These economic disruptions also fueled an increase in smuggling, organized crime, and the reconfiguration of international trade networks. [29]

Additionally, the sanctions pushed a significant portion of Venezuela’s defaulted debt into the hands of other investors, many of whom operate through intermediaries in places like Russia, Syria, and China. [30] This highlights the unintended consequence that, rather than curbing corruption, the sanctions may have simply driven it underground, enabling illicit activity to persist.

Sanctions as Root Causes of Migration:

Sanctions can severely weaken a nation’s economy, leading to widespread instability and hardship for its citizens. The global consequences of sanctions are evident with millions fleeing countries like Venezuela, where over 7.1 million have left since 2014. [31] Hundreds of thousands also have migrated from Central America, Mexico, Haiti, and Cuba each year. Immigration from Cuba, in particular, has been a longstanding trend since the 1960s, and it remains significant today—with more than 200,000 Cubans arriving in the United States in both 2022 and 2023—a figure that has surged fivefold since 2021. [32]

This mass migration has placed immense strain on neighboring countries, which struggle to accommodate and support these displaced populations. The consequences extend further, with the United States being a primary destination for many migrants seeking asylum. However, despite the growing crisis at the U.S. southern border, the U.S. government has largely overlooked sanctions as a contributing factor to the surge in migration. While the government focuses on border security and immigration enforcement, it has failed to address how U.S.-imposed sanctions, intended to pressure governments, often exacerbate economic instability and create the very conditions that push people to migrate.

## QPQ

### Examples

#### The negative could QPQ that aid/engagement – Guatemala proves

Lazarus and Berg, 24 (Leland, associate director for national security at the Florida International University Jack D. Gordon Institute of Public Policy. He is a former U.S. Foreign Service officer, and Ryan, director of the Americas Program and head of the Future of Venezuela Initiative at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, 1/10, “Guatemala Nears a Pivotal Moment on Taiwan”, <https://www.americasquarterly.org/article/guatemala-nears-a-pivotal-moment-on-taiwan/>) AJW

After months of political drama, Guatemala’s President-elect Bernardo Arévalo still faces an entrenched political elite intent on derailing him. If he takes office on January 14, another political battle with outsized geopolitical consequences looms—Guatemala’s diplomatic ties with Taiwan.

Arévalo has said he does not intend to cut Guatemala’s longstanding ties with Taiwan, and his choice of Carlos Ramírez Martínez as foreign minister signals continuity. But Arévalo has also said he wants to increase trade with mainland China, and he is likely to discover that Beijing will acquiesce only on the condition of a break with Taiwan. China will dangle lucrative incentives, but the U.S. and Taiwan can also offer attractive incentives of their own as Guatemala weighs its future at a key moment.

Guatemala is the most populous country to maintain formal diplomatic ties with Taiwan—not in the region, but in the world—and China is likely to push Arévalo especially hard. Most of Central America turned away from Taiwan under leftist presidents, and Arévalo is Guatemala’s first leftist president in decades. China also has momentum: Costa Rica, El Salvador, Nicaragua, Panama, and most recently, Honduras cut official ties with Taiwan—switches executed, except Costa Rica, in the last six years.

On the other side of the Pacific, China is struggling with the prospect of long-term economic malaise, and Xi Jinping may need to bolster his political legitimacy by peeling off a key Taiwan ally to signal that “reunification” is inevitable. Moreover, Lai Ching-te and his incumbent Democratic Progressive Party will likely win Taiwan’s election on Sunday. This would probably engender a more aggressive stance from Beijing, as Lai supports the current status quo on Taiwan.

For his part, Arévalo may be tempted by what China can offer. After Honduras cut ties in March 2023, negotiations began on a new free trade agreement (FTA), and Chinese state-owned enterprises agreed to build key infrastructure projects, such as the Patuca III hydroelectric dam. Chinese state-owned companies have supported flashy projects in El Salvador, like a new stadium and national library. And Nicaragua finalized an FTA with China and announced dozens of new projects at the most recent Belt and Road Forum.

Guatemala’s political landscape may also lead Arévalo to lean toward China. If he takes office, the opposition-controlled Congress will severely limit his power. Already, Congress has passed a law circumscribing the president’s ability to use the 2024 budget on education and health care—Arévalo’s main priorities beyond combating corruption. With so many domestic strictures, Arévalo will seek quick wins to deliver for his supporters. Switching allegiance from Taipei to Beijing could attract a rapid infusion of much-needed infrastructure funding and other investment. The Chinese carmaker Geely recently established a manufacturing plant in Guatemala, providing a taste of what could come.

Two nations’ role

The U.S. and Taiwan will have to act immediately to make the case that Guatemala should maintain diplomatic recognition. Fortunately for them, U.S. officials have spent the last six months laser-focused on supporting Guatemala’s democratic transition, deploying targeted sanctions and restricting visas on hundreds of public sector officials and members of Congress who allegedly sought to prevent Arévalo’s inauguration. The Biden administration can leverage this goodwill, as well as the fact that 35% of Guatemala’s trade is with the United States.

The U.S. and Taiwan can also pool resources to fund the large-scale infrastructure projects Guatemala needs. The U.S. Development Finance Corporation could work with Taiwanese private companies to underwrite the risk for such projects, and development agencies in both countries can leverage their global memorandum of understanding to expand education and health care initiatives in Guatemala jointly. Other like-minded partners, like Japan, South Korea, and the European Union, could also be convinced to contribute funding. Taiwan could additionally leverage its reputation as a world leader in artificial intelligence, semiconductor supply chains, and other emerging technologies by helping to train Guatemala’s young workforce in these crucial fields of the future.

These measures would not only boost Guatemala’s productivity but also provide incentives for Guatemalans to stay in place rather than migrate to the U.S. All this aligns with the U.S.-led Americas Partnership for Economic Prosperity, of which digital workforce development is a key pillar, and Taiwan’s effort to sell its global narrative of human capital development. Its stance is strengthened when it meets partners on their terms and funds projects with high environmental, social, and governance standards—and weakened when it plays China’s game of comparing the overall dollar total of development assistance.

Together, Taiwan and the U.S. could also support investigative organizations that expose the poor records of Chinese companies on corruption, environmental damage, local labor violations and undue delays in Central America. Florida International University’s dashboard tracking malign Chinese business practices and organizations like the Andrés Bello Foundation and Expediente Público are essential partners in this endeavor.

If such projects don’t materialize and Guatemala switches diplomatic recognition, it should be urged to maintain and capitalize on trade with Taiwan. Taipei maintains meaningful trade ties with various countries around the world that recognize China; it has a robust commercial relationship with non-diplomatic partners like Mexico, for example. Taiwan maintains economic and cultural offices in nine non-diplomatic partners in the region.

If Arévalo is inaugurated on January 14, China will doubtless make attractive offers. The U.S. and Taiwan will need to roll out a proactive strategy to keep Guatemala in Taiwan’s camp.

#### The negative could advocate any number of affirmatives on the Mexican government addressing immigration issues.

MND, 24 (Mexico News Daily Staff discussing talks between the US and Mexico over a migration policy deal, 1/9, “Will there be a migration quid pro quo between Mexico and the US?”, https://mexiconewsdaily.com/politics/will-there-be-a-migration-quid-pro-quo-between-mexico-and-the-us/)

Are Mexico and the United States heading toward some kind of broad-based quid pro quo that will help reduce the number of migrants arriving at the Mexico-U.S. border?

Both sides want something from the other — that is clear — but it remains to be seen whether they can reach a substantive deal. An answer just might come before the end of the month.

United States Customs and Border Protection (CBP) processed a record high of over 300,000 migrants at the U.S. southern border in December, after encountering an all-time high of almost 2.5 million in fiscal year 2023, which concluded in September.

With the United States presidential election less than 10 months away, it’s not surprising that the Biden administration is pushing for the Mexican government to do more to slow the flow of migrants to the 3,145-kilometer-long Mexico-U.S. border.

President Andrés Manuel López Obrador — whose non-extendable six year term will end Oct. 1 — appears prepared to ramp up Mexico’s efforts to stem migration, but not without getting something in exchange from the United States, a country he believes is partially responsible for the exodus of people from other Western Hemisphere nations.

What does the United States want from Mexico?

After speaking with three unnamed United States officials including one described as “a senior Biden administration official,” NBC News reported Monday that the U.S. government “needs Mexico to let it push more non-Mexican immigrants back across the U.S. southern border” in order to bring migrant numbers down.

Both the Trump and Biden administrations used the Title 42 public health order to return migrants to Mexico without an asylum screening. While that policy was in effect, Mexico accepted the return of over 1 million migrants per year during three consecutive years between 2020 and 2022.

The policy ended last May, and Mexico is now only officially willing to take back 30,000 migrants per month — just 10% of the number processed by CBP in December.

United States negotiators, NBC reported, “also want Mexico to step up enforcement on its southern border with Guatemala and deport more migrants who are apprehended within the country.”

With broad support from Republican Party lawmakers, the United States House of Representatives approved a bill last May that “would effectively end access to asylum at the border,” according to a Reuters support.

The bill — officially called the Secure the Border Act of 2023 — has not been voted on in the Democrat-led Senate, where it would almost certainly be rejected.

NBC reported Monday that “negotiations over border security measures between Republicans and Democrats continue into their second month with no clear breakthrough.”

What does Mexico want from the United States?

At his morning press conference last Friday, President López Obrador (AMLO) outlined four “measures” he would like the United States government to take.

1. Allocate US $20 billion in funding to countries in Latin America and the Caribbean over an unspecified period of time.

The United States Congress should “approve a plan of cooperation for development and well-being,” López Obrador said, adding that the aim of such an initiative would be to address the structural causes of migration — things such as poverty, violence and lack of opportunity.

He has previously urged Biden to champion “a new policy of economic and social integration on our continent,” like the Alliance for Progress development plan of the 1960s, an initiative of former U.S. president John F. Kennedy.

2. Regularize the migratory situation of “at least 10 million Hispanics” who have “worked honorably” in the United States for more than 10 years.

AMLO has praised the U.S. government for opening up new migration pathways for citizens of some Western Hemisphere countries, but believes the Biden administration should also issue visas to Mexicans who have lived and worked in the U.S. for extended periods.

In November, he emphasized the importance of regularizing the status of Mexican migrants in the U.S. — who he often describes as “heroes” in recognition of the large sums of money they send home — due to the “anti-immigrant attitudes” of some state governors, such as Greg Abbott of Texas and Ron DeSantis of Florida.

3. Suspend the embargo against Cuba and commence bilateral talks with the Cuban government.

López Obrador, who has long called for the lifting of the U.S. trade blockade and advocated bilateral dialogue, posed a number of questions regarding the U.S.-Cuba relationship (or lack thereof).

“What danger can Cuba or any other country represent to the United States? How can the people [of a country] be sacrificed for political and ideological interests? Can’t there be dialogue? Can’t there be understanding? Can’t there be a relationship of respect?”

4. Remove all sanctions on Venezuela.

Venezuela is currently one of the largest source countries of migrants to the United States.

López Obrador noted that the majority of the 32 migrants abducted in Tamaulipas on Dec. 30 are Venezuelan.

Removing U.S. sanctions on the once-prosperous but currently poverty-stricken South American nation would “go to the heart” of addressing the cause of migration in Venezuela, he said.

The latter two proposed “measures” are reminiscent of one of 13 points agreed to by the countries in attendance at a regional migration summit hosted by López Obrador in Palenque, Chiapas, last October.

The governments of 10 countries, including those of Mexico, Venezuela, Cuba and Colombia, urged the removal of “unilateral coercive measures imposed on countries of the region” given that “they are contrary to international law and have serious repercussions beyond the target countries.”

# Disad Ground

## Topic Specific

### FTA/Integration DA

#### There are DA’s focused on Free Trade Agreements, Latin American Integration, and Agricultural Trade dependent on isolation from the United States

Busch, 4-24-25 [Alexander Busch, Reporter for NZZ, “Trump trade shock could accelerate Latin America's integration into the global economy”, https://www.nzz.ch/english/us-tariff-shock-could-be-boon-for-latin-american-trade-ld.1881225]

After U.S. President Donald Trump's so-called Liberation Day, the countries of South America breathed a sigh of relief. They had been targeted with the lowest level of new U.S. import duties. With the exception of countries such as Nicaragua, Bolivia and Venezuela, tariffs on the continent’s imports into the United States were to be increased by only 10%.

This does not include the tariff increases already implemented for steel and aluminum. The import tariffs of 25% announced a few weeks ago also remain in place for Mexico. That country has long had close economic ties with the United States and Canada, initially via the North American Free Trade Agreement, or NAFTA, and since 2020 via the successor agreement United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement, or USMCA. After China, Mexico is today the country that has the largest trade surplus with the United States.

The fact that large parts of South America are getting off relatively lightly compared to the emerging economies of Southeast Asia is due to their trade balances. In fact, the U.S. has trade surpluses with all of South America's major economies. There is therefore no rational reason to impose import tariffs on South American exports if – like Trump – you view foreign trade deficits negatively and want to reduce them.

However, this does not mean that South America’s trade deficits with the United States will necessarily prevent it from being targeted by Trump's retaliatory policies in the future. It remains too early to make any such assumption, and Trump is too unpredictable.

Trump's tariff policy is therefore setting processes in motion in South America that will fundamentally change the way the region is integrated into the global economy.

Rapid change is currently taking place in three areas in particular.

South America is looking for new trading partners

Worldwide, efforts to strike free-trade agreements in order to compensate for the loss of trade with the United States are gathering steam. This is true of South America as well.

This has increased the chances that the free-trade zone between Europe and the Mercosur group of countries in South America will be implemented more quickly. The EU and Mercosur are currently negotiating at full speed about the form in which the agreement, which has already been adopted, should be submitted to the member states for ratification.

Resistance appears to be diminishing among forces that previously opposed the agreement. The governor of France's central bank, for example, has publicly spoken out in favor of the agreement as a means of protecting the country against U.S. tariffs. In Austria, Economy Minister Wolfgang Hattmannsdorfer is pushing for a swift conclusion to the talks.

The fact that there is competition within Europe to sign an agreement with Mercosur speaks further in favor of rapid implementation. The European Free Trade Association, which consists of Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway and Switzerland, also wants to sign a joint agreement at the Mercosur presidential meeting in July.

Decision-making processes regarding free-trade agreements have accelerated on both continents, which additionally makes it more likely that the agreements will be concluded soon.

For example, the EU now intends to withdraw several sets of demands it recently made of its trading partners. Specifically, this involves provisions relating to the EU’s deforestation regulation, sustainability reporting requirements and supply chain act. These provisions are now being relaxed or eliminated. This means that there are fewer points of possible contention in agreements on foreign trade between South America and Europe.

Both Argentina and Paraguay have also reduced tariffs on 50 other products. For years, Argentina had the Mercosur group’s most stringent barriers to imports as it sought to protect its own economy. This regime is now changing under President Javier Milei’s liberal government.

Argentina’s recent cautious easing of currency controls, as well as the economic upturn in this country that has experienced chronic crises, are also making South America's second-largest economy more interesting again for foreign investors. This is in turn increasing Mercosur's overall appeal as a trading partner.

The Mercosur member states are also seeking to bring their long-running negotiations with countries such as Singapore, the United Arab Emirates and South Korea to a conclusion.

The continent's economies are becoming more integrated

Companies that are active throughout Latin America are reorganizing their supply chains. More and more Latin American companies are viewing their subsidiaries from Mexico to Argentina as a single unit for the first time.

This is a new development particularly in Mexico. Previously, that country has focused its economy primarily on exports to North America, and has not strongly pursued integration with its southern neighbors. Trump's tariff policy is changing that.

This is an interesting development for the automotive industry, for example. Firms with branches in Latin America are now considering how they can expand and reorganize their supply chains from Mexico to Argentina. Volkswagen, for instance, has long been represented throughout the region, with eight production facilities in Argentina, Brazil and Mexico. The firm is now reconsidering how it can facilitate cooperation within this network of plants.

In this context, it is critical to note that Washington has also indicated plans to impose tariffs on exports from Chinese companies based in third countries in the future. This would apply to locations such as Vietnam and Mexico. Existing ventures with Chinese suppliers are therefore also being put to the test.

At the same time, links within the continent's own infrastructure are being drawn tighter. For the first time in a long time, serious efforts are being made to connect the economies of countries on the Atlantic seaboard, such as Argentina and Brazil, to ports on the Pacific Ocean, as trade with Asia is set to increase.

China wants to connect its recently opened deep-water port in Chancay, Peru, with all of the continent’s countries by way of rail and water routes, as well as via a road through the Andes and the rain forest. This could trigger a growth spurt in Latin America.

Agriculture is turning toward Asia

Latin American farmers are hoping that China and other Asian countries will increase their food imports from South America, because Beijing and other regional capitals are imposing their own higher tariffs on imports from American farmers.

During Trump's first term in office, Latin American farmers were able to significantly increase the volumes of their exports to Asia. South American farmers, meat producers and food processors have adapted both to the specific requirements of Asian consumers and to the ongoing geopolitical changes in record time.

Three examples:

Beef: As recently as 10 years ago, Brazilian meat producers exported just 115 tons of beef annually to China. That's not much more than two large trucks full. For the last two years, this quantity has been more than 1 million tons per year. Brazilian meat producers now send around half their overall exports to China.

Wheat: Over the past three years, Brazil has become a major wheat exporter. Traditionally, Brazil has imported wheat. However, following the loss of supplies from Ukraine and Russia, Brazil stepped in as a supplier.

Cotton: This is a fundamental product for the global textile industry. Brazil had to import it for a long time, but the country is today the world's largest exporter of cotton, with a yield per hectare twice as high as that of the United States.

Great potential for Latin America

These examples show how quickly the South American economy has been able to react to changing world market conditions.

However, there is a growing risk that Asian firms will now try to redirect their exports, which are being effectively blocked by the U.S., to other regions. A growing Latin America with its large domestic market would be ideal for this.

It remains to be seen whether or how Trump's measures will weaken the global economy overall. However, the new U.S. policy course appears to hold great potential to boost the Latin American region’s trade prospects.

### LA Self Determination DA

#### There’s DAs about cooperating with the US instead of the EU and China and emboldening Trumpian authoritarianism

Bouchard 2-2-25 [Joseph, freelance journalist who has previously been published in The Diplomat, Mongabay, the Rio Times, the City Paper Bogota, among other outlets, “Trump's Racism Is Pushing Latin America Away; Can the Left Seize the Moment?”, <https://www.commondreams.org/opinion/trump-push-latin-america-away>]

In late January, the Trump administration forcibly repatriated Colombian nationals via military aircraft, allegedly shackling them and depriving them of basic necessities, all without trial. In a racist nod to his nativist base, U.S. President Donald Trump boasted on Truth Social that the migrants were "CRIMINALS."

While Trump's behavior is outrageous, and should be condemned widely, it also presents an opportunity for the left in Colombia, and Latin America, to push for further autonomy.

In a nation of militarized borders, hypersurveillance, and a cruel immigration system, millions of Latin Americans enter the U.S. illegally seeking refuge or economic opportunity. Latin American borders, by contrast, tend to be more porous, with irregular crossings common during geopolitical crises. When the Simón Bolívar International Bridge between Colombia and Venezuela closed amid diplomatic tensions, "Colombovenezolanos" regularly crossed through jungles and mountains to trade, study, work, and visit loved ones. I witnessed this firsthand at the bridge's reopening in the early days of Gustavo Petro's presidency.

To ensure this transition benefits the region, the left must actively counter right-wing efforts to realign Latin America with fascist, oligarchical U.S. interests.

Most Colombian immigrants (including irregular migrants) to the U.S. are not criminals; the majority crossing are economic migrants and asylum seekers. Yet Trump's imagery equates them with convicted terrorists bound for Guantánamo Bay—ironic given that he just issued an order to sending 30,000 migrants to the island for extrajudiciary detention.

There is a clear double standard here. Trump, himself civilly liable for rape and closely tied to serial rapist Jeffrey Epstein, has supported far-right terrorist groups and pardoned 1,500 insurrectionists who attempted to overthrow a democratic election on January 6, 2021. He prioritizes prosecuting brown immigrants over actual criminals.

Colombian President Gustavo Petro condemned the flights as violations of Colombian sovereignty and human rights, initially refusing to accept them. In retaliation, Trump imposed severe economic measures: a 25% tariff on all goods, a travel ban, sanctions on government officials and their allies, and extra screening at all U.S. ports of entry. Facing economic devastation and fearing further mistreatment of 1.5 million Colombians in the U.S., Petro relented.

In a passionate rebuke, the former M-19 guerrilla leader implored Trump to recognize Colombians' humanity, noting that despite U.S. efforts to repress its neighbors, Colombia has long resisted foreign domination, and thrived while doing so.

This is nothing new. The Monroe Doctrine, framed as protection against European colonization, was weaponized to oppose Simón Bolívar's dreams of regional unity and independence. The U.S. backed the United Fruit Company during the 1928 Banana Massacre, pressured the Colombian government into violent crackdowns on labor strikes, and played a major role in counterinsurgency efforts during La Violencia. The War on Drugs further entrenched U.S. intervention, with operations like the killing of Pablo Escobar more about American dominance than narcotics control—with U.S. drug consumption continuing to increase and the government arming and financing drug traffickers in Latin America and elsewhere. The U.S. also supported far-right paramilitaries and corrupt leaders in Colombia, including former President Álvaro Uribe, whose administration faced numerous allegations of ties to death squads.

Such blatant nativism has a long-term cost: U.S. regional influence. Despite the U.S.-Colombia trade war cooling off, the wheels of shifting regional power have already been put into motion. Though Colombia remains a key U.S. ally, Trump's aggression accelerates a preexisting shift, namely, Latin America's decoupling from the U.S., and the rise of polycentrism, or multiple powers competing over influence within Latin America. Colombia is increasingly diversifying its foreign relations, seeking partnerships that align with its national interests, values, and autonomy.

Across Latin America, left-wing and center-left democratic governments—from Colombia, Mexico, and Brazil to Bolivia, Uruguay, Honduras, Guatemala, Chile, and Peru—are reducing their reliance on Washington. Many regional leaders are reconsidering U.S. arms purchases, shifting defense contracts elsewhere. MERCOSUR and U.S. free trade negotiations have stalled, replaced by deepening ties with the E.U., China, and internal regional alliances. U.S. infrastructure and economic initiatives pale in comparison with China's growing investment, while the E.U. expands its footprint in public projects. Several Latin American countries, including Mexico, have already issued threats of retaliation against Trump's tariffs and repatriation flights.

Some right-wing governments, though a minority, still kowtow to Trump. Argentina's Javier Milei and El Salvador's Nayib Bukele have become MAGA darlings. Meanwhile, far-right movements are gaining traction in Colombia, Chile, Peru, and possibly Brazil, threatening polycentrism's progress. Their electoral victories would erode regional leverage against Trump and other authoritarian figures pursuing nativist agendas. Still, the broader trajectory favors a regional shift, with right-wing governments struggling to reverse course against broader trends. That shift will be best ushered in by the pro-democratic left.

Latin America's history is one of continuous resistance against imperial powers—Spain, Portugal, Holland, France, and now the U.S. For over two centuries, Washington has acted as a bully in its own backyard, orchestrating coups, backing dictators, and fueling instability to protect military and corporate interests. Trump's aggression is simply the Monroe Doctrine on steroids. Yet this overreach may finally push Colombia and other Latin American nations toward genuine self-determination.

This moment presents a strategic opening for the Latin American left. Historically, even progressive leaders like Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva and Michelle Bachelet treated the U.S. as a well-intentioned partner. That illusion has now fully shattered. With Trump exposing the naked self-interest of American Empire, its moral credibility in Latin America has collapsed. Washington's warnings about Chinese, Russian, or Iranian influence in the region now ring hollow—despite those states' extensive human rights abuses and extreme authoritarianism. Leftists in the region have long opposed U.S. imperialism, but today, that skepticism is near-universal, save for local fascists, oligarchs, and their enablers. If harnessed effectively, this disillusionment can propel Latin America toward true autonomy and bottom-up development.

Bilateral cooperation between the U.S. and Colombia is important, but there is simply no middle ground with fascism, and democracy must be defended, regardless of political expediency in the short-term. Under Trump, the U.S. is not just seen as lacking any moral character but as politically unstable, led by an idiocratic elite class. Despite their own obvious flaws, China, the E.U., and other regional partners offer a lower-risk, higher-reward alternative. By doubling down on racism, imperialism, and aggression, Trump accelerates America's decline in Latin America.

Whether the U.S. makes this a seamless transition to polycentrism or, like many other dead Empires, decides to go down swinging by further opening up the veins of Latin America, remains to be seen. If history is any guide, the latter is more likely—to the detriment of peace, human rights, and self-determination everywhere.

To ensure this transition benefits the region, the left must actively counter right-wing efforts to realign Latin America with fascist, oligarchical U.S. interests. This means solidifying regional economic and political alternatives, bolstering diplomatic unity against American coercion, and deploying the grassroots base against U.S.-backed reactionary forces. Only through concerted action can Latin America fully unshackle itself from imperial influence and forge a future of genuine sovereignty, justice, and development for all.

### Multilateralism DA

#### US influence trades off with Latin American attempts for independence and more national leadership roles

Cattafi & Papp 1/5/2025 [Carmelo, Associate Professor Tecnologico de Monterrey

Monterrey, Mexico Robert Professor School of Social Sciences and Government, Monterrey Institute of Technology and Higher Education Monterrey, Mexico Can Latin America play a more influential role in a shifting world order? Front. Polit. Sci., 05 January 2025 Sec. International Studies Volume 6 - 2024 | <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpos.2024.1527715> [https://www.frontiersin.org/journals/political-science/articles/10.3389/fpos.2024.1527715/full Accessed 4/26/2025](https://www.frontiersin.org/journals/political-science/articles/10.3389/fpos.2024.1527715/full%20Accessed%204/26/2025)

Latin America is a region marked by diverse economies and political landscapes, that has to date not been able to effectively represent its strategic and humanitarian interests on the global agenda. Its business card is a set of often unaligned positions and disassociated agendas that demonstrate a lack of unity. Its natural resources, cultural diversity, geographic advantages in an era of “nearshoring” and absence of inter-state armed conflict all provide the region with significant advantages. Yet, it has not been able to adequately leverage these strengths as a regional actor in the international community due to challenges including effective governance, economic development, income inequality, ideological divides, and organized crime.

Defining an increased role for Latin America in world affairs in an emerging multipolar world order will be a complex challenge. The entire region has long been overshadowed by U.S. political and economic dominance. The very concept of Latin America, an amalgam of ethnic, historical, and linguistic entities, of both indigenous and imported cultures, is also not easy to define. Here will simply look at the Western Hemisphere, beginning in Mexico and ending at Tierra del Fuego, itself a geographical entity shared by two nations. This is a space occupied by a wide variety of actors, including large and emerging economic powers, stable and failing states, micro-nations, and diverse political systems. Some of these aspire to play a more fundamental role in world affairs, while others scarcely have or need an active foreign policy beyond routine elements of relations with their neighbors.

The startling pace of changes to the world order, with the rise of challenges to the “unipolar” world dominated by the United States and its allies, will provide both opportunity and the need to make hard choices for many Latin American nations. Some nations will clearly wish to stay under the continued tutelage of the U.S. and its allies or will simply have to do so out of economic necessity. Others will want to seek new levels of relations with countries like China and even the Russian Federation, as well as a broad range of actors in Europe, Africa, and other Asian countries. Some may wish to assume genuine leadership roles. Even now, the Latin American region maintains a complex triangular dynamic between Latin America, the U.S. and China (Hirst et al., 2024). It will be increasingly important that Latin America places its relationship with the European Union and the Global South, the latter as exemplified by BRICS on a level approaching this dynamic.

A few Latin American nations may find themselves able to maintain relative neutrality, far from the clamor of international conflicts, and carry on with what are mostly routine relations with neighboring states through bilateral contact and regional fora. These may be able to focus on domestic economic issues, social programs, migration, drug trafficking, transnational organized crime and other themes directly relevant to their populations without weighing in on issues like crises in Ukraine, the Middle East, or the South China Sea. These can avoid the efforts of great powers to set up military bases on their territory, sell them arms, insist on their political condemnation of one or another country, or influence their sovereign rights to deal with other nations as they see fit.

#### Multilateralism is critical to regional goals and decisions

Cattafi & Papp 1/5/2025 [Carmelo, Associate Professor Tecnologico de Monterrey

Monterrey, Mexico Robert Professor School of Social Sciences and Government, Monterrey Institute of Technology and Higher Education Monterrey, Mexico Can Latin America play a more influential role in a shifting world order? Front. Polit. Sci., 05 January 2025 Sec. International Studies Volume 6 - 2024 | <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpos.2024.1527715> [https://www.frontiersin.org/journals/political-science/articles/10.3389/fpos.2024.1527715/full Accessed 4/26/2025](https://www.frontiersin.org/journals/political-science/articles/10.3389/fpos.2024.1527715/full%20Accessed%204/26/2025)

The delimitation of Latin America as a political-economic and geographic identity places it clearly within the Global South. This requires drawing a line of differentiation between the history of its relations with the U.S. and the region’s articulation with U.S.-led liberal internationalism. Although, following Hirst’s thesis, there is a tendency to perceive both processes as part of a single vertical linkage, they are distinct political developments (Hirst et al., 2024). The Global South is not the Third World of the Cold War, but an entity of great relevance in the current scenario. The dialogue between LA and the Global South is led by Brazil and includes Saudi Arabia, India, Indonesia, Nigeria, Turkey and other countries that influence, albeit in a dissociated manner, the global agenda, given their possession of critical resources, attributes of military power, financial means, technological and scientific capacity or sources of highly qualified human capital.

According to Harris (2024), as multipolarity grows, some see this as a new stage of non-alignment and we can say that the element that currently unites LA community are the threats, the inevitable challenges of global governance such as maintaining international peace and security, socioeconomic challenges, climate change, the water crisis, poverty, drug trafficking, migration, violence, micro-criminality, among others.

Hirst et al. (2024) conceives of the presence of Two different Norths and a diverse South. This is a “non-hegemonic order,” which has no start date because it emerges from a combination of processes of varying duration and effects, an order in which no single state or coalition of states and social forces would be able to establish hegemony or dominance with global reach. The order that is being formed will have two main fault lines: a gap between two opposing and different Norths (North 1 and North 2) and another gap between the two Norths and a Global South diverse in resources and power configurations, of which LA, with its own specificities, is a part (Hirst et al., 2024).

LA has enormous potential to play a leading role in the global order in coming years. Given its role as a significant component of the Global South, it can contribute directly to defining the role of the United Nations, BRICS, and other global and regional fora on a range of topics such as the environment, security, health, and social and cultural identity. Its ability to serve as a binder between the two Norths can be a fundamental ingredient to reactivate multilateralism and its hopeful principles of cooperation.

#### The US and Latin America are shifting in different directions in an increasingly multilateral world – US engagement will undermine the shift desired by the region

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In LA it is necessary to point to a new social, economic and political paradigm that illuminates alternative paths for productive organization and consumption models that allow us to maintain a stable balance with the natural world in which we live (Ruesga Benito, 2023).

According to Acharya et al. (2021), the idea of a region not only as a place of action, but also as an identity, has developed in its struggle for independence. The contemporaneous formation of republics led to shared efforts at the level of individual countries and at broader regional levels. But LA can manage strategic bi-regional partnerships. In the economic sphere, it is beginning to play a significant role in the scientific and technological fields.

In terms of security, drug cartels and criminal organizations undermine state authority and pose significant threats to a good government. Political stability has been affected by a wave of corruption turmoil and governance limits. Among the models that have stood out for their improvement process, it is worth highlighting the progress, however fragile, in the peace-building process in Colombia, or the transition to democratic governance in Chile. However, the region’s institutional capacity and its role in international organizations still needs to be strengthened. For example, leftist governments in LA have historically pursued policies of regional integration, anti-imperialism, and detachment from the U.S., while right-wing governments have focused on economic liberalization.

Contrary to Fukuyama’s (1992) predictions, we are witnessing the transition from a cold war to a hot peace, as mentioned by Parsons (1995), where soft power plays a fundamental role in the absence of leadership by States and International Organizations. This leads us to consider that in the new world order there is the empowerment of organized civil society, capable of measuring its forces with precise campaigns aimed at the protection of human rights, but also of rights whose violations are not directly attributable to States. Here, we consider promising examples of movements of cyber activism and calls for environmental protection, among others, which have a global impact (Cattafi, 2021). As a partner, LA needs political stability and good governance with a willingness to reduce corruption, strengthen institutions and civic participation and address social inequality. It is about implementing significant reforms of a structural nature, paradigm shifts, innovative policies, all with the goal of strengthening macroeconomic and social stability.

Although LA is performing below its potential, without a common voice it has attempted to strengthen its resilience. Latin American states have refreshed their international role in existing multilateral instruments such as the G20 and Brazil’s leadership at COP30, Peru’s role in the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) forum, Colombia’s role in the COP on biodiversity, and the coordination of multilateral development banks by the Inter-American Development Bank.

Latin American participation in regional security organizations, such as the OAS and the Union of South American Nations (UNASUR), is crucial for addressing regional conflicts and promoting stability. But neither the OAS nor UNASUR are LA, even if they are composed of Latin American states. In this sense, the advance of autonomous regionalism led to the constitution of the CELAC in 2010, followed 2 years later by the consolidation of the Pacific Alliance with Chile, Colombia, Mexico, and Peru. These initiatives were joined by the actions of the ALBA-Mercosur axis countries and the BRICS agreements of 2014 to create elements of a new global architecture.

Advancement of both international and domestic law remain as considerable challenges. Both falter in cases such as south to north migration from the jungles of Panama to the suffering of migrants on the infamous “beast” train, where only minimum protocols are observed for the protection of human rights (Cattafi, 2021), In the new world order, we may just need to be more human, thinking that proclaiming the obligation to respect human rights should be unnecessary in a world of humans, but it is nonetheless a fundamental operation because international agreements on human rights are precisely, as Turner (1993) reminds us, the institutional response to human frailty. Thinking of a perfect citizenship that goes beyond national ties (Cattafi, 2019) seems a matter of difficult implementation, but LA could play a role here by extending the implementation of the design of the European Union that began to be outlined with Mercosur.

This model of autonomous regionalism, which is unlikely to generate a regional union capable of interacting in a way that differs from the logic of individual state interests, contrasts with the open regionalism model of collaboration between micro-regional alliances. In this context what Gramsci (1996) saw as the formation of the populus embodied in a plebiscite is missing.

If the post-war period saw a renewed hegemony based on counter-hegemonic visions such as dependency, developmentalism, nationalism, race and realpolitik (Acharya et al., 2021), now, we are facing a new phase of the crisis of the world order, whose main feature is the direct political confrontation and large territories between central power blocs of the “global North” and emerging power blocs, deepening on the situation of relative multipolarity (Merino, 2016). In this new context, LA has a great opportunity to lead new alliances and fluid cooperation.

The alliances of interests that Harvey (2014) mentions, which he calls the representatives of the associations meet regularly to assess, plan, and carry out common tasks and to address common problems at different scales: bi-regional, continental, and global. In this sense, the construction of a genuine democracy will be arduous and prolonged, but the region maintains the ideal characteristics to be an influential partner in the new scenario. This begins with the need for LA to pursue a policy of non-alignment on issues that do not directly affect it, while vigorously advocating for global issues in which it can play a key role. A bit what, according to Heine (2024), India did in the Global South, to navigate the turbulent waters of a world order in transition.

According to Acharya’s work, Latin American responses and reactions to alternative world orders in analytical and normative terms are framed by general attempts to theorize in and from the region about world order(s); by different Latin American approaches to understanding peace and security, through the promotion of the norms and institutions of international law; international political economy, (sub)development and globalization; and foreign policy formulations, through the autonomy approach, peripheral realism, regionalism, including the recent trend towards post-hegemonic regionalism and multilateralism (Acharya et al., 2021). While these variables must be considered in the analysis of Latin American reactions, it is also necessary to look inward and assign some space to the phenomenon of political polarization.

The same that McCoy (2024) considers as a systemic and multifaceted process that breaks cross-cutting ties and transforms the perception of politics into a zero-sum game. And when it becomes pernicious, political actors and partisans see opponents as an existential threat and the capacity of democratic institutions to process political conflict breaks down. In this sense, Latin American countries experience varying degrees of breakdowns where persistent and deeply entrenched social hierarchies oriented around class, race and place stand out.

Another additional challenge, generated by extreme versions of populism and authoritarianism feeds citizen disaffection and unease, ideological polarization. Moncagatta and Silva (2024) reveal a substantial process of mass-level ideological restructuring, accompanied by a region-wide increase in ideological polarization in LA taking place during the second decade of the twenty-first century. They find that ideological polarization, albeit varying in intensity by country, is clearly present at a mass level in most countries in the region (Moncagatta and Silva, 2024). In addition, Murillo (2022) notes that polarization has been the historical norm in the region and that today, elites use polarizing strategies to attract electoral support rather than in respond to what is going on in the minds of voters.

Finally, ideological polarization refers to the increasing spatial distance between parties or citizens along a left–right continuum based on their ideological views or policy preferences (Roberts, 2022). Affective polarization refers to the adoption of positions by rival sociopolitical camps based on feelings or sentiments rather than ideological preferences (Druckman and Levendusky, 2019). In LA, polarization at the level of the masses (of citizens), remains present with even greater intensity than Elite-level polarization (of political leaders).

Political factors and ideology have tempered many of the potential economic benefits that LA could have achieved. The inability to implement good governance policies has generated more corruption that pollutes the political arena, coupled with unnecessary alienation of the middle classes (Munck, 2020).

We can perhaps explain this short circle between the exercise of power and the repercussions in society with the Foucauldian concept of “power-knowledge” which suggests that mechanisms of power bring together and produce different kinds of knowledge in ways that further reinforce exercises of power; this is about organization and discourse, where power-knowledge dominates (Hacking et al., 1985). In other words, regardless of ideology, and despite it, in LA knowledge/power continues to be exercised through surveillance and normalization.

#### Latin American development of leadership and tech is unique – outside factors like US meddling is a net negative

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3.4 Latin America’s potential to play a more active role in world affairs

The liberal international order is in the critical phase that Gramsci would call the interregnum, a historical stage in which the old dies and the new cannot be born. A crisis, which Babic (2020) considers multidimensional and cumulative, and which exerts its impact simultaneously and in a correlated manner, in politics and the global economy, at the state level and within society. Heine (2024) considers that a Second Cold War has begun, where LAC countries—but also, more broadly, across the Global South - are under pressure from the US and China. The resulting scenario is synthesized in the idea of interregnum: the dominant forces and coalitions are unable to sustain the established order (what is dying) and those that challenge them are not yet in a position, for lack of capacity or will, to establish an alternative order, which would be the new that cannot be born (Hirst et al., 2024).

Without having planned it, the region must take advantage of the fact that the European Union is once again looking towards LA. This comes after a pause during which the European Union devoted itself to projecting its interests on the African continent, but this did not bear the expected fruits. Its exaggerated investment in Africa did not have the expected response in terms of political recognition by African countries. The non-explicit exchange failed, and the attempt at a new soft colonization of certain parts of Africa now leaves room for a deep concertation in international organizations, based on the interregional relationship between LA and the EU.

The search for greater autonomy in the international sphere, the diversification of ties with other actors, such as the China and the European Union, the deployment of new cooperation and regional integration initiatives, or the return of development policies in a scenario of environmental crisis and digital transformation are some of the elements through which the Latin American region is searching for answers. The region is a mosaic of countries and interests with internal historical, geographical, and ideological fractures that make it difficult to trace a common route. The countries called to exercise this type of leadership (Mexico and Brazil) do not coordinate common policies and have incompatible geopolitical strategies that do not converge. Latin America lacks hegemon, but generating the assumptions to overcome the obstacles, it can become an ally in the preservation of democratic institutions.

Currently, its States participate in dialogues of various kinds. For example, the Organization of American States, founded in 1948, has 35 members with the purpose of cooperating throughout the continent. The Central American Integration System, created in 1960, is composed of 8 members, and has an economic-political purpose The Central American Common Market (CACM) of 1960, is composed of Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras, Nicaragua, Panama, and Costa Rica. The Latin American Parliament (Parlatino) was founded in 1964 and has 23 members; it functions as a regional parliament for the promotion of integration. The Organization of Eastern Caribbean States was founded in 1967 for technical cooperation among seven members. The Andean Community, founded in 1969, has four members. CARICOM, founded in 1973, has 15 members seeking a common market. The LAC Economic System was founded in 1975 and has 28 members.

The Latin American Integration Association was founded in 1980 and has 13 members for economic cooperation. Since 1991, Mercosur foresees the constitution of a common market. It has 5 member states (Venezuela is suspended). The Association of Caribbean States was created in 1994 and has 18 members. The Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of Our America (ALBA) was founded in 2004 and serves as a venue for cooperation by 13 members with a certain ideological affinity. The Union of South American Nations (Unasur) was founded in 2008, with 7 members. The aforementioned CELAC has 33 members, and since 2010 has aimed at political dialogue. The Pacific Alliance was founded in 2011 and has 4 members.

Latin American economies are integrated into smaller sub-units due to the enormous differences that define them. Ideological influences play a palpable role in these regional organizations. This has resulted in limitations on their utility as true models of regional integration. Rather, they can devolve into mechanisms of “regionalism à la carte” when national interests take precedence over the interests of the region.

The Post-Western World experiencing the collapse of the existing world order and the emergence of a counter-order in difficulty for conflict resolutions like those that occurred in past transitions in 1812, 1919 and 1948, but this time without a full-scale war (Zartman, 2024). The state in 2024 of simultaneous large-scale war in Ukraine, complex and expanding conflicts in the Middle East, and tense confrontations in the East and South China Seas may, however, temper this assertion. Borón (2014) said that in their phase of decomposition empires can become much more aggressive and bellicose. A question that is still present and in the face of which LA can generate the necessary dialogue to moderate bellicose situations.

In this context, LA can expand its global influence, but we must question whether it has adequate leadership in its own region to present a unified voice. Only once this key internal factor has been solved, can it become a significant actor in addressing global megatrends that represent challenges and opportunities. One factor is particularly promising. Despite its considerable domestic political and developmental challenges, we can affirm that in LA, inter-state armed conflicts are rarer than in other regions. It can speak on this topic with credibility and authority.

Among the advantages of this region, it is worth noting that in the economic, environmental, and demographic spheres it is emerging as an entity that can play a relevant role in the coming years. The younger population in LA compared to that of many mature economies of the world is another advantage for this region. Indeed, it already fuels a significant part of the labor market in the U.S. and provides a source of cultural vitality and demographic growth.

#### Multipolarity is vital to ensuring regional growth and development globally – any influence from other actors is net negative for the region

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Further reflection is needed in LA to strengthen a regionalism that seems as if it should come naturally but lacks solid foundations and leadership. In another sense, a stronger integration would allow all parties to be at the same table. Collaborating side by side without the need to align to a particular great power. Latin American nations could choose which issues to deal with on a sub-regional basis, in a hemispheric context, or at the level of international organizations. In doing so, it must avoid the trap of becoming a client state to any power acting out of hegemonic ambitions, addressing issues that the region itself defines as priorities in the interests of its own populations.

Yet, the definition of a leader, or group of leaders, to promote such an identity, and to achieve a significant regional influence on global affairs, remains elusive. We have discussed various nations that due to their politico-economic significance in the Americas, could exercise such roles, including Brazil, Mexico, and Colombia. Indeed, these could collaborate more actively in international fora to provide a regional voice that could be identified as such in global economic, environmental, and conflict resolution initiatives. This voice may never be inclusive, and will hardly include nations such as Cuba, Venezuela, and Nicaragua in formulating approaches to great power rivalries. Yet even the European Union has outliers with respect to relations with Russia, China, and Israel, that do not negate its impact on global economic and even political affairs. Unanimity of vision in LA is hardly achievable, yet it is also not necessary to increase her voice in areas that matter to the region.

LA already has a private sector with a cadre of strong national and multinational companies. This sector can play a key role in both conventional economic and broader cultural and social representation of the region abroad. Latin American companies have considerable opportunities to broaden their direct investment in the United States, Europe, Africa, and Asia. In that they do not operate from countries with significant political liabilities in these regions, as with the great powers, such companies have fewer barriers to entry. The grounds for objection, such as opposition to Chinese companies in the U.S., or French companies in Africa, are absent.

Here, the lack of politico-economic baggage and fear of state involvement in direct investment for potentially nefarious ends are a distinct advantage. Investments by a Mexican or Brazilian company in Asia or Africa do not engender the kinds of suspicions that might be found with the companies of former colonial powers. LA n companies must. However, move past simple import and export activity to more meaningful and influence-generating partnerships, equity investments, and even direct buyouts in the retail, manufacturing, and services sectors. There have been tentative steps by companies such as Mexico-based Bimbo and FEMSA in Europe and the United States, but much more can be done. Here, we emphasize foreign direct investment by LA n companies in other parts of the world rather than by other nations in LA.

Multipolarity, changing geopolitical needs, new global challenges, and the demand for a different typology of actors involved in decision making, generate a greater potential for LA to increase its influence in the evolving world order. The hitherto peripheral global role of LA may prove to be a strength given global south frustration with the behavior of its northern counterparts. LA bears little or no responsibility for ongoing global conflicts and has avoided direct military involvement in great power rivalries. Narratives in the global south toward the richer north of predatory capitalism, economic subjugation and the high political costs of foreign investment are absent.

The limited political and economic engagement to date of LA in world conflicts offers the region an opportunity to reassess its influence more prominently at the global level, as a player offering a fresh start and perspective. With more room for maneuver, however, there remain significant challenges for the sustainability of intra-regional peace, management of strategic resources, plurality of identities and the political vitality of its actors. Here the power and dynamism of traditional civic activism and social movements may play a positive and unifying role in overcoming these challenges. By adopting a politically balanced approach that emphasizes genuine economic cooperation, respect for sovereignty and equality among nations, and an emphasis on its rich human and ecological diversity, Latin America can easily assume a more significant role in a world tired of conflict and great power rivalries.

#### Unilateral focus detracts from cooperative aims necessary to tamp down on democratic backsliding in Latin America

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KEY LESSONS FROM LATIN AMERICA’S REGIONAL RESPONSE

The essays in this report deepen our understanding of the escalating and evolving threats posed by global authoritarianism. While responses to authoritarian information manipulation have been robust in many ways across Latin America, much more can be done to counter it and enhance the quality of information available to citizens, particularly around elections. Key lessons include:

Authoritarians are increasingly collaborating to undermine democracy. Global authoritarian powers are investing massive resources in support of partner regimes who share their goals of undermining democracy at the regional level. A key component of the autocrats’ wide-ranging effort is the production and dissemination of media narratives that question democracy, elevate authoritarian rule, and aim to challenge the legitimacy of core democratic tenets such as the separation of powers, rule of law, free and fair elections, and human rights. Such collaboration often also includes the provision of new digital technologies for repression, as well as economic and military partnerships.

Democratic actors must cooperate to address the speed and scale of the challenge to democracy. No single organization has all the necessary tools, knowledge, and experience to counter the increasing speed and scale of authoritarian information operations. Cross-disciplinary collaboration among civil society—journalists, fact checkers, researchers, data analysts, experts in artificial intelligence, sociologists, and strategic communicators, among others—is critical to building resilient democratic institutions and managing new challenges such as those that will accompany the spread of generative artificial intelligence. Democratic governments also play a critical role in facilitating such innovative forms of collaboration through direct engagement, technical support, and funding, as has been seen recently in Ukraine.

Strategic responses to authoritarian information operations are essential. As authoritarian actors expand their influence, civil society-led initiatives that correct misrepresentations in the information space, such as fact checking and independent journalism, may not be enough. Strategic, proactive responses that provide context and historical perspective to explain why such narratives may harm citizens and their democracy are essential to supporting democratic cohesion and defending the integrity of the information space.

Authoritarians are increasingly emboldened in their drive to undermine democracy. The experience of Latin America, where there are many vulnerable democracies, is a critical example of how authoritarians use information and ideas to project influence in ways that are deeply corrosive to democracy. While the world waits for the scaling of legal and regulatory remedies that might ameliorate some of the top-order challenges in the information space, civil society’s role becomes increasingly critical. To succeed in securing the integrity of the information space in support of democratic standards—in Latin America and elsewhere around the globe where democracy is under threat—civil society must unlock new forms of innovation to confront the evolving forms of authoritarian influence reshaping the information environment.

#### Negative can argue that increased engagement harms broader attempts to tamp out democratic backsliding or that democratic aid trades off

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COUNTERVAILING INTERESTS AND ASYMMETRIC COMMITMENTS ON BACKSLIDING

Given the seriousness and prevalence of democratic backsliding globally, the administration’s willingness to respond strongly to at least some cases of it is important. The administration’s prodemocratic engagement in Brazil in the lead-up to the 2022 elections, for example, helped head off a potentially momentous blow to democracy in Latin America. Yet the Biden team has confronted three nettlesome issues in its quest to limit or reverse backsliding.

The first is the fact that countervailing U.S. interests vis-à-vis many backsliding contexts militate against a strong U.S. democracy response. As discussed in the earlier section on countering China and Russia, some of these crosscurrents arise from Washington’s competition with Beijing and Moscow to gain the friendship and loyalty of many governments. It is difficult, for example, for the United States to push the Indian government hard on its troubling policies regarding minority rights and fundamental freedoms when Washington is in full courtship mode with New Delhi in its quest to line up major partners against Beijing. Responding in a principled fashion to coups has proven difficult in the Sahel, where Russia is fishing for new friends and capitalizes on anti-Western sentiment. And, after Poland stepped up as a key ally in the U.S.-led response to Russia’s invasion of Ukraine, whatever inclination the Biden team had to distance itself from Poland’s illiberal government of the time dissipated.

The geopolitical angle is not the only complicating factor. Given the wide range of U.S. security interests around the world, countervailing interests particular to a specific country or subregional context often exist. The Biden administration’s relative silence on troubling democracy and human rights issues in Mexico is related to the administration’s need for help from the Mexican government on migration. The administration has engaged seriously to try to slow or constrain the autocratic march of Tunisia’s strongman president, yet such actions are quietly balanced against the need to preserve the long-standing relationship that the United States has with Tunisia’s military.

The second serious challenge to the anti-backsliding agenda is the inescapable asymmetry that affects such efforts: for the backsliding leader, the political project of autocratization is often of existential importance; backing down from it implies political failure and a possible ouster. By contrast, for Washington, limiting or reversing the backsliding is a nice-to-have policy goal, but U.S. officials are not likely to go to the mat for it. Indeed, often it is just one of several, coexisting U.S. priorities for a specific country. This asymmetry, combined with the strong perception in many foreign capitals of diminishing U.S. influence globally and weakened U.S. credibility in delivering prodemocratic messages, causes many leaders—even of relatively small, weak countries—to shrug off entreaties or pressure from Washington. The fact that at least somewhat robust U.S. prodemocratic engagement with Tunisia’s leader has not turned him away from his autocratizing project is testament to this fact. So too is the reality that the president of a country as small and traditionally dependent on the United States as El Salvador can defy the Biden administration’s stated wishes regarding democratic principles and pay no real price for doing so. Even when the United States exerts a high degree of economic pressure—such as on Myanmar and Venezuela—elites find ways to insulate themselves, either by hiding assets or forging alliances with U.S. rivals.

A third challenge on backsliding is the simple fact of limited U.S. policy bandwidth. Crafting an effective response to democratic backsliding requires steady, nuanced policy engagement that is well-coordinated across the different, relevant parts of the U.S. government. It also requires continued follow-up as backsliding powers adapt and push back. Ideally, such engagement needs to begin early, when backsliding is just starting, and then continue and evolve as the government in question implements its illiberal playbook.39 When the country is of significant size and overall profile, such concerted engagement is sometimes possible. Brazil is arguably such a case. Yet when it is a small country unlikely to make U.S. headlines, sustained, high-level, prodemocracy policy engagement is hard to muster. This was particularly the case during the first two years of the Biden administration, when many key democracy policy officials had their hands full with extensive preparations for the two global democracy summits. Moreover, as the administration has lacked a confirmed assistant secretary for democracy, human rights, and labor due to the Senate’s refusal to confirm a nominee for the position, the Biden team has lacked a primary senior democracy champion in the policy arena.

QUESTIONS ABOUT DEMOCRACY DELIVERING

The administration’s bet that helping reform-oriented governments show their citizens that democracy can deliver is a useful complement to other parts of its democracy policy. Focusing on emergent bright spots is not itself novel; for decades, the United States has hurried aid to countries that experience democratic breakthroughs.40 But by elevating this policy approach as a flagship initiative, the administration raises the chances of bringing to bear greater diplomatic muscle and aid resources. In addition, given the gloomy outlook about democracy in analytic and policy circles, it is a useful corrective to highlight the fact that democratic openings are still occurring and that Washington can boost them. With its focus on the need for democracy to deliver, the effort seeks to address the deeper causes of democratic failure rather than just to treat the symptoms, something the United States and other prodemocratic international actors have been slow to do over the course of the global democratic recession. The Democracy Delivers Initiative is still too new to permit any judgment about its impact, but several potential challenges to its success, or at least issues that will need to be addressed as it develops, merit mention.

One obvious question is whether the administration can mobilize significant and sustained help for countries that are largely of low strategic importance to the United States (such as the Dominican Republic, Malawi, Maldives, and Zambia). Washington is so beset with pressing demands for assistance and congressional earmarks often leave so little room for maneuver that doing a lot for these countries will be a challenge. Administration officials note that mobilizing new aid resources is less the goal than mobilizing other actors—such as U.S. businesses and private philanthropic organizations—to step up for these countries, and they flag that the initiative has already galvanized a sizable array of partners.41 They also argue that precisely because most of the targeted countries are small, even relatively modest amounts of additional support will be noticed and make a difference. Nevertheless, the administration’s own ability to deliver on its promise to help others deliver will be a test.

A second issue that speaks to the need for further deepening and broadening of this policy initiative is the stubbornly difficult question of the causes of democratic failure. A close look at a diverse array of relevant cases shows the insufficiency of the simple assumption that backsliding is mainly driven by governments falling short on economic performance. In some countries, such as El Salvador and the Philippines, it was citizen anger about physical insecurity rather than economic well-being that fueled illiberal populist leaders. In other cases, such as Poland and Türkiye, notable economic success preceded the emergence of illiberal autocratic leaders; instead, it was identity and culturally based divisions and ambitions on the part of different social groups that underpinned support for the leaders. Additionally, assuming that citizens’ embrace of illiberal leaders is a key factor in backsliding ignores cases like Guatemala, where the incipient backsliding was about the reassertion of power by entrenched elites determined to strangle looming democratic accountability, not about popular support waning for well-intentioned democrats. In these and other cases, looking to ensure the success of a democratic opening or to head off democratic slippage by simply helping “democracy deliver” is too narrow a playbook.

A third question is about the initiative’s longevity. The initiative was established and has been advanced by a strong, high-profile head of USAID, Samantha Power. Its implementation therefore hinges on the unusually high level of prominence and policy heft that she brings to the table. While the new USAID democracy bureau is engaged in the initiative, the overall effort has been largely spearheaded by the team around the administrator. Whether this initiative will survive her eventual departure from USAID—and the arrival of a successor who potentially has other interests and likely a lower profile—is thus another question mark.

THE VALUE AND LIMITS OF AID

Upgrading and retooling democracy aid to better meet the current international moment is unquestionably a strong forward step on the administration’s part. The democracy aid community, both in the United States and other donor countries, has been slow to move past ways of thinking and acting that were formed decades ago, when democracy was expanding worldwide and the core goal was bolstering ongoing transitions. Now that the global context is marked by widespread democratic slippage, the effort to modernize aid programs, including by giving extra attention to issues of pressing current relevance, is long overdue. The administration’s heightened emphasis on anti-corruption work, for example, is a valuable recognition of the corrosive role corruption has been playing in many democracies. Similarly, the greater focus on digital repression and other technologically driven harm to democracy is a welcome sign of catching up to the fast-changing factors that are distorting and damaging democracy globally.

At the same time, the limits of democracy aid remain. It is worth bearing in mind that since the global democratic recession emerged in the second half of the 2000s, the United States has spent over $30 billion on democracy aid (and European donors have together spent a similar amount), yet the recession has advanced year by year.42 Compared with the main domestic drivers of a country’s political trajectory, like the configuration of political forces and the relative strength of different political institutions, democracy aid coming into a country from an external actor is usually a relatively weak factor in shaping outcomes. In addition, democracy aid only reaches certain countries; little goes to some of the major current or recent cases of backsliding, such as Brazil, India, Mexico, and Türkiye.

Furthermore, democracy aid can only be strongly effective if is complemented by matching engagement on diplomacy and security. For example, a technical aid program to increase electoral integrity in a country where the government threatens to compromise the electoral process needs complementary diplomatic and economic pressure on the government. Sometimes U.S. democracy aid receives such supportive policy engagement, but sometimes it does not. U.S. democracy aid goes to various autocratic governments, such as Jordan and Morocco, with which the United States maintains friendly ties and therefore asserts little diplomatic pressure around democracy issues.43 It is no surprise, then, that two of the seemingly most promising arenas of the administration’s democracy aid push—anti-corruption and technology—also feature robust policy initiatives. In these areas, the administration has ably combined policy and aid initiatives to bolster or establish new partnerships and programs that will make tangible, positive contributions. A key question now is whether the administration can join up other focal areas of democracy aid, like media freedom and support for people-centered justice, with complementary policy engagement.

### Swing State DA

#### Swing State DA – nation states have emerged as potential “swing states” for the global order. US unilateral engagement with Latin America forces overreliance on the dollar, which maligns swing state cooperation.

Scheffer et al 23 [Alliances in a Shifting Global Order: Rethinking Transatlantic Engagement with Global Swing States, Fluid Alliances in a Multipolarizing World: Rethinking US and European Strategies Toward Global Swing States, May 2, 2023, <https://www.gmfus.org/sites/default/files/2023-04/Global%20Swing%20States_27%20apr_FINAL_embargoed%20until%202%20May%202023.pdf>]

Russia’s war on Ukraine has accelerated three structural trends that have been reshaping global affairs since the end of the Cold War: the erosion of the post-1945 order and challenges to US global leadership; strategic competition between the United States and China; and the rise of regional powers to the status of global powers. This period of geopolitical transition demands a rethinking of US and European international statecraft if the transatlantic community is to retain its extensive influence.

A full-scale reconfiguration of global alliances is now underway, forcing states to position themselves in relation to new dynamics of strategic competition. Many countries are choosing to maintain fluid relations in different realms of international affairs to exploit opportunities from steadily growing Sino American competition. These “global swing states”, a term initially coined by GMF and the Center for a New American Security in 2012, and updated in this publication in the light of the war in Ukraine and the current great-power rivalry, seek to increase their influence in global affairs by cooperating with the United States, China, Europe, and Russia, without giving any of them an exclusive commitment. Given this growing global geopolitical and economic reach, swing states are playing a pivotal role in their respective regions, shaping policies on key transnational issues such as climate change, global health, and internet governance, and assuming a more active role in crisis diplomacy. They seek to escape a bipolar logic and pursue a multialignment strategy.

Drawing on GMF’s global network of offices and fellows, this publication provides in-depth and cross regional analysis of the “swing strategies” of six key states—Brazil, India, Indonesia, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, and Turkey—and formulates policy recommendations for the United States and European powers to engage with the swing states, thereby preserving transatlantic influence over the shape of the international order.

New Patterns of International Cooperation

Global politics has entered an era of more competition and less cooperation. The world order has become more fragmented, increasingly split between Washington- and Beijing-led blocs that take different approaches to economic, security, technology, and social policy. The World Trade Organization’s and UN Security Council’s structural issues have only worsened as they become epicenters of these opposing perspectives. Both agencies, and other post-World War II institutions, exhibit increasing dysfunction after failing to address recent challenges such as the COVID-19 pandemic and the war in Ukraine. An increasing number of countries are consequently rejecting the US-led, Western concept of international order and striving to create their own norms on human rights and technology, among other critical global issues.

The United States sees China increasingly co-opting multilateral forums and prefers to invest in international cooperation through bilateral or regional formats with like-minded countries, such as AUKUS and the Quad in its Indo-Pacific (Australia, India, Japan, and the United States) and transatlantic (France, Germany, the United Kingdom, and the United States) versions. Beijing, no longer content to adhere to the existing global order, is simultaneously building its own institutions and channels, including development banks and inter-regional security organizations. Chinese President Xi Jinping has called on his country to “lead the reform of the global governance system” by pursuing a multipronged strategy. He seeks the status quo when it aligns with national goals and norms, as the World Bank and the Paris Agreement on climate change do, and he seeks change when national vulnerabilities are exposed, as they are in the global financial system and international technology standards, or when Chinese norms differ from those of the current system, as they do regarding human rights. In these latter cases, China undermines Western values and creates alternative institutions.

The Trump administration’s retreat from global leadership gave China an opportunity to fill the void and promote multipolar global governance. That administration also normalized transactionalism and disruption in international affairs, boosting a trend toward more fluid and reversible alliances.

Swing states seek to find their place in this world, as new coalitions emerge. They seek alternatives to the present order, but another structure, whether economic or political, has yet to emerge. SinoAmerican interdependence in a globalized economy means complex consequences for a rivalry that impacts multiple global actors, each uniquely.

Unsurprisingly, these developments have made regionalization more consequential than globalization, with more than half of international trade, investment, and the movement of money, information, and people now occurring within regions. From India to Argentina, from Brazil to South Africa, and from the Middle East to Southeast Asia, nations and regions are accelerating efforts toward arrangements aimed at reducing their dependence on the US dollar. They fear that the United States could use its currency’s power to target them as it has a sanctioned Russia. The swing states also recognize China’s growing ability to provide its trading partners with goods that they need, including advanced technology.

The future of a healthier international order will likely depend on stronger regional structures. The transatlantic community, if it is to protect its interests, needs to work with these structures, and that means working more effectively with swing states.

#### Another good swing state article: <https://www.goldmansachs.com/intelligence/pages/the-rise-of-geopolitical-swing-states.html>

### Aid Tradeoff DA

#### Foreign assistance to Latin America is on the chopping block – multiple factors

WOLA 1/31/2025 [Washington Office on Latin America, a leading research and advocacy organization advancing human rights in the Americas.Trump’s Pause of U.S. Foreign Assistance to Latin America: An “America Last” Policy <https://www.wola.org/analysis/trumps-pause-of-u-s-foreign-assistance-to-latin-america-an-america-last-policy/> Accessed 4/23/2025]

Next Steps U.S. foreign assistance to Latin America and the Caribbean has enjoyed bipartisan support for decades: programs have built on past lessons and become more sophisticated and cost effective. Foreign aid can be an important tool to advance U.S. foreign policy goals, including addressing the factors driving migration, supporting countries receiving migrants, refugees and asylum seekers to reduce secondary migration, developing more effective drug policies, expanding state presence in ungoverned territories, strengthening criminal justice institutions and the rule of law, and consolidating peace in Colombia. For U.S. support to be effective, strategies must be long-term, sustainable, rooted in the realities on the ground, and working with constructive partners in governments, international agencies, and civil societies. Cutting or eliminating assistance in Latin America badly disrupts that long-term, sustainable focus. It will make the region less safe and give governments fewer tools to respond to the drivers of migration. During Trump’s first term, Congress—including in 2017-18 when Republicans held the majority in both chambers—rejected proposed cuts to many programs. In the case of Latin America and the Caribbean, U.S. assistance ranged from $1.67 billion to $1.8 billion per year between 2018-2021, on par with previous years. At this critical moment, the Trump administration should spend U.S. foreign assistance as appropriated by Congress. Members of Congress should do everything in their power to exercise their authority in determining the budget. While the Office of Management and Budget has rescinded its January 27 memo freezing all federal grants, this is not the case for the pause on foreign assistance, which appears in an earlier executive order despite its impact on civil society organizations and others providing vital assistance worldwide. At the same time, Congress should insist that the Administration adhere to existing law regarding the expenditure of funds. The U.S. legislature undergoes a rigorous, detailed annual appropriations process, dividing the federal budget into 12 comprehensive bills developed and negotiated by separate subcommittees. These bills are not suggestions that the President may pick and choose like items on a menu. The 1974 Impoundment Control Act affords presidents possible avenues for rescinding or deferring some forms of spending under certain conditions. But Trump’s enormously broad, preemptive pause of foreign aid goes far beyond what the law allows and what the Constitution contemplates. The Trump administration, like each of its predecessors, undoubtedly wishes to put its stamp on U.S. foreign policy and on the priorities that guide U.S. foreign assistance programs. The new administration will have every chance to do so through Congress’s normal budgeting and appropriations legislative processes. For at least the next two years, Trump’s GOP will control both houses of Congress through which those priorities and spending bills emerge, and the new administration’s officials will have innumerable opportunities to try to make the case for changes they consider necessary. But the pre-emptive pause of vast swathes of U.S. foreign aid, without warning and without any assurances that programs will resume, has no basis in U.S. law, undermines other governments’ confidence in U.S. reliability, and is causing harm to civil society organizations that play a vital role in the life of any democratic society.

#### Funding freezes places budgets in critical condition- money will shift between different portions of USAID and other foreign assistance

WOLA 1/31/2025 [Washington Office on Latin America, a leading research and advocacy organization advancing human rights in the Americas.Trump’s Pause of U.S. Foreign Assistance to Latin America: An “America Last” Policy <https://www.wola.org/analysis/trumps-pause-of-u-s-foreign-assistance-to-latin-america-an-america-last-policy/> Accessed 4/23/2025]

The unprecedented pause and potential elimination of many U.S. foreign assistance programs, announced in President Trump’s executive order “Reevaluating and Realigning United States Foreign Aid,” has caused shock waves worldwide. The State Department has since backtracked and taken the welcome move to exclude “life-saving humanitarian assistance” from this freeze. Still, most programs remain on long-term hold even though they support priorities that the Trump administration claims to uphold, like curbing mass migration, reducing illicit drug supplies, and fostering economic prosperity. State Department and USAID-managed foreign assistance to Latin America and the Caribbean totaled a little over $2 billion in FY 2023, the most recent year for which an actual amount is available. While this is a fraction of the $45 billion in base U.S. foreign assistance obligated for State and USAID programs that year, it is enough to guarantee that great harm will result from the 90-day pause in use of funds and the possibility that agreed-upon programs might be modified or discontinued. That is causing great uncertainty and alarm among “implementing partners”—civil society organizations, international organizations, and contractors region-wide- : they are being forced to cancel events, lay off staff, and determine how or if they will be able to honor commitments. The freeze applies beyond development and human rights efforts to encompass programs that groups like WOLA have often critiqued. Much U.S. military and police aid, including training programs and counter-drug eradication and interdiction funded through the State Department’s International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs (INL) Bureau, is now on hold. Far from making the United States safer, stronger, and more prosperous, the pause in funding and uncertainty about future funds undermine fundamental U.S. interests to an extent that is difficult to comprehend. It is actively weakening efforts to address the reasons millions are fleeing Latin America and the Caribbean, like armed conflicts, violent organized crime, rampant corruption, democratic backsliding, closing civic space, weak justice systems and rule of law, inadequate policing and public security, gender-based violence, exclusion from formal markets, and vulnerability to climate change. The aid freeze is an exquisitely wrapped gift to the United States’ regional adversaries, from dictators to drug lords to human smugglers to great-power rivals like China. Current U.S. support for Latin America and the Caribbean According to Congressional Research Service, “Over the past decade, top U.S. funding priorities for foreign assistance in the region have included addressing the underlying drivers of migration from Central America, combating drug production and supporting peace accord implementation in Colombia, and strengthening security and the rule of law in Mexico. U.S. agencies also have prioritized programs intended to counter HIV/AIDS and instability in Haiti, address security concerns in the Caribbean, and respond to the political and humanitarian crises in Venezuela and their impact on the broader region.” FY2023 appropriations are primarily passed through the Development Assistance (DA, $663.7 million), Economic Support Funds (ESF, $523.5 million), and International Narcotics Control and Law Enforcement (INCLE, $584.9 million) accounts. The Inter-American Foundation, which promotes microenterprises and community development throughout the Latin American and Caribbean region, also received an additional $52 million in funds. The region also received a share of global accounts and initiatives, most notably programming from the State Department’s Population, Refugees, and Migration Bureau (PRM) that is helping millions of migrants to settle there instead of proceeding further north.

The FY2024 budget approved by Congress in March 2024 included several areas that Republican legislators have long supported, including $25 million in Cuba democracy programs, $50 million for democracy programs in Venezuela, $15 million for democracy and religious freedom programs for Nicaragua, and not less than $125 million under ESF and INCLE accounts for programs to counter the flow of fentanyl, fentanyl precursors, and other synthetic drugs into the United States, principally in Mexico. A multiple of that goes to states like Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, Panama, and Costa Rica to counter the production and transshipment of cocaine. $70 million was appropriated to support “programs to reduce violence against women and girls, including for Indigenous women and girls” in Central America. At least $12.5 million seeks to combat human trafficking. Much of the $134.5 million in INCLE and NADR (Nonproliferation, Anti-terrorism, Demining, and Related Programs) funding for Central America seeks to dismantle and protect people from gangs while fortifying borders.

#### Messing with USAID funding undermines Mexico funding and coop with the US

WOLA 1/31/2025 [Washington Office on Latin America, a leading research and advocacy organization advancing human rights in the Americas.Trump’s Pause of U.S. Foreign Assistance to Latin America: An “America Last” Policy <https://www.wola.org/analysis/trumps-pause-of-u-s-foreign-assistance-to-latin-america-an-america-last-policy/> Accessed 4/23/2025]

Mexico Much recent U.S. assistance to Mexico has focused on strengthening the rule of law and addressing crime, with the State Department’s Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs (INL) working to build capacity in Mexican security and justice institutions. As the current funding pause halts State Department programs to combat transnational crime, it is paradoxically freezing and threatening to defund U.S. engagement on some of the very issues the current administration identifies as key to improving not just Mexico’s security, but that of the United States. Just since Inauguration Day, the Department of Justice (DOJ) issued a statement about how extensive U.S.-Mexico cooperation resulted in Mexico’s arrest of the leader and another member of “a prolific transnational drug trafficking organization operating along the U.S.-Mexico border.” The statement commented on how funding through INL had enabled DOJ to provide valuable assistance—assistance that is among the categories currently “paused.” For its part, USAID has provided important support for Mexican institutions’ efforts to address the country’s devastating disappearance crisis, as well as assistance that aims to improve human rights, protect journalists and human rights defenders, and support economic development and state-level justice institutions. Cutting off such programs would not only harm people and groups in Mexico, but could undermine the current administration’s focus on migration, weakening efforts to address the root causes of why people migrate, like crime and insecurity.

### Nonalignment DA

#### Relations are at a critical space now- continued perceptions of the trump administration are only suggesting a decline in support

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Security Lens Their approaches will also lead to different likely partners. Trump is more likely to maintain close relations with leaders the global conservative movement views favorably — such as Argentina’s Javier Milei and El Salvador’s Nayib Bukele, both of whom spoke at this year’s Conservative Political Action Conference (CPAC). A Harris administration would likely be able to work with these countries — much as the Biden administration has — but it would also be more able to engage with countries with left-wing governments. Working with these countries will be critical to addressing shared challenges in the region and in building support for collective pressure on undemocratic countries. Given Harris’s heritage, past policy preferences, and prosecutorial history, she may also be able to work with Caribbean leaders on issues of importance to the region, including climate change and gun trafficking. Rhetoric surrounding the region will also have real impacts. Both administrations will likely have a heavy focus on China and view the region through this security lens. This framing may lead to missed opportunities to partner with the region under both administrations. However, a Trump administration is much more likely to engage in conversations of the Monroe Doctrine and racialized discourse surrounding immigrant communities — discourses that can undermine US relations across the region. These conversations also feed into regional concerns about US interests in the region as well as China’s narrative of US intentions.

#### US pressure against China increases tensions and alienates Latin American allies who rely on Chinese economic investments

Leon 2024 [Othon A. teaches management, strategy, and political science-related topics at schools such as HEC Montreal (University of Montreal), as well as universities on four continents as an invited lecturer. He manages the Canadian Centre for Strategic Studies and is currently completing PhD studies in Political Science (war studies) while simultaneously completing a master’s degree in International Relations and War Studies at King's College London. He holds two M.Sc. degrees (International Studies, Strategy) and an MBA. He is also a former Fortune 500 company executive who attended a military academy. Latin America Is About to Gain More U.S. Attention Than It Has Received in Three Decades… Is That Good? <https://moderndiplomacy.eu/2024/12/17/latin-america-is-about-to-gain-more-u-s-attention-than-it-has-received-in-three-decades-is-that-good/> Accessed 4/23/2024]

Strategic Competition with China

China’s rapid economic expansion in Latin America has become a major concern for U.S. policymakers. Beijing has solidified its presence through trade, investment, and infrastructure projects in the past two decades. Chinese companies have funded critical initiatives, such as ports in Peru and railway networks in Brazil, fostering closer economic ties.

Trade between China and Latin America grew from $18 billion in 2002 to $480 billion in 2023, reflecting the region’s growing reliance on Chinese markets. This dynamic creates a geopolitical dilemma for countries seeking to balance their relationships with the U.S. and China. Washington has urged regional governments to avoid Chinese involvement in sensitive sectors, particularly telecommunications and energy. However, this pressure risks alienating nations that view China as a valuable partner for economic growth.

#### Latin America is abiding by non-alignment now and is staunchly against taking sides between US, Russia, and China

Heine 23 [Jorge Heine Interim Director of the Frederick S. Pardee Center for the Study of the Longer-Range Future, Boston University, The Global South is forging a new foreign policy in the face of war in Ukraine, China-US tensions: Active nonalignment, June 16, 2023, https://theconversation.com/the-global-south-is-forging-a-new-foreign-policy-in-the-face-of-war-in-ukraine-china-us-tensions-active-nonalignment-207078]

What does the Ukraine war have to do with Brazil? On the face of it, perhaps not much.

Yet, in his first six months in office, Brazilian President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva – now in his third nonconsecutive term – has expended much effort trying to bring peace to the conflict in Eastern Europe. This has included conversations with U.S. President Joe Biden in Washington, Chinese President Xi Jinping in Beijing and in a teleconference call with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy. It has also seen “shuttle diplomacy” by Lula’s chief foreign policy adviser – and former foreign minister – Celso Amorim, who has visited Russian President Vladimir Putin in Moscow and welcomed his foreign minister, Sergei Lavrov, in Brasília.

One reason Brazil has been in a position to meet with such an array of parties involved in the conflict is because the nation has made a point of not taking sides in the war. In so doing, Brazil is engaging in what my colleagues Carlos Fortin and Carlos Ominami and I have called “active nonalignment.” By this we mean a foreign policy approach in which countries from the Global South – Africa, Asia and Latin America – refuse to take sides in conflicts between the great powers and focus strictly on their own interests. It is an approach that The Economist has characterized as “how to survive a superpower split.”

The difference between this new “nonalignment” and a similar approach adopted by nations in decades past is that it is happening in an era in which developing nations are in a much stronger position than they once were, with rising powers emerging among them. For example, the gross domestic product in regard to purchasing power of the five BRICS countries - Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa – has overtaken that of the G7 group of advanced economic nations. This growing economic power gives active nonaligned nations more international clout, allowing them to forge new initiatives and diplomatic coalition-building in a manner that would have been unthinkable before. Would, for example, João Goulart, who served as Brazil’s president from 1961 to 1964, have attempted to mediate in the Vietnam War, in the same way that Lula is doing with Ukraine? I believe to ask the question is to answer it.

Transparent, research-based, written by experts – and always free.

Neither neutral nor disinterested

The growth of active nonalignment has been fueled by the increased competition and what I see as a budding second Cold War between the United States and China. For many countries in the Global South, maintaining good relations with both Washington and Beijing has been crucial for economic development, as well as trade and investment flows.

It is simply not in their interest to take sides in this growing conflict. At the same time, active nonalignment is not to be confused with neutrality – a legal position under international law that entails certain duties and obligations. Being neutral means not taking a stance, which is not the case in active nonalignment.

Nor is active nonalignment about remaining equidistant, politically, from the great powers. On some issues – say, on democracy and human rights – it is perfectly possible for an active nonaligned policy to take a position closer to the United States. While on others – say, international trade – the country may side more with China.

Men in suits stand by the coast.

Egyptian President Gamal Abdel Nasser, Indian Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru and Yugoslavian President Marshal Tito at the Non-Aligned Movement conference in 1956. Archive Photos/Getty Images

This form of nonalignment requires a highly fine-tuned diplomacy, one that examines each issue on its merits and makes choices steeped in statecraft.

Opting out across the world

As far as the war in Ukraine is concerned, it means not supporting either Russia or NATO. And Brazil isn’t the only country in the Global South taking that position, although it was the first to attempt to broker a peace agreement.

Across Africa, Asia and Latin America, several key countries have refused to side with NATO. Most prominent among them has been India, which despite its closer ties with the United States in recent years and its joining the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue – or the “Quad,” a group sometimes described as an “Asian NATO” – with the U.S., Japan and Australia, refused to condemn Russia’s invasion of Ukraine and has significantly increased its imports of Russian oil.

India’s nonalignment will presumably be on the agenda during Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s talks with Biden in his upcoming visit to Washington.

Indeed, the position of India, the world’s largest democracy, shows how the war in Ukraine, far from reflecting that the main geopolitical cleavage in the world today is between democracy and autocracy, as Biden has argued, reveals that the real divide is between the Global North and the Global South.

Some of the most populous democracies in the world in addition to India – countries like Indonesia, Pakistan, South Africa, Brazil, Mexico and Argentina – have refused to side with NATO. Almost no country in Africa, Asia and Latin America has supported the diplomatic and economic sanctions against Russia.

Although many of these nations have voted to condemn Russia’s invasion of Ukraine in the United Nations General Assembly, where 140-plus member states have repeatedly done so, none wants to make what they consider to be a European war into a global one.

How the ‘great powers’ are reacting

Washington has seemingly been caught by surprise by this reaction, having portrayed the war in Ukraine as a choice between good and evil – one where the future of the “rules-based international order” is at stake. Similarly, during the Cold War with the Soviet Union, U.S. Secretary of State John Foster Dulles referred to nonalignment as “immoral.”

Russia has seen the new nonaligned movement as an opening to bolster its own position, with Foreign Minister Lavrov crisscrossing Africa, Asia and Latin America to buttress Moscow’s opposition to sanctions. China, in turn, has ramped up its campaign to enhance the international role of the yuan, arguing that the weaponization of the U.S. dollar against Russia only confirms the dangers of relying on it as the main world currency.

But I would argue that active nonalignment depends as much on regional multilateralism and cooperation as it does on these high-profile meetings. A recent South American diplomatic summit in Brasília called by Lula – the first such meeting held in 10 years – reflects Brazil’s awareness of the need to work with neighbors to deploy its international initiatives.

Three men sit at a bench the one in the center has a plaque saying 'Brazil' on it.

Brazil President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva speaks during a meeting with fellow South American leaders on May 30, 2023. Mateus Bonomi/Anadolu Agency via Getty Images

Think local, act global

This need to act jointly is also driven by the region’s economic crisis. In 2020, Latin America was hit by its worst economic downturn in 120 years, with regional GDP falling by an average of 6.6%. The region also suffered the highest COVID-19 death rate anywhere in the world, accounting for close to 30% of global fatalities from the pandemic despite comprising just over 8% of the world’s population. In this context, to be caught in the middle of a great power battle is unappealing, and active nonalignment has resonated.

Beyond the incipient U.S.-China Cold War and the war in Ukraine, the resurrection of nonalignment in its new “active” incarnation reflects a widespread disenchantment in the Global South with what has been known as the “Liberal International Order” in existence since World War II.

This order is seen as increasingly frayed and unresponsive to the needs of developing countries on issues ranging from international indebtedness and food security to migration and climate change. To many nations in the Global South, calls to uphold the “rules-based order” appear to serve only the foreign policy interests of the great powers, rather than the global public good. In such a context, it is perhaps not surprising that so many nations are actively refusing to be caught in an “us versus them” dynamic.

#### Non-alignment is a hotly debated conversation in the literature at the moment – Latin American governments’ desires to “stay out of the competition choice” gives this disad uniqueness.

Lesser et al 23 [Ian O., GMF Collaborative, Alliances in a Shifting Global Order: Rethinking Transatlantic Engagement with Global Swing States, The Myth of the Monolithic “Global South”, May 2, 2023, <https://www.gmfus.org/sites/default/files/2023-04/Global%20Swing%20States_27%20apr_FINAL_embargoed%20until%202%20May%202023.pdf>]

Leaving aside countries such as Syria, Venezuela, North Korea, Mali, and others whose regimes rely heavily on Russian support, most countries in the Global South oppose the Kremlin’s war of aggression on legal and moral grounds. Respect for territorial integrity tends to be taken seriously, and UN General Assembly resolutions attest to this. Those voting with Moscow are clear outliers, although a significant number of countries are inclined to abstain. The conflict may be distant, but countries in the south are keenly aware of their exposure to its global consequences, particularly regarding food and energy security, and the risks to international trade and investment. There is a growing sense of southern exposure to large-scale conflicts emanating from geopolitical clashes in the Global North, an ironic reversal of the post-2001 narrative about the West’s exposure to instability and political violence emanating from the south. It is unsurprising, therefore, that policymakers and opinion shapers in Africa, Latin America, and much of the Middle East view the deepening Western confrontation with Russia as a distant, troubling development to be held at arm’s length. Indeed, notions of equidistance and nonalignment have strongly influenced the post-colonial evolution of foreign policies throughout the Global South. They may opt to swing toward a Euro-Atlantic outlook on various issues, but their own interests dictate if they do. Understandably, they resent being forced to choose under conditions that may be existential for others but not for them. Israel is not usually described as part of the Global South, yet it offers a clear example of this ambivalence. The country is fully aligned with Western condemnation of Russian aggression and has supported Ukraine with humanitarian and limited defence assistance. But Israel clearly could do more. The limits appear to be set by different views within Israeli society, with its large Russian and Ukrainian diasporas, and the desire to preserve the country’s freedom of action vis-à-vis Moscow in Syria and Lebanon. The Return of Nonalignment? A degree of nostalgic sympathy for Russia exists in some quarters across the Global South. This is especially true in parts of Africa and Latin America, whose support Moscow has keenly encouraged through regional media and targeted high-level visits. There is also a reflexive discomfort with views and policies set in the north, often by formal colonial powers. Even where bilateral cooperation with European and North American partners is well developed, as it is in South Africa, positive views of NATO are not a given. Cold War memories remain potent. China has been adept at exploiting this by promoting a sense of shared identity with the Global South, and the country’s development model retains its admirers. But in their approach to Russia, many Global South actors have adopted an approach that may be described as functional nonalignment. In practical terms this has meant condemnation of the invasion of Ukraine but a reluctance to impose sanctions on Russia. Southern actors may be aligned with transatlantic and other like-minded partners on many issues while still being inclined to preserve economic and political ties to Moscow. To varying degrees, this approach is visible throughout the Global South. For some, a distaste for economic sanctions in general is part of their thinking.

Ambivalence Toward China Some of the same sources of ambivalence shaping the Global South’s approach to Russia and the war in Ukraine are also evident in the longer-term and, potentially, more consequential debate on how they deal with China. The sense of development and policy affinity inspired by the original conception of the BRICS has not disappeared. But it is much less obvious 20 years on as Beijing has gone its own way. Today, economic interest is a far more important factor in African and Latin American policy toward China. Large-scale Chinese loans and investment, not least via the Belt and Road Initiative, have created a web that will be difficult to disentangle, even if there is a desire to do so. Competing connectivity initiatives, such as the EU’s proposed Global Gateway, are hardly on the same scale. Still, the Global South, like North America and much of Europe, has hardened its attitude toward Beijing as an economic and political partner. For countries such as Brazil, the ambivalence is unsurprising. China is Brazil’s largest trading partner and an overwhelmingly important consumer of Brazilian food and raw material exports. At the same time, China is widely seen as an engine of Brazil’s deindustrialization. Brazilian expert and official opinion largely aligns with European and North American partners regarding China’s dubious behavior toward intellectual property, digital governance, and human rights. Why Choose? A world of heightened geopolitical friction and animating conflicts holds the potential to reshape the economic and the security environment. Countries of the Global South are keenly aware of the challenges this may pose. The prospect of greater political conditionality in trade and finance— globalization by invitation—with sanctions regimes, friendshoring, and strategic decoupling would force uncomfortable choices. Countries in the Global South may well swing toward more critical transatlantic views of Russia, China, Iran, and other revolutionary or dissatisfied actors on practical grounds or out of principle. But the Global South is most unlikely to align with the notion of a global struggle between democracy and autocracy. This ideological aspect of the Western foreign policy debate has only limited resonance outside the United States and Europe (and is not uniformly popular even there). As one GMF meeting participant put it recently, governments across the Global South are “simply not buying” the democracy-versus-autocracy competition. A Matter of Engagement The south is not monolithic. There is little uniformity of view on the leading issues animating current transatlantic debates on international policy. This brief assessment suggests a few lines of difference and potential alignment in policy terms. But there is one overarching concern likely to shape southern perspectives: fear that spreading geopolitical friction and conflict will distract the international community from addressing longer-term challenges to which the Global South is particularly exposed. These include climate change, health, food security, migration, and development.

Countries across the Global South are highly vested in multilateral institutions, and many are adept at multilateral diplomacy. They will be wary of, and likely swing away from, unilateral or, in their view, “club-like” efforts emanating from Global North powers. This suggests that the style and structure of transatlantic activism on key issues may be as important as actual policies for shaping north-south convergence over the next decade.

#### Another non-alignment article specific to Brazil: <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/autonomy-or-alignment-the-us-brazil-relationship-in-a-changing-world-order/>

### General Sphere DA

#### Lack of engagement in Latin America leads to heavy Russia and Chinese influence in the region

Levin, 1/24/2025 [Matthew, American Security Project, The Trump Administration could be the most engaged with Latin America of any 21st-century administration. Here’s why that is a good thing. <https://www.americansecurityproject.org/the-trump-administration-could-be-the-most-engaged-with-latin-america-of-any-21st-century-administration-heres-why-that-is-a-good-thing/>

Never in recent history has the Cabinet of the United States been led by as many Latin America experts as the Trump administration plans to appoint. At a time when foreign policy has its eyes laser-focused on the Middle East and Ukraine, strategic realignment with U.S. neighboring allies could open the United States up to a new source of security and economic prosperity. With collaboration between Latin America and China growing by year, greater focus on the region should be a priority of the Trump administration and those that follow. Latin America has been at the bottom of the U.S. foreign policy priority list for far too long. Administrations have promised greater cooperation with the region for decades, but large-scale foreign crises have often taken attention off foreign policy in the Western Hemisphere. Disproportionate U.S. focus on the Middle East, Asia, and Ukraine, has allowed China to establish a firm collaborative footing in Latin America, coinciding with the growth of Russian security and economic cooperation in the region during the same period. Trump’s recent appointments of Marco Rubio to head the State Department, ex-U.S. Ambassador to Mexico Christopher Landau as Deputy Secretary, and Mike Waltz as National Security Advisor reflect a new era of foreign policy that will be focusing on the Western Hemisphere. His administration has also nominated several Ambassadors to key Latin American nations such as Colombia and the Dominican Republic, which were without Ambassadors for years. President Trump also maintains close personal relationships with Brazilian former President Jair Bolsonaro and Salvadorean President Nayib Bukele. Argentine President Javier Milei was the first foreign leader to visit Trump after the election in November. If the United States wants to maintain its position as the “global protector,” it needs to prove that it can defend its interests in its own backyard. In the past 25 years, China has gone from making up 2 percent of Latin American exports to now being the largest export destination for South America and the second largest in all Latin America. In 2021, the trade volume between China and Latin America exceeded $450B, with many expecting that number to rise to $700B in the next ten years. In contrast, in 2023, trade volume between the United States and Latin America amounted to about $1.1T. However, when trade with Mexico is removed, the number shrinks to less than $350B. As part of the Belt and Road Initiative, China has invested over $100B in Latin America’s energy, infrastructure, and mining sectors. This includes the development of Chinese mining companies to operate in Latin America and the construction of Chinese cellular communications infrastructure and facial recognition software for policing. Beyond that, between 2018 and 2020, China invested an additional $16B in Latin America’s “Lithium Triangle,” a region holding 56 percent of the world’s lithium. When countries are unable to repay their debt to China, they are allowed to pay it back with natural resources; this debt trap advantages weaker nations and strengthens Chinese supply chain dominance. Beyond its underutilized markets and resources, Latin America has the potential to play a role in broader U.S. foreign policy. One critical policy issue for Washington is Taiwan, which is losing its global diplomatic recognition quicker than it is gaining it. Of the eleven UN member states that have official relations with Taiwan, seven are in the Americas. Of those seven, one is in South America (Paraguay) and two are in Central America (Guatemala and Belize). The remaining four are scattered across the Caribbean. However, even this foothold is in jeopardy. In March 2023, Honduras severed ties with the island in exchange for establishing relations with China, a move known as “dollar diplomacy.” Unlike when seeking foreign investment from the United States or U.S.-based companies, countries seeking money from China do not have to meet requirements of democracy or human rights, explaining the strong relationship between China, Venezuela, Nicaragua, and Cuba. While being authoritarian or negligent of human rights abuses is not a requirement to work with China, it allows those governments a pathway to economic success without needing to conform to the norms of the international community. It is possible that President Trump can use his relations with autocratic figures in Latin America to sway the greater region away from Chinese predatory influence.

If the United States does not strengthen and progress relations with its southern continental neighbors, it will only allow adversaries like Russia and China to bolster their already strong footings in the region. The United States cannot allow that to happen. With the officials President Trump is appointing to the United States’ most important foreign policy positions, it may be possible to begin the long overdue process of stronger hemispheric cooperation.

#### Lack of engagement in Latin America has led to other nations filling in the region

Garza 2025 [Antonio Former U.S. Ambassador to Mexico, member of the Bush Center Board of Directors, and Chair of the Bush Institute’s Advisory Council A win-win approach to Latin America <https://www.bushcenter.org/catalyst/memos-to-washington/a-win-win-approach-to-latin-america> Accessed 4/23/2025]

Let’s come back to China in a minute. But first, let me ask you something else. In the last few years, Washington has talked a fair bit about helping to improve governance in Central and South America – both for its own sake and as a way to deal with the migration problem. Has this talk actually translated into progress on the ground? I don’t think we’ve done much, and I don’t think that was simply the last couple of years. We have never been terribly engaged in Latin America. And whatever modest engagement you’ve seen was primarily with Mexico, and to a lesser extent with Brazil and Argentina. I can appreciate that Washington has been distracted by the situations in the Middle East and in Ukraine and by the ascendancy of China. But those issues should be arguments for more engagement in Latin America, not less. But you asked me about the last couple of years, and I would give the United States modest to poor grades for its level of involvement. And because of the other conflicts around the world, that absence was not appreciated.

As the United States took its eye off the region, has the involvement of China, Russia, and Iran grown significantly? Let’s start with China. In 2003 or 2004, their overall trade with the region was between $15 [billion] and $20 billion. These days, the number’s closer to $500 billion. That’s a significant uptick. China is also increasing its investment and infrastructure spending. The example you read about the most these days is Peru, where China is helping build a port. [Chancay, a $1.3 billion project.]

As for Russia and Iran, the shift is not as visible. But you’ve got Venezuela, where bad actors go to play. Russia and Iran have historically been involved in Cuba and Nicaragua as well. While China’s involvement is more economic, they’re positioning themselves well in the region. And Russia and Iran are never too far behind.

### Russia Sphere DA

#### Russian influence increasing in multiple areas now

Cattafi & Papp 1/5/2025 [Carmelo, Associate Professor Tecnologico de Monterrey

Monterrey, Mexico Robert Professor School of Social Sciences and Government, Monterrey Institute of Technology and Higher Education Monterrey, Mexico Can Latin America play a more influential role in a shifting world order? Front. Polit. Sci., 05 January 2025 Sec. International Studies Volume 6 - 2024 | <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpos.2024.1527715> [https://www.frontiersin.org/journals/political-science/articles/10.3389/fpos.2024.1527715/full Accessed 4/26/2025](https://www.frontiersin.org/journals/political-science/articles/10.3389/fpos.2024.1527715/full%20Accessed%204/26/2025)

The role of the Russian Federation is a related, but more complex and even urgent matter given the war in Ukraine and the almost complete breakdown of relations between Washington and Moscow. The Russian Federation focuses its policy on Latin America most significantly, but not exclusively, on Cuba, Venezuela, and Nicaragua, and continues to have a large official presence in Mexico as a platform to target the United States. Russia employs diplomatic, press, and social media efforts to counter U. S. influence, emphasize politico-military positions, and even promote its religious and family values in the Bolivarian nations and throughout the Americas. These efforts often find considerable traction as an alternative to the U.S. narrative, especially given the rise of the left in Latin American politics. Nonetheless, the Russian Federation cannot compete with centuries of U.S. presence in the region. American economic might and the importance of an increasing Latino population in the U.S. suggest that while the U.S. has lost a considerable amount of influence, it will remain the dominant superpower in the region.

The key role of Brazil in BRICS, the avowed neutrality of Mexico, and the “marea rosa” in Latin American politics have all provided fertile ground for the Russian Federation to advance its limited goals in the hemisphere. Its focus on Cuba has been inconsistent in recent decades based on budgetary challenges and competing political-military priorities. Engagement with Cuba is again, however, in the limelight for the Russian Federation as a response to the military role of the U.S. in Ukraine, which the Russian government regards as its “near abroad.” Cuba and Venezuela also provide convenient bases for Russian warship visits and other military activity far from home.

Nicaragua too provides the Russian Federation a counterweight to NATO expansion in Eastern Europe. In June 2022, the Ortega government announced that small contingents of Russian troops would deploy regularly to Nicaragua for training, law enforcement and emergency responses. A GLONASS navigational satellite ground station also operates in Nicaragua. While there are four such sites in Brazil, this one has drawn the concern of the U.S. for its potential use in intelligence collection.

Brazil’s participation with China and other nations in putting forth diplomatic proposals to end the war in Ukraine are also significant in that they pose a deliberate alternative to U.S. policy. The expanded role of Mexico in such dialogues, and its assertion that as a neutral it will retain good relations with Russia, is also increasingly impactful. Scepticism toward U.S. foreign policy has been directly addressed by AMLO, and indications are that President Sheinbaum will continue this tradition, emphasizing issues of sovereignty and neutrality. Sheinbaum almost immediately expressed her lack of interest in joining BRICS after assuming her mandate, indicating she understands the clear priority of relations with the U.S.

There are other elements of Russian policy in the region that have drawn the attention of the U.S., such as small investments in Paraguay, Uruguay and Argentina, and activities of the Russian National Committee for the Promotion of Economic Trade with Countries of Latin America (NK SESLA) in Chile. In sum, however, Russian influence in the region at large is limited in both scope and politico-economic significance. It does not even approach the growing impact of China in the region and is only one of many larger challenges to U.S. dominance in Latin America rather than a major destabilizing factor. The impact of the Russian Federation on how Latin America adapts to the new global balance of power will, however, be more visible in United Nations reform and the expansion of both the membership and influence of BRICS.

#### Russia and China are both currently pursuing influence in Latin America & the Caribbean for their own means and to undermine the US

Berg 2/12/2024 [Ryan C. is director of the Americas Program and head of the Future of Venezuela Initiative at the Center for Strategic and International Studies. China and Russia engage Latin America and the Caribbean differently. Both threaten US interests. <https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/in-depth-research-reports/issue-brief/china-and-russia-engage-latin-america-and-the-caribbean-differently-both-threaten-us-interests/> Accessed 4/25/2023

China and Russia operate and influence in a myriad of ways, but the core of their influence is through covert and overt strategies to undermine the US position in the region and to shape the foreign policy preferences in Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC). For both China and Russia, this includes increasing support for what they call a “multipolar world,” with the United States cast as a declining power, China an increasingly ascendant power, and Russia a great power seeking to assert that status on the global stage. In China’s case, influence in LAC is channeled to reduce regional support for democratic Taiwan, in a region where eight of Taipei’s fourteen global allies are situated. For Russia, influence is channeled to lock in a preference for Russian arms and either outright support for its war in Ukraine or silence in multilateral bodies, and a reluctance to join the Western sanctions campaign.

While their interests may often converge in LAC, China and Russia have distinct ways of engaging and operating in the region. In short, Chinese engagement is more thorough and multifaceted than Russian engagement. It encompasses regional organizations and institutions, international financial institutions, and deep economic ties on the bilateral level. By contrast, Russia’s engagement is more circumscribed. Russia has been unable to connect itself economically to LAC in the same way that China has, limiting its engagement to the bilateral sphere as well as to security cooperation and military-to-military relations. Russia’s limited “value add” to LAC means that its deepest relations are often with the region’s most autocratic and isolated governments.

#### Russia will use its leverage to undermine the US’ influence in not only Latin America & the Caribbean but plans to expand it elsewhere

Berg 2/12/2024 [Ryan C. is director of the Americas Program and head of the Future of Venezuela Initiative at the Center for Strategic and International Studies. China and Russia engage Latin America and the Caribbean differently. Both threaten US interests. <https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/in-depth-research-reports/issue-brief/china-and-russia-engage-latin-america-and-the-caribbean-differently-both-threaten-us-interests/> Accessed 4/25/2023

By contrast, Russia influence is more circumscribed and visible in two major developments and realities. The first is the entrenched nature of the region’s existing autocratic regimes, which have interests that dovetail with Moscow and maintain strong security and ideological relationships with Russia. Russia seeks to sustain state-to-state security relationships with Cuba, Nicaragua, and Venezuela, and to a lesser extent with Bolivia and Peru—all leading purchasers of Russian military equipment. (In the case of Bolivia and Peru, this is largely because the Russians service legacy military equipment.) Supporting Russia’s military-industrial complex is a top domestic concern for President Vladimir Putin, especially as US and European Union sanctions threaten to devastate the future of Russia’s defense industrial base. In Nicaragua, for instance, Russia has supplied ninety percent of the country’s arms imports. Venezuela has purchased nearly $10 billion in Russian weapons, including sophisticated S-300 anti-aircraft missiles.

Second, Russia aims to leverage the region to push back against US action in Europe, where it considers itself entitled to a privileged “sphere of influence.”3 Indeed, not only is Russian strategic thinking steeped in the concept of privileged “spheres of influence,” but it tends to link LAC and Europe, seeing LAC as a traditional region of US influence where it can meddle and push back, much as it believes the United States does in Europe. Moscow’s view of LAC as a counterpoint to US policy in the European theater has only deepened as the United States intensifies its support for Ukraine. Through a combination of selective threats and incentives, Russia strives to increase its military and commercial activities, enhance its information warfare operations, and generate an anti-US coalition, destabilizing regimes in the LAC region, mostly to buy itself strategic space in Europe (but also as affirmation of its role as a global power).4 Moscow appears to believe that the United States will either agree to some kind of understanding on its spheres of influence, or be forced to expend more diplomatic bandwidth on regions such as LAC, thus buying itself space in Europe.

#### Russia DA – Russia is attempting to repaint their public image through Latin American diplomacy – but failing

Solar 3/19 [Dr Carlos Solar Senior Research Fellow, Latin American Security International Security at RUSI, Moscow's Other Offensive: Russian Public Diplomacy in Latin America, https://www.rusi.org/explore-our-research/publications/commentary/moscows-other-offensive-russian-public-diplomacy-latin-america]

The Kremlin’s ambassadors have increased their public diplomacy, challenging supporters of Ukraine and amplifying counter-West narratives.

The annexation of Crimea in 2014 and Russia’s full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022 significantly tarnished Moscow’s public diplomacy. Strained relations with the Western world obliged Russia to rethink its global positioning with a heavier focus on multipolarity, aimed particularly at Asia, the Middle East and Latin America.

Moscow, however, has never been popular in Latin America. While Russia and Western Hemisphere countries have engaged in diplomatic relations based on shared historical experiences such as Cold War dynamics and non-aligned movements, sparse historical connections have constrained mutual understanding between Moscow and the Western Hemisphere.

Even before the war, a Latinobarometer poll conducted in 10 countries revealed a poor image of Moscow, with only one in five Latin Americans liking Russia, compared to 47% with a positive view of the US. Russia has compensated for its lack of soft power through economic cooperation and trade, including investment projects in resource-rich Latin American countries – namely Argentina, Mexico, Brazil, Cuba and Venezuela – which are key exporters of agricultural commodities, machinery, chemicals and pharmaceuticals.

Although condemnation of Russia’s invasion of Ukraine included almost every country in Latin America and the Caribbean, Moscow is keen to seek greater regional support in its pursuit of counter-West diplomatic enterprises, including what the Kremlin argues is the importance of a diverse and balanced international system. ‘I am convinced that our cooperation with the countries of Central and Latin America will be one of the engines of development and creation of a new multipolar world order on the planet’, said Duma member Leonid Slutsky at the opening of a meeting in October 2023 between Russian politicians and their counterparts from Latin American countries including Nicaragua, Brazil, Honduras, Guatemala, Cuba and El Salvador.

This shared perspective has led to diplomatic cooperation in international forums, for example at the recent BRICS and G20 meetings, where Moscow advocated for a global order resisting what it characterises as unilateralism from major powers. To back such efforts, the Kremlin has revamped its diplomatic inroads in the region, with Russian ambassadors challenging supporters of Ukraine in their respective host countries and making a visible effort to appear in the news cycle championing Moscow’s policies.

The Charge of the Muscovites

Ever since inflammatory speeches against Kyiv by Russian government officials became the norm, Vladimir Putin’s large-scale invasion in 2022 has gone virtually unchallenged. Russia controls information flows through state-controlled media and has taken measures to limit dissenting voices or perspectives that contradict the official narrative. There are laws and regulations that grant the government broad powers to restrict information that is deemed a threat to national security or public order surrounding the Ukraine war.

However, when it comes to other countries, the Kremlin cannot censor media outlets expressing views inconsistent with its official stance. Instead, it is using news outlets to advocate the Kremlin’s so-called ‘special military operation’ in Ukraine, openly challenging dissident opinions.

Russian ambassadors are challenging supporters of Ukraine in their respective host countries and making a visible effort to appear in the news cycle championing Moscow’s policies

In Colombia, where geopolitical dynamics have been influenced by the historical alliance between Bogota and the US, Russian ambassador Nikolay Tavdumadze published an op-ed in El Tiempo on 9 February in which he attributed the ‘various conflicts and crises’ in the international system to the ‘stubborn refusal of some Western countries, led by Washington, to perceive the objective realities of the multipolar world that is currently in the process of formation’.

‘Their destructive contribution undoubtedly comes from the US military-industrial complex. US companies producing all kinds of weaponry want to keep working without stopping, and they cannot allow their products to remain in storage for too long. Hence, they have always incited and continue to incite Washington to unleash wars around the world’, said Tavdumadze, before going on to warn that the ‘risks of a global conflict are growing’.

In Chile, ambassador Sergei N Koshkin used Russia Day on 9 June 2023 to blame Ukraine for committing ‘terrorist acts’ and ‘sabotage against civilian infrastructure’, such as ‘our painstakingly built Nord Stream gas pipeline in the Baltic Sea’. Speaking about the military situation, Koshkin said that ‘the combat is not between Russia and Ukraine; it is Russia against the unified military might of NATO’, in which the ‘collective West’, as he termed it, ‘unleashed a hybrid war on all fronts’.

Koshkin frequently engages in public exchanges with Ukrainian supporters and Ukraine’s representatives in Santiago, asserting Russia’ s commitment to a ‘negotiated solution to the conflict in Ukraine’, while also maintaining that the military operation will bring victory and expel Volodymyr Zelensky from power.

The bilateral relationship is clearly not of central geopolitical importance for Chileans – indeed, Russian-Chilean relations ‘have trended towards zero in almost all spheres’, as described by Koshkin. Meanwhile, Ukraine recently upgraded its delegation in Santiago to the status of embassy, with a new chief envoy.

In Mexico, ambassador Nikolay Sofinsky wrote an op-ed in La Jornada in September 2023 chastising the West for ‘using energy as a weapon’ and for causing turbulence in the international trade of hydrocarbons through ‘illegitimate restrictions and anti-market measures’. For the Russians, it may be a helping factor that Mexican President Andrés Manuel Lopez Obrador has not taken a direct position in the conflict between Moscow and Ukraine.

Despite Moscow’s targeted public diplomacy, its efforts to build sympathy for Russian foreign policy goals across the Americas seem to have hit a brick wall

Similarly, in Brazil, ambassador Alexey Labetsky has been publicly vocal about the war. Interviewed by Globo in September 2023, Labetsky complained that ‘Zelensky, and the regime installed in Ukraine, remains an almost neo-Nazi regime, anti-Russia, based unfortunately on values propagated by fascist Germany’. When asked about the meeting between Presidents Lula da Silva and Volodymyr Zelensky in New York on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly, Labetsky said that the Kremlin respects ‘the sovereign policy of our strategic partner, Brazil, and accept[s] everything done within that policy’, moving on to argue that both countries enjoy a ‘vast bilateral agenda, including diesel, trade agreements, and investment projects’.

Brazil–Russia relations have not been so promising after the FBI and Brazil’s Federal Police released information on at least three cases of alleged Russian spies with Brazilian identities detected in the US, Ireland and Norway.

In Venezuela, the Russian ambassador to Caracas, Sergey Mélik-Bagdasárov, used a nationally televised show in February 2023 to blame the war in Ukraine on the US and NATO, and to embellish bilateral relations. ‘We (Russia and Venezuela) have solid foundations with our governments, a full understanding of the paths towards the future, our involvement in international organizations, bilateral political dialogue through consultations and visits of high-level contacts’, said Mélik-Bagdasárov, adding that ‘politically, we move forward together with a shared vision’. One aspect of Russian involvement in Venezuela is the two countries’ strong military ties, with Moscow supplying advanced weaponry including fighter jets and helicopters. These arms sales have bolstered Venezuela’s armed forces, with President Nicolás Maduro most recently ordering the militarisation of the Guyana border.

In Cuba, where Russia has actively pursued stronger energy cooperation, the Kremlin recently appointed Victor Koronelli, an experienced diplomat who previously headed the embassies in Mexico City and Buenos Aires. Koronelli, however, has been less fortunate than his counterparts, with reports of the recruitment of hundreds of Cubans to participate in the war against Ukraine forcing him to stay out of the limelight.

Hitting a Wall

Russia and the West have gradually become engaged in a ‘dialogue of the deaf’, with public diplomacy and cooperation taken out of the picture. The conflict in Ukraine marks the culmination of a long-term crisis in diplomatic engagement with Kremlin officials, who staunchly argue that Ukraine’s drifting toward the West is a major threat to Russia’s security and status aspirations.

Post-Cold War Russian diplomats have made attempts to redefine themselves, but whether their nationalist, anti-Western message will be effective in Latin America and the Caribbean remains doubtful. Despite Moscow’s targeted public diplomacy, its efforts to build sympathy for Russian foreign policy goals across the Americas seem to have hit a brick wall. Even if all the blame for the inequities of the international order is put on Western countries, new partnerships will be hard to materialise. As other have argued, Russia’s public diplomacy seems contradictive, limited and divisive, especially in the wake of the Ukraine war.

### China Sphere DA

#### Chinese influence is massively increasing in the region in multiple sectors

Cattafi & Papp 1/5/2025 [Carmelo, Associate Professor Tecnologico de Monterrey

Monterrey, Mexico Robert Professor School of Social Sciences and Government, Monterrey Institute of Technology and Higher Education Monterrey, Mexico Can Latin America play a more influential role in a shifting world order? Front. Polit. Sci., 05 January 2025 Sec. International Studies Volume 6 - 2024 | <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpos.2024.1527715> [https://www.frontiersin.org/journals/political-science/articles/10.3389/fpos.2024.1527715/full Accessed 4/26/2025](https://www.frontiersin.org/journals/political-science/articles/10.3389/fpos.2024.1527715/full%20Accessed%204/26/2025)

The order based on a system of post-war norms, influenced by Western power, has changed course. We are witnessing a decline of the European continent that reduces its ability to influence world events. However, the European Union, despite not being able to compete with the military might of the United States or China, remains a major international player with considerable soft power (Fitz-Gerald and Thompson, 2020).

China has become the leading advocate of a new world order based on “win-win” relations. But a “common destiny for humanity” within global capitalism obscures the fundamental reality of capitalist competition and exploitation (Harris, 2024). Due to the tendency of the Asian continent to propose itself as a promoter of a multipolar world, Stuenkel (2023) considers that there are three advantages that Latin America can take advantage of from Asia’s increased influence: its high economic compatibility; its geopolitical and diplomatic versatility that allows it to deliberately engage with China or the United States without the need to align with one of them; and a privileged place at the table of the global debate on climate change.

Relations of these two great power adversaries of the U.S. with Latin America has economic, politico-military, and ideological bases. China, as an export powerhouse, and with substantial investment capital to deploy, is certainly the dominant of the two players. Its footprint is continuously expanding throughout the continent. For now, this engagement is primarily in the politico-economic sphere, rather than as politico-military engagement designed to counter U.S. influence in the region. The U.S regularly cites its alarm at the persistent trend of Chinese investment and expansion of commercial ties yet continues a policy approach toward Latin America that many political observers regard as one of benign neglect. In relation to China, South America has been the big winner, accounting for about 89%, on average for the period analyzed (Velosa and Pastrana Buelvas, 2023), of the Asian country’s imports from Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC). The South American advantage, when it comes to the consolidation of markets for Chinese products, is reduced to about 58%, on average. However, the role played by Mexico in Chinese exports to the region should once again be highlighted, as this country accounts for about 29% of the regional market.

South America and Mexico have become the key markets for China in LAC, accounting for 87% of imports from the other side of the Pacific. In fact, China destined 54% of its exports to the region to just two states between 2019 and 2022: Mexico and Brazil. The case of the United States is different. South America accounts for only about 19% of U.S. imports from LAC. Mexico, on the other hand, represents, on average, 74%. This means that Central America and the Caribbean export, on average, only 7% of the total regional supply that reaches the U.S. In the case of U.S. exports, the situation is similar to the above, although not as concentrated. South America represents, on average, about 25% of the market for U.S. products exported to LAC, while Mexico is the main partner, consuming, on average, about 62% of them. Central America and the Caribbean receive about 13% (Velosa and Pastrana Buelvas, 2023).

China’s state-dominated form of capitalism, in which it can direct resources to strategic ends, provides some significant advantages. It can take a long-term view on investment returns, and link economic and political goals. This is a markedly different investment approach than that of U.S. companies, driven by short-term profit considerations and not necessarily acting in concert either with competitors or in advancing national political goals. Further, China has a consistent policy of not criticizing national governments for the quality of their democratic processes or on their record of accomplishment on cultural issues affecting their societies. One major exception of purely political intervention has been China’s mostly successful efforts to woo nations that diplomatically recognize Taiwan into their orbit.

Brazil, Mexico, Chile, Argentina, and Venezuela have the highest levels of bilateral trade with China, but Chinese exports are pervasive throughout Latin America. Chinese markets, with a wide variety of inexpensive products from cell phones and consumer electronics to clothing are a major element of local commerce. Direct foreign investment by China is particularly strong in the extractive sector, but also in port, canal, and rail infrastructure, power generation, and manufacturing. This relationship is not exclusively one-way. Latin American exports to China are also significant, particularly from Brazil, Chile, Peru, and Argentina.

China is second only to the U.S. as a trading partner in the region. While Latin American countries such as Mexico express concern that the region not become another Africa in terms of the effects of Chinese investment that might lead to dependency, the imperatives for trade and investment on both sides of the Pacific Ocean remain strong. Latin America needs affordable imports of all kinds, and especially of modern Chinese technology that is cheaper than that produced in the West. China needs the raw materials that enable its exports, including oil, silver, copper, nickel, lithium, other minerals and rare earth elements, and agricultural products.

Most Latin American consumers have little interest in issues raised by the U.S. about alleged information security risks of using Chinese technology, and while they recognize that risks exist, often believe that their own governments and the U.S. government would be as or more likely to collect data on them than the Chinese. TikTok, under fire by American authorities as a tool for propaganda and espionage, remains as wildly popular in Latin America as it is in the U.S. Huawei and ZTE products continue in widespread use, despite specific U.S. measures against these companies.

Indeed, Chinese Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) in Latin America has begun to shift from large infrastructure projects to investment in smaller high-tech enterprises engaged in areas such as AI, 5G, electric vehicles, and renewable energy. Overall FDI investment, however, has slowed, and is still well below that of the U.S.and Europe. The U.S. is still wary of Chinese investments in critical infrastructure, to include electricity transmission, data centres, and telecommunications, cloud computing, and internet connectivity.

China has limited military and intelligence goals in Latin America. In the case of Chinese signals intelligence facilities in Cuba, the purpose is quite clear and directed at the U.S. In other cases, this is more a subject of conjecture and possible dual use of commercial facilities. For example, the Chinese mega-port in Freeport, the Bahamas, and other investments in infrastructure, tourism, and agriculture in the Caribbean have drawn U.S. ire due to their proximity to U.S. naval facilities and even the mainland itself.

The U.S. has criticized Chinese investments in Nicaragua, Honduras, and El Salvador as preying on weak democracies and not delivering value, while Salvadoran President Nayib Bukele characterized the Chinese as having “no-strings attached,” a clear swipe at U.S. influence in the region. The Chancay mega-port north of Lima, scheduled to open in late 2024 under the control of Chinese company COSCO, has also caused considerable angst among American policymakers both for its status as the first Chinese commercial shipping hub in South America and its perceived potential for future naval usage.

Chinese investment in Peru, actively promoted by President Boluarte in mid-2024 during her visit to Beijing, now also includes complete control of Lima’s electricity by China Southern Power Grid. Chinese investment in the Chilean lithium mining industry has also proven controversial both in Chile and abroad, as U.S. and western companies vie for access to this critical battery component, and as the Chilean government seeks to increase state control over this key resource. The issue is fraught with environmental implications as well. Further, as China has been Chile’s top trading partner since 2010, there is a significant politico-economic dimension as well.

In sum, Chinese investment in, and trade with, Latin America is a dynamic and evolving process that will have critical importance in shaping Latin America’s engagement with partners outside of the Western Hemisphere. Despite changes in Chinese policy due to cyclical economic factors and reduced emphasis on Belt and Road style projects, this trans-Pacific engagement is here to stay. How it is linked to geopolitical issues, such as the rise of BRICS and other global south initiatives, and even the reform of the United Nations, will play a key role in whether this can become the basis for policies that go beyond country-specific commercial projects to a broader regional policies and changes in international political alignments.

#### China has strategic investment and involvement within Latin America & the Caribbean

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China relies on investment through its state-owned enterprises capable of swaying decision-making and expanding its economic footprint through the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). The leading edge of China’s engagement in the region is economic in nature. The power of China’s market, which acts as a large magnet for many countries in the region, allows it to alter the incentives and considerations for domestic political and economic decision-making—sometimes down to the very local level.1 China’s control of important supply chains and dominance over certain markets also allows it to weaponize economic interdependence with regions such as LAC.

As a major component of its economic engagement, China also strives to isolate and reduce regional diplomatic recognition of Taiwan, as well as grow support for its rhetoric of an emerging multipolar global order, with China as a major player within that system, and the United States reduced to a miniscule interest even in its own hemisphere.2 China has been a forceful advocate of organizations that explicitly exclude the United States (and Canada) from regional discussions, such as the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC). Further, twenty-one countries have now joined the BRI, with Argentina joining most recently, in February 2022. More countries are expected to join the BRI in the future, with large countries such as Brazil remaining as major prizes.

China also seeks to protect its own model of autocratic governance from criticism, though not necessarily by actively seeking more autocratic governments in the western hemisphere. Of course, those that do exist will receive China’s assistance: China has collaborated extensively with Venezuela, and has supported autocratic governments in Ecuador (2007-2017) and Bolivia (from 2006-2019 and again from 2021 to the present). Yet, China is content if it also manages to keep the region’s democracies relatively quiet and restrained. Its main concerns are criticisms of its internal security and human rights practices, especially in multilateral fora like the United Nations Human Rights Council, the Organization of American States (OAS), and the Inter-American Human Rights System. Thus, one of the ways China no doubt measures its influence is by the amount of support it receives, especially from nominal US partners and allies, for its rhetoric on an emerging multipolar world, as well as the extent to which it is able to ward off criticism of its most concerning domestic and international practices.

To this end, China understands that LAC is still a region of sizeable US influence. The country’s leadership understands that it is unlikely to fully cleave US partners from the United States. To this end, the extent to which Beijing can grow support for the idea of “active nonalignment”—that is, the foreign policy vision that holds that Latin America and the Caribbean should not choose a side in a geopolitical competition between the United States and China, and that the region should be highly skeptical of geopolitical fault lines or blocs surrounding the idea of “democracy” vs. “autocracy”—it can decrease the frequency of the region’s alignment with Washington, thus suiting its long-term geopolitical aims. If China cannot overcome decades of US influence and convert LAC into a strategic asset for itself, leaders in Beijing are content to at least take LAC off the geopolitical chessboard, effectively neutralizing it as a potential strategic asset for the United States in long-term competition.

#### US is massively behind China- current efforts are ineffective and insufficient

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US steps in the right direction

The US response to China’s fast-growing influence in LAC thus far can charitably be described as delayed, uncoordinated, and largely ineffective. Washington has been slow to step up its own material and diplomatic engagement with the region, responding at least initially with messaging and tactics seemingly designed to alienate key constituencies and confirm fears that the United States only cares about the region in the context of the emerging global competition with China.15 Washington has had some limited success in discrete areas, such as pressing countries to exclude Chinese firms from their 5G networks. Most LAC countries, however, are understandably unwilling to give up the cheap infrastructure and low-cost products that Chinese companies offer and US companies are unlikely to be able to supply, ranging from 5G networks to subways.16

The Biden administration has made a conscious effort not to paint US reengagement in LAC as driven by competition with China. The Biden administration’s National Security Strategy describes China as a strategic competitor but maintains that the administration will not view the world solely through the prism of strategic competition, focusing on partnerships in LAC to advance economic resilience, democratic stability, and citizen security.17 US officials are increasingly promoting alternatives to the BRI rather than simply criticizing it, with infrastructure financing offers with competitive terms and which promote sound environmental policy, good labor standards, and transparency.18 The “Americas Partnership for Economic Prosperity,” announced by President Biden at the Summit of the Americas in June, is designed to demonstrate US commitment to Latin American economies, and proposes to revitalize the Inter-American Development Bank and create clean energy jobs. “The best antidote to China’s inroads in the region,” a senior administration official reportedly told Reuters, “is to ensure that we are forwarding our own affirmative vision for the region economically.”19

Implementation of such proposals will be critical, but there are promising signs that Washington is taking a more effective approach to regional competition with China focused on the needs of LAC countries themselves. Key questions going forward are not only whether Washington can deliver on its promises, but also whether it can better coordinate messaging and diplomatic engagement with investment and assistance in a way that counters China’s drive for influence. The US approach to pandemic assistance was not encouraging; many US donations did not generate the same impact in public perception as did Chinese donations, pointing up the importance of pairing positive messaging and engagement with concrete deliverables to achieve maximum effect.20

#### This debate will be deep on both sides, allowing the affirmative to claim that increased engagement can levy public sentiment to counter an expansive China

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China’s changing regional engagement¶ As Washington readjusts its response to China’s influence in the LAC region, it should account for shifting dynamics in China’s regional engagement that may naturally alter perceptions of China in ways that align with US goals. Most notably, China’s slowing growth and pullback from financing in the region will gradually reshape the nature of LAC countries’ ties with—and views of—China. While trade with Latin America will remain significant, China’s economic engagement with the region may weaken as its growth slows, especially in greenfield investment and sovereign lending.21 Since 2020, China’s policy banks have approved no new loans to the region.22 Recent signals in China highlight the severity of the ongoing economic slowdown. China’s largest property development company is fighting to survive while the latest economic data reveals a 14.5% decline in Chinese exports compared to the previous 12 months.23 This slowdown is likely to have a cascading effect on the relationships between Latin American and Caribbean (LAC) countries and China. For instance, Chinese investments into Brazil have recently plummeted to their lowest point in 13 years.24¶ More fundamentally, structural issues in China, such as a domestic property slump, fallout from the trade war with the United State, and a turn toward statist economic policies under Xi may signal that China will not play the same role in Latin American economies as it has since it blasted onto the scene during the past two decades. Perceptions of China also may be shaped by growing concerns about stalled investments—more high-value BRI transactions were suspended or canceled in Latin America than almost anywhere else—and by the labor and environmental impact of Chinese projects.25 China’s attempted use of economic leverage over countries in Europe and Asia to coerce outcomes in line with the CCP’s interests and geopolitical aims, while not much of a factor or concern currently in LAC, may eventually contribute to dampened views of China as it has elsewhere.26¶ China will clearly remain a key economic player in LAC, particularly in the trade and foreign direct investment (FDI) domains, and Chinese diplomatic engagement is likely to remain expansive.27 China’s security and arms relationships across the region will likely grow and remain of understandable concern to US military planners.28 But China’s slowdown and the country’s increasingly apparent internal challenges under Xi may contribute to a “coming down to earth” of expectations for China’s promise as a boon to the development of regional countries. It may also weaken receptivity to China’s message that its success is proof that the road to prosperity no longer runs through liberal democracy.29¶ One more factor in shifting dynamics in China’s relations with LAC is the possibility that familiarity is starting to breed contempt—or at least less widespread appreciation—for China’s engagement and business practices. Coming back to the Panama example, public sentiment toward the Chinese government soured significantly after diplomatic ties were established. In 2018 and 2021, approximately 68 percent of respondents found the Chinese government to be “untrustworthy” or “not very trustworthy.” This is a large increase from 2016—a year before diplomatic relations were established—when only 48 percent of respondents found the Chinese government untrustworthy.30¶ Lessons from Africa, where Chinese engagement goes back decades and is comparatively more established than in Latin America, may be instructive here. A growing body of research indicates that, after an initial period of excitement regarding the promise of Chinese private investment, African populations’ perceptions of China as well as of their own domestic economy plummet once projects begin operating, particularly in the localities hosting those projects. Africans’ views of their leaders who welcomed these investments follow a similar pattern. The expected widespread benefits of Chinese FDI do not materialize as firms focus on maximizing and extracting profits, local jobs are not created, and negative environmental effects arise.31¶ Taken together, these factors support a case for the United States to focus on pairing concrete engagement with LAC countries to address specific needs with positive messaging and outreach, while allowing the current moment in China-Latin America relations to play out. Unmet expectations from China’s rapid investments across the region, mounting skepticism about China’s model, and rising if nascent concerns about vulnerability to PRC coercion are likely to prove more challenging to China’s regional ambitions than anything the United States could manufacture through countermessaging campaigns.

#### Latin America is the next fulcrum for the China-US space race

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Over the last two decades, China’s relations with Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) have evolved beyond their largely extractive character to encompass a growing focus on digital and space technology.

The Chinese Communist Party’s (CCP) first white paper on its relations with LAC, released in 2008, referenced outer space only in passing. “The Chinese side will strengthen cooperation with Latin America and the Caribbean in aeronautics and astronautics … and other areas of shared interest,” it read. Eight years later, China’s interest in the sector had grown. Section 9 of its 2016 policy paper on LAC – the latest issued – explicitly addressed space cooperation, with emphasis on remote sensing and communication satellites, satellite data application and aerospace infrastructure. These themes have since been picked up by the CCP’s Global Security Initiative introduced in 2022 and outlined in February 2023.

For China, the pursuit of space cooperation with Latin America and the Caribbean advances its wider objective to dominate near-earth space. It also strengthens ties with strategic regional partners, and undercuts Western and American-led alliances and institutions. While some LAC governments share Beijing’s political motives, others are encouraged by the space industry’s economic benefits. All of this suggests that China-LAC space relations are likely to deepen in the years ahead.

History of space cooperation

The first joint space venture between China and the LAC region dates to 1988, when the China-Brazil Earth Resources Satellite (CBERS) program was established.

CBERS was a collaboration between the China Academy of Space Technology and Brazil’s National Institute for Space Research. It was created to collaboratively develop satellites and launch them into orbit, with the declared aim of observing and monitoring the earth’s resources and environment. The initiative was meant to allow the two countries to expand their footprint in space without the United States’ or Western involvement. To date, six CBERS satellites have been launched: in 1999, 2003, 2007, 2013, 2014, and most recently in 2019. As of 2002, each country covers 50 percent of the costs; previously 70 percent had been covered by China.

Encouraged by its successful collaboration with Brazil and its space race with the U.S., the CCP has expanded its space-based partnerships throughout the LAC region.

Bilateral space relations

China’s most significant advances in bilateral space cooperation with LAC states have been with populist regimes that share China’s worldview and are often in need of financial assistance and unable to obtain it from the West.

On the heels of its 2003 financial crisis, Argentina signed a framework agreement for space cooperation with Beijing in 2004. Signed between Argentina’s National Space Activities Commission and China’s National Space Agency, it centered around the use of China’s Long March rockets to launch Argentine satellites from the then-newly established national satellite company, Argentina Satellite Solutions Company. In this regard, it also served as a precursor for the development of the Espacio Lejano Station, in Neuquen province, Patagonia.

The station, with its 35-meter-diameter antenna and operations run by the China Satellite Launch and Tracking Control General, a division of the People’s Liberation Army Strategic Support Force, remains something of an enigma. Agreed to in 2014 by President Cristina Fernandez de Kirchner and Chinese President Xi Jinping, and made operational in late 2017, it appears to be a dual-use facility – utilized for Chinese civilian and military purposes. Some analysts suggest it could have been involved in the Chinese spy balloon that appeared in U.S. airspace earlier this year. Yet absent transparency and Argentine oversight, this cannot be confirmed.

The $500 million facility, which is part of the Chinese Deep Space Network, is Beijing’s first deep space earth station outside of the mainland. It is designed to facilitate communication between deep space missions and spacecraft that pass over the southern hemisphere. Chinese state media claimed it “played an important role” in the Chang’e 4’s 2019 landing on the far side of the moon. It is also integral to China’s Mars research and its plans to improve multi-objective tracking, telemetry, and command capabilities (MTTC), which would allow for more coordinated communication in complex missions. Improved MTTC capabilities would also enhance the PLA’s battlefield awareness, navigation, and positioning.

Space exhibition in China

A staff member shows a spacesuit to visitors during an exhibition on space on April 24, 2023, in Hefei, China. In recent years, Beijing has made it one of its top strategic priorities to rival the U. S. as a space actor. © Getty Images

China has also established bilateral space relations with Bolivia, Chile, Ecuador and Venezuela. To date, all cooperation has centered around the provision of Chinese launch services, satellite components and platforms, mostly financed by loans secured through the China Development Bank. Such capabilities have enabled LAC countries to monitor their natural resource and agricultural activity – including for export to China. It has also allowed them to improve telecommunications and collect geospatial data that could assist with border surveillance and other matters of national security.

For Beijing, bilateral space cooperation with LAC states forms part of its Space Information Corridor, a component of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) intended to enhance space-related cooperation and data sharing among BRI members through the deployment of satellites, ground stations, data centers, other ground application systems and the training of foreign space personnel. LAC countries with bilateral space relations with China are nodes in Beijing’s wider space network, which is being forged to dilute and ultimately supplant its U.S.-led counterpart.

Regional initiatives

China’s Global Security Initiative (GSI) explicitly declares its support for the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC) in “playing an active role in upholding regional peace and security.” Since 2011, Beijing has demonstrated its preference for working with the LAC region through CELAC, even though the bloc lacks the institutional mechanisms to address matters of either security or space. China’s support for CELAC comes at the expense of the Organization of American States (OAS), the region’s traditional architecture for multilateral engagement. While the U.S. is a member of the OAS, it is not a member of CELAC.

China deliberately seeks to forge new structures for cooperation rather than work within existing ones. This also extends to space. The 2022-2024 China-CELAC Joint Action Plan proposes the establishment of a China-CELAC Space Cooperation Forum through which members would collaborate on satellite technology, remote sensing, and research. The plan also notes Beijing’s aim to leverage the BRI to extend its Beidou satellite system throughout the region as a way to rival the U.S.- operated Global Positioning System.

In 2021, Mexico and Argentina spearheaded the establishment of the Latin American and Caribbean Space Agency (ALCE), headquartered in Mexico. Currently comprising 23 member states (Brazil has not joined), the ALCE is designed to foster regional collaboration on space-based activities, including the development of the LAC region’s own satellite technology. With an initial budget of $100 million, however, it remains to be seen what the initiative will be able to accomplish.

China has openly expressed support for the ALCE. Although to date no formal agreements have been brokered, Beijing’s financial and technological backing of the agency cannot be discounted. Among ALCE member states are those with which Beijing already boasts bilateral space relations, as well as those disposed to closer ties with it. Engagement through the ALCE would provide China with an additional vehicle to expand its space footprint in Latin America, as well as to induce LAC country participation in its own multilateral space initiatives.

LAC states in China’s multilateral space initiatives

In recent years, Beijing has embarked on the creation of new formal and informal multilateral initiatives designed to rival the policy tasks of existing ones. Of these, several center around space. They have become increasingly important to CCP policy – including in its dealings with LAC states. The China-CELAC joint plan, for example, invites CELAC states to “join the International Lunar Research Station”(ILRS) being developed with Russia. In April, Venezuela expressed interest in doing so “as soon as possible.”

Since the China National Space Administration released its initial road map for the ILRS in 2021, it has signed cooperation agreements or letters of intent with Argentina and Brazil, as well as the Asia-Pacific Space Cooperation Organization to which Peru belongs. Brazil’s interest in the ILRS is noteworthy, as it could complicate its participation in the U.S.-led Artemis Accords, to which Mexico and Colombia are also signatories. Brazil’s president, Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva, has openly voiced his intention to foster closer ties with Beijing to “balance world geopolitics.”

In April, Beijing announced the establishment of the International Lunar Research Station Cooperation Organization (ILRSCO). Unlike the Artemis Accords, which is a nonbinding multilateral agreement, the ILRSCO is to be forged as a formal organization with leadership and bureaucracy, both likely to come from China. Through agreements on principles and subsequent planning led by Beijing, the ILRSCO will pursue lunar missions in coordination with member states. Its creation risks leading to a two-system lunar governance.

For LAC countries, participation in the ILRSCO and other Chinese-led space initiatives might provide access to resources and space-based navigation, positioning and communication infrastructures. For those that share Beijing’s objective of a multilateral world order, it has the added benefit of normalizing and extending Chinese global governance.

This aim underpinned the 2005 founding of the Beijing-based Asia-Pacific Space Cooperation Organization (APSCO). Peru is a founding member and Mexico is an observer state. “Past experience shows that during the Cold War years, space policies of superpowers … rested … on rivalry, claiming hegemony in space,” reads APSCO’s founding statement. Article 6 of its convention outlines cooperation in space technology, earth observation, space law, research, and a “central data bank.” Peru is party to several of these activities. It hosts a space observation site for monitoring debris in low-earth orbit; with China, Turkey, and Pakistan it is party to the Joint Small Multi-Mission Satellites Constellation Program; and it has participated in training around APSCO’s data-sharing service platform.

Peruvian involvement in APSCO, like that of other LAC states in Chinese multilateral space initiatives, indicates an evolving space geography beyond the LAC region but one in which its members are increasingly invested beyond the more obvious bilateral engagements. Encouraged by Beijing, LAC member states are becoming increasingly active players in space geopolitics.

Scenarios

The trajectory of Sino-LAC space cooperation appears poised to intensify both through bilateral and multilateral channels, especially among the region’s left-leaning governments. LAC regional space initiatives are likely to remain too embryonic to be credible actors.

Beijing will continue to aggressively pursue this deepening of space relations as it seeks strategic global partners to advance its agenda. For LAC countries, such ties could eventually come at the expense of space cooperation with the U.S. The adoption of the Beidou system, ground stations such as Espacio Lejano, and data-sharing agreements with Beijing are increasingly likely to be perceived as national security threats by the U.S. While for some LAC countries such an ostensible shift away from the U.S. would be welcome, for others it would prompt technological and diplomatic challenges.

In this context, Brazil under President Lula is a country to watch. Brazil and the U.S. have in place, among other initiatives, a Space Situational Awareness sharing agreement that facilitates information exchange on space objects. Should Brazil agree to the ILRSCO, for instance, this and other U.S. space programming could be curtailed. For Brazil and moderating LAC states, then, space policy is becoming a balancing act between established and emergent actors. The financial and technology advantages associated with space cooperation with China make it unlikely that it would be abandoned.

As China deepens space cooperation in the LAC region, it becomes an ever-more capable and multidimensional space actor with the ability to shape space norms. Its engagement in the region also buoys member countries as credible space actors. This will contribute to increasingly multipolar, labyrinthine, and for the West, adversarial space geopolitics.

#### Chinese engagement in Latin America is key to strengthen the BRI and ensure effective Latin American economic growth

Hrytsenko 23 [Alina, Centre for International Security, Advancing China's global security strategy and expanding its presence in the Latin America and Caribbean, https://analytics.intsecurity.org/en/global-security-initiative-latin-america-caribbean/]

Upon coming to power in 2012, Xi Jinping initiated the process of strengthening China’s political positions worldwide. This was evident in massive projects such as the “Belt and Road Initiative” and numerous philosophical-geopolitical concepts like the “Chinese Dream” (中国梦, Zhōngguó mèng), the Community of Shared Destiny for Mankind (人类命运共同体, Rénlèi mìngyùn gòngtóngtǐ), the Global Development Initiative (Global Development Initiative, 全球发展倡议, Quán qiú fā zhǎn chàng yì), and the Global Civilization Initiative (Global Civilisation Initiative, 全球文明倡议, Quánqiú wénmíng chàngyì). All these concepts aim to establish China as a global power, an alternative to the United States, offering a “just” and “mutually beneficial” world order. One component of this package of initiatives and concepts is the Global Security Initiative (全球安全倡议, Quánqiú ānquán chàngyì).

The essence of the Global Security Initiative (GSI) is to address the root causes of international conflicts, improve the management of global security, encourage joint international efforts to ensure greater stability and predictability in an unstable and changing era, and contribute to strong peace and development worldwide. GSI encompasses broad general principles that echo the key tenets of Chinese foreign and security policy. GSI aims to solidify China’s reputation and image as a responsible global player that conscientiously fulfills its obligations as a major power and is ready to serve as a guarantor and provider of global security. This should be seen as China’s statement of intent to aspire to a significantly larger role in international politics. In seeking to establish itself as a leader, Beijing, including through initiatives like GSI, promotes the idea of a more just world order, an alternative to the rules-based order. China contends for leadership positions among developing countries, comprising the so-called Global South, including countries in Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC).

The characteristic of Beijing’s modern approach to Caribbean countries and, in general, to the LAC, is encapsulated in the formula “1+3+6”, proposed by Xi Jinping in July 2014 as a new format for relations between China and LAC. In this formula, “1” signifies a unified, coordinated development plan for cooperation between China and LAC countries, “3” represents three cooperation mechanisms involving trade, investment, and finance, and “6” encompasses six cooperation areas: energy resources, infrastructure, agriculture, industry, scientific and technological innovation, and information technologies.

China is increasing its influence in Latin America through various strategies and mechanisms, including the following aspects:

Economic Investments. China is actively investing in the economies of Latin America and the Caribbean, including credits, loans, and direct foreign investments in various sectors such as energy, infrastructure, mining, and agricultural enterprises. Economic cooperation allows China to create a positive image in the region as an alternative to the United States, which has a somewhat toxic reputation due to a complex history of relations with regional states and sometimes strong historical resentments.

Trade. Over the past twenty years, China has become a major trading partner for many Latin American countries. Trade between China and Latin American countries is growing, and China is a significant importer of agricultural products, strategic resources, and minerals from the region.

Energy Projects. China is actively investing in energy projects in the region, including the construction of hydroelectric power stations, power plants using renewable energy sources, and the extraction of oil and gas. This allows China to meet its energy needs and expand its influence in the region.

Infrastructure Projects. China is financing and constructing infrastructure projects such as ports, railways, and transportation corridors that contribute to the development of logistics and trade in the region.

Diplomatic Efforts. China is actively developing diplomatic relations with Latin American countries, including leader visits, the signing of bilateral agreements, and participation in regional forums. China interacts with Latin American countries on multilateral platforms such as the China-Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC) Forum.

Education and Cultural Exchanges. China is also investing in education and cultural exchanges, strengthening ties between China and Latin America and supporting a positive image of China in the region. The complex Chinese culture and language are promoted through numerous branches of the Confucius Institute established in various countries in the region.

The Essence of the Global Security Initiative (GSI)

GSI was first proposed by Xi Jinping at the annual Boao Asian Forum[1] in April 2022. In February of that year, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of China published a conceptual document outlining the key provisions of the Initiative.

Officially, the goal of GSI is to eliminate the root causes of international conflicts, improve the management of global security, encourage joint international efforts to ensure greater stability and predictability in an unstable and changing era, and contribute to strong global peace and development. GSI incorporates broad general principles that echo the fundamental tenets of Chinese foreign and security policy, primarily based on the Panchsheel principles[2] or the “principles of peaceful coexistence”. The document includes “six commitments” and defines priority areas of cooperation:

Comprehensive, universal, joint, and sustainable security.

Respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of all states. According to this point, sovereign equality and non-interference in internal affairs are the fundamental principles of international law and the most fundamental norms regulating modern international relations. “All countries, large or small, strong or weak, rich or poor, are equal members of the international community. Their internal affairs should not be subject to external interference; their sovereignty and dignity should be respected, and their right to independently choose social systems and development paths should be supported”.

Adherence to the purpose and principles of the UN Charter.

Serious consideration of the security issues of all countries. According to this point, humanity forms an integral and indivisible security community. This means that the security of one state cannot be realized at the expense and to the detriment of another state, as all states are equal in ensuring security. Each country has fair and legitimate security interests.

Peaceful resolution of disputes between countries through dialogue.

Maintenance of security in both traditional and non-traditional spheres (such as terrorism, climate change, cyber security, and biosecurity).

Officially, the GSI aims to “protect the principle of indivisible security, build a balanced, efficient, and resilient security architecture”. In particular, the document outlines tasks that China urges the global community to undertake and assures readiness to make a significant contribution to achieving the stated goals, reflecting China’s leadership geopolitical ambitions. Among the key tasks are: preventing potential nuclear warfare and supporting non-proliferation, promoting the prohibition and destruction of weapons of mass destruction, maintaining global control over conventional arms, promoting the political resolution of international and regional issues in conflict zones through open dialogue, strengthening dialogue on maritime law and combating crimes at sea, including piracy, enhancing international cooperation in outer space, supporting the WHO in health care management, and effectively coordinating and mobilizing global resources for joint response to COVID-19 and other infectious diseases. Additionally, the GSI aims to promote the protection of global food and energy security, ensure stable grain production and supply chain security, and avoid politicization and weaponization of food security. The initiative also seeks to support cooperation between countries in addressing climate change.

Thus, the GSI is intended to solidify China’s reputation and image as a responsible global player that conscientiously fulfills its obligations as a major power and is ready to serve as a guarantor and provider of global security. This should be considered as China’s statement of intent to claim a significantly larger role in international politics.

This confirms the 20 priority areas of cooperation to address key global issues (peace, development, security, and governance) highlighted in the conceptual document of GSI. Within these points, China declares its readiness to promote coordination and healthy interaction among major states and build relationships characterized by peaceful coexistence, overall stability, and balanced development. China, thus, positions itself as one of the major world powers on par with the United States. It emphasizes that large states bear a particularly important responsibility for maintaining international peace and security. This point reflects China’s significant geopolitical ambitions and a clear vision of the future world order and China’s place in it.

GSI envisages the implementation of set tasks through five main platforms and mechanisms. Among these platforms are not only global ones like the UN (including the UN General Assembly and UN Security Council) but also regional organizations, forums, and discussion platforms where China is represented. Specifically mentioned are the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, BRICS, the Conference on Interaction and Confidence-Building Measures in Asia, the “China + Central Asia” mechanism, a multilateral dialogue platform in the Persian Gulf region, meetings of foreign ministers of countries neighboring Afghanistan, the China-Africa Peace and Security Forum, the Security Forum in the Middle East, the Beijing Xiangshan Forum, and the Global Forum on Public Security Cooperation (Liangyun Summit). The emphasis on “non-Western” platforms confirms China’s efforts to promote an alternative world order, where the United States and European states, former metropolises and empires, do not hold the key positions. Beijing’s focus is on countries in the so-called Global South, and the world order concept promoted by China envisions an equal status for former empires and colonies. Moreover, China claims leadership among developing countries that constitute the so-called Global South. Seeking to establish itself as a leader, Beijing, through initiatives like GSI, promotes the idea of a more just world order, an alternative to the rules-based order that, from the Chinese leadership’s perspective, was created exclusively in favor of Western states. A more just world order, as China sees it, involves adequate representation of developing states on global platforms and organizations, including the UN, WTO, and IMF. Despite its economic power and pace of economic development, China still considers itself the “largest developing country” and uses this status to garner support and solidarity from other countries, fostering cooperation along the South-South axis.

In this way, GSI, overall, is an attempt by Xi Jinping to present a comprehensive vision of a new world order and formulate the ideological basis for a new global governance system that enhances China’s influence amid the gradual decline of the United States’ influence on the world stage. GSI concerns all regions of the world, including the conflict-prone region of the Persian Gulf. GSI is fully aligned with the views of regional states on regional and international security, including through the principle of non-interference in internal affairs, which entails no criticism for, for example, human rights violations or the erosion or absence of democratic values.

In the Middle East, the GSI conceptual document calls for creating a “new security structure” based on the Chinese proposal of five points to achieve peace and stability in the region, “including support for mutual respect, adherence to equality and justice, support for the non-proliferation regime, strengthening collective security, and cooperation for development”. Additionally, China promises to use GSI to support the efforts of regional countries in “strengthening dialogue and improving relations, addressing legitimate security concerns of all parties, strengthening internal forces to ensure regional security, and supporting the League of Arab States and other regional organizations that play a constructive role in this regard”. To some extent, the implementation of GSI manifested itself during China’s mediation in normalizing relations between Saudi Arabia and Iran. Although China’s diplomatic success was influenced by favorable circumstances, including the willingness of both sides to sit down for negotiations to restore communication, China used the successful conclusion of the talks to its advantage as evidence that GSI is a viable and practical initiative.

GSI includes not only the Middle East but also the African continent, the Latin American and Caribbean (LAC) region, and is actively promoted by Chinese representatives at various levels. For example, following the visit of Colombian President Gustavo Petro to China, support for the Latin American state’s endorsement of GSI was announced, as well as for other related concepts such as the Global Development Initiative (GDI) and the Global Civilization Initiative (GCI).

China’s Penetration into the Latin America and Caribbean

The countries of LAC, which were on the periphery of Ukraine’s foreign policy, have increasingly attracted the attention of Beijing in recent decades. The main objectives that China has pursued in the last 20 years include economic expansion to gain access to the rich natural resources of the region (such as oil, gas, uranium, gold, lithium, copper, silver, diamonds, and more) and reducing Taiwan’s influence in the world. As of October 2023, out of 33 countries in the region, 7 maintain diplomatic relations with Taipei (Paraguay, Haiti, Guatemala, Belize, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia).

Since the 2000s, China has become a key export market for Cuba, Chile, Brazil, Peru, Argentina, and Venezuela. Additionally, it holds the first place among importers for Panama and Paraguay and the second place for Argentina, Venezuela, Brazil, Colombia, Mexico, and Peru. China’s push for exports and investments is driven by the desire to acquire necessary resources to meet the needs of its developing industries, expand markets, and improve the efficiency of existing enterprises. China has achieved success in active economic penetration through mass acquisitions of assets of raw material companies involved in the oil and gas business or mineral extraction.

The main agreements with LACB countries focus on the raw materials sector, particularly in extraction industries, while large investments are directed towards the industrial sector. However, China’s recent interest has also extended to the production of agricultural products, especially in the field of soybean production.

Over the past 20 years, China has managed to secure the second position among the largest investors in LAC countries. Accumulated Chinese investments in the region from 2005 to 2019 ranged from $130 to $140 billion, with Brazil receiving around $60 billion and Peru, rich in copper and hydro resources, receiving nearly $27 billion. The primary direction of Chinese capital investment is in energy projects (56%), with investments in metallurgy and mining accounting for 28%. In addition, the value of Chinese construction contracts in the region has approached $61 billion, with 53% allocated to energy infrastructure and 27% to transportation and logistics. The main recipients of Chinese credits from 2005 to 2019 were Venezuela, Brazil, Ecuador, and Argentina.

LAC is the second-largest global recipient of Chinese investments, with over 2,700 Chinese enterprises operating in the region. Currently, more than 2,000 Chinese companies have invested in the economies of LAC countries, creating over 1.8 million jobs. Typically, the Chinese government provides loans for the construction of projects on the condition that the work is carried out by Chinese companies and the equipment is supplied from China. Thus, China’s approach is based on financing projects designed for its long-term presence in the region.

China, as an investor, is attractive to the countries of the Latin America and Caribbean region for several reasons. Firstly, Beijing does not impose stringent requirements regarding democratization or specific directions for the development of state institutions, and it does not interfere in the internal politics of states, as the United States did. The finances of the U.S. were strictly regulated in terms of their implementation, and overall, they were accompanied by numerous restrictive mechanisms. Secondly, China itself serves as a positive example for developing countries. Unlike developed countries that became wealthy, in part, due to past colonies, China had a different historical background and, despite this, demonstrated long-term economic growth. China, originally an agrarian country lagging significantly behind leading world countries in terms of technology and economics and lacking serious resource potential, proved capable of transforming into a dynamically developing state. In this context, the Chinese model of economic development is attractive to LAC countries, for which transitioning from peripheral countries to developed states is important. This is particularly relevant considering that the LAC region is composed of developing countries, to which China also belongs.

Economic and trade relations are the main vector of Chinese-Latin American interaction. Since the beginning of the century, the total volume of trade between China and LAC has increased from $17 billion in 2002 to nearly $315 billion in 2019. In the years 2018-2019, China’s imports from Latin America accounted for almost 8% of China’s total imports, while exports to LAC constituted approximately 6% of China’s total exports. China has become the main trading partner for Brazil, Argentina, Chile, Peru, and Uruguay, surpassing the United States, and the second-largest trading partner for many other countries in the region.

China mainly imports natural resources from LAC, including ores (32%), mineral fuels (19%), soybeans and soybean oil (16.7%), and copper (5.6%). The major portion of China’s exports to LAC in 2019 consisted of electrical appliances and equipment (21%), machinery and devices (15%), automotive vehicles and parts (6.5%), and a wide range of consumer goods.

China has free trade agreements with Chile, Costa Rica, and Peru. In the last two years, China’s exports and imports to and from LAC have continued to grow, maintaining the trend of the past decade, and even the COVID-19 pandemic has not significantly altered this situation.

Moreover, the pandemic provided China with the opportunity to go beyond its key role as a trade partner and creditor for Latin American countries. China initiated what became known as “mask diplomacy” and even “coronavirus diplomacy” (or “Health Silk Road construction” in China). In LAC, unlike Africa, there were no accusations against China for the spread of infection, except for remarks from Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro, known for his skepticism about the coronavirus. Therefore, China’s “coronavirus diplomacy” in LAC had a pragmatic rather than forced nature to improve the country’s international image.

By the end of 2020, China provided masks, protective suits, tests, equipment (monitors, defibrillators, and ultrasound scanners), ventilators, financial aid, and vaccines of Chinese production. The assistance to the region was distributed unevenly, with the main flow going to ideologically aligned countries like Venezuela and Cuba.

The “coronavirus” year 2020 can be seen as a turning point in China’s investment policy towards LAC: for the first time in 15 years, China did not provide any credit to any Latin American country. Meanwhile, Chinese companies shifted their focus from lending to direct investment in Latin American infrastructure, especially in the energy and transportation sectors. This new approach was influenced by the Belt and Road Initiative, in which China wants to involve LAC, and also by the COVID-19 pandemic. The supply of Chinese aid demonstrated its political effectiveness, changing the attitudes of previously skeptical leaders towards China, such as Argentine President Alberto Fernández, who in January 2021 thanked China for supporting Argentina’s fight against COVID-19 and even supported the idea of building a community of shared future for all of humanity. In 2022, Argentina joined the Belt and Road Initiative. In 2023, China intended to start the construction of a 1200 MW reactor at the Atucha nuclear complex in Lima, Buenos Aires province, costing $8 billion, in addition to two hydroelectric power stations already under construction in southern Argentina. It’s worth noting that as of 2023, more than 20 out of 33 LAC countries are participating in the Belt and Road Initiative. Brazil, Mexico, and Colombia, three of the largest Latin American economies, are not yet involved in the project.

During his speech at the 2018 China-CELAC Forum, Wang Yi, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the People’s Republic of China, highlighted five points of cooperation between the parties within the framework of the “Belt and Road” initiative: the construction of infrastructure connecting “land and oceans”; the establishment of an open market enabling the export of Latin American products; the development of competitive economic sectors in CELAC countries through the transfer of Chinese technology; the promotion of innovation by expanding the Digital Silk Road to the region’s countries; and the exchange of experience in various fields.

As part of the “21st Century Maritime Silk Road”, China plans to create an infrastructure network, a railway that will connect the port of Tianjin (China) to the ports of Bayovar (Peru) and Santos (Brazil), thereby strengthening cooperation within the initiative. The Chinese side stands to benefit from increased delivery speed, as the current route through the Panama Canal is more expensive and time-consuming. It is noteworthy that the port of Tianjin will also encompass the Hebei province and Beijing, leading to the creation of a new free trade zone in China. The advantage of the Tianjin Free Trade Zone is that it integrates the northern region of China, which lags behind the southern provinces.

China’s presence on the continent is advantageous for the countries in the region as it diversifies political contacts and can balance the influence of the United States in the region. The emergence of the People’s Republic of China as a new economic player has put an end to the excessive dependence of countries on Washington, and China has become a card in political bargaining with the United States. China’s approach to cooperation, based on infrastructure development and the absence of rigid mechanisms for controlling financial flows, aligns with the values and priorities of left-wing parties in the region, generating a high interest in developing relations with China.

China’s Interests in the Caribbean

The countries of the Caribbean Basin hold a particular interest for China, as this region is home to the largest concentration of countries that maintain diplomatic relations with Taiwan. Consequently, China is keen on altering the situation in its favor, and this is achieved through investments in the local economy. From 2005 to 2022, China invested over $10 billion in six Caribbean Basin countries, including Jamaica ($3.16 billion), Guyana ($3 billion), Trinidad and Tobago ($2.28 billion), Antigua and Barbuda ($1 billion), Cuba ($740 million), and the Bahamas ($350 million). Key sectors that China invests in include tourism, transportation, metal extraction, agriculture, and energy.

The primary forms of Chinese assistance to Caribbean countries are grants and low-interest loans. Grants are typically allocated for the implementation of small to medium-scale socially oriented projects, financing cooperation in human resource development, technical cooperation, material, and humanitarian aid. Low-interest loans provide the borrower with highly favorable conditions—interest rates below 2-3% annually with terms ranging from 15 to 20 years. Such loans are usually granted for the implementation of large and medium-scale industrial and infrastructure projects, as well as for the purchase of machinery, electronic equipment, and materials.

China traditionally shows a significant interest in investing in the exploration of natural resources. While Caribbean countries do not possess extensive reserves of minerals (unlike some South American states), Cuba, Jamaica, Trinidad and Tobago, and the Dominican Republic may be attractive to China in this regard. Cuba has significant reserves of nickel, chrome, iron and copper ores, phosphates, and ongoing exploration of oil and gas deposits. Jamaica is rich in bauxite, Trinidad and Tobago in oil and gas, and the Dominican Republic in bauxite, iron ore, nickel, and copper. In 2011, the China National Petroleum Corporation (CNPC) signed a $6 billion contract to increase the capacity of the Cuban oil refinery and construct a new liquefied natural gas terminal in the coastal area of Cienfuegos.

China is showing increasing interest in making substantial capital investments in the development of port infrastructure in the Caribbean Basin. The strong dependence of China on the import of energy resources and raw materials, which arrive in large volumes by sea, has led Beijing to place greater importance on expanding access to maritime communications and related infrastructure worldwide, including in the Caribbean Basin. In July 2014, during Xi Jinping’s visit to Cuba, an agreement was signed to provide a $115 million loan for the restoration and modernization of the country’s second-largest port, Santiago de Cuba.

It is worth noting separately that the development of port infrastructure could potentially contribute to the expansion of China’s military presence in the region, as it would increase the presence of Chinese naval forces in the Caribbean. While Beijing is just beginning its path to expanding its military-political influence in the Western Hemisphere, there are already noticeable results: according to The Wall Street Journal, China has reportedly entered into a secret agreement with Cuba to deploy an electronic listening device on an island approximately 100 miles from Florida. The parties are also negotiating the establishment of a joint military training camp on the “island of freedom.” In addition, Beijing has shown interest in the radio-electronic center in Lourdes, the main Soviet, and later the most important Russian foreign center for radio-electronic intelligence. Located in the southern suburb of Lourdes, the Cuban capital Havana, it was used until 2002.

In 2018, at the initiative of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of China, the China-Caribbean Press Center was established. The center’s work involves facilitating trips to China for Caribbean journalists. At the same time, it should be noted that such institutions are part of a strategy to expand influence and project soft power, as they facilitate the dissemination of certain narratives and concepts. For example, it helps to establish China’s image as the “leader of the Global South”, advocating for the equality of all states regardless of territorial size or economic power, non-interference in internal affairs, and supporting the political uniqueness of all states. Mostly, this is nothing more than rhetorical manipulation, which, nevertheless, is positively received in the small island states of the Caribbean Basin and Latin America as a whole, which have a long and sometimes negative history of relations with the U.S. and Western European states, former colonies.

China, which Xi Jinping positions as a state that once suffered from European imperialist policies, seeks to solidify its reputation as a champion of a “fairer” world order. By this, Xi understands a world without the dominance of a single hegemon, particularly the U.S. Xi Jinping often says that the world is currently experiencing the greatest geopolitical changes in the last 100 years, understanding this as not only the reduction of U.S. influence in the world but also the strengthening of regional states that were recently under the yoke of colonizers. The theme of shedding colonial past and increasing the role of the state on the world stage is actively exploited by China, including with small, economically weak countries such as Barbados, which in 2021 changed its form of government from a constitutional monarchy to a parliamentary republic (though it remained a member of the Commonwealth of Nations).

During a meeting in Beijing with Barbados Prime Minister Mia Mottley, Xi Jinping used terms such as “defense of national sovereignty and independence” as well as “independent choice of own development path”. With this, Xi expressed China’s support for Barbados’ break from the British Crown. “Developing countries must strengthen solidarity and cooperation, practice true multilateralism”, said Xi Jinping. This rhetoric is extremely attractive for small or poor countries in the Caribbean and Latin America, as well as for more powerful candidates for regional leaders who are rethinking their place and the region’s place in the world. At the same time, a characteristic feature of the Chinese information-political campaign is the rejection of promoting communist, Marxist doctrines, aiming to confirm Xi Jinping’s statements that “there are no bad states, but each state is good in its own way” and the freedom and independence of choosing political development.

The potential allies of China in the LAC region

Chinese rhetoric is manipulative but attractive, and although it is currently difficult to determine a clear camp of pro-Chinese states in the LAC region, states more willing to cooperate can be singled out. These are predominantly American antagonists such as Venezuela, Bolivia, Cuba, and Nicaragua. Thus, it is not so much pro-Chinese states as anti-American ones that are attracted to China’s non-intervention policy (i.e., providing financial support without additional requirements such as democratic or anti-corruption reforms). However, as demonstrated by the example of Venezuela, these states are willing to cooperate with Washington on attractive terms for their own benefit. At the same time, the policy of rapprochement with China depends largely on the current political conjuncture, as seen in the example of Colombia. The new president, Gustavo Petro, decided to reconsider relations with the United States, reflected, among other things, in the renewal of relations with China to the level of “strategic partnership”. Although for Beijing, this status is symbolic and almost meaningless.

For China, a “fair world order” is polycentric. Speaking of solidarity and equality among all states, it essentially means an uneven distribution of influence among different countries in different regions, regardless of the size of the territory or the strength of the economy, but a fair distribution of influence among comparable regional states. China does not seek to make the LAC a “Chinese backyard” but is ready to share influence with states like Brazil, which is currently a key transmitter of Chinese narratives and concepts. The main reason for this lies in the convergence of the views of Xi Jinping and Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva on the emerging new world order, where the level of American influence in the LAC region is minimized. This also explains cooperation between states within BRICS. Brazil’s geopolitical ambitions under Lula’s third presidency are aimed at consolidating Brazil’s status as a regional leader, a center of influence, and the LAC region as a fully integrated player on the international stage. LAC is currently undergoing transformation, and China contributes to this informationally and, one might say, ideologically.

This year, at the seventh China-CELAC summit, Xi Jinping stated that the alliance is a key partner of China in strengthening solidarity among developing countries and developing South-South cooperation. “China cooperates with CELAC countries to enter a new era characterized by equality, mutual benefit, innovation, openness, and benefit for the people”.

The new era in thought should be characterized by the minimization of the global influence of the United States, a goal also of interest to the Russian Federation (RF). Although currently, the RF and China do not act as a united duo in the LAC region. Russia’s influence in the region has consistently diminished since the collapse of the Soviet Union, and currently, Russian positions are quite weak. The informational presence of Russia is quite widespread thanks to Spanish- and Portuguese-language media outlets such as Sputnik Mundo and RT en Español, which spread Russian propaganda, including distorted and false accounts of Ukraine and the Russian-Ukrainian war. However, the acceptance of Russian propaganda is more noticeable among countries antagonistic to the United States, and it does not contribute to strengthening Russia’s influence in the region. Currently, Russia, already deprived of the status of a regional power, whose level of isolation is increasing due to a toxic reputation, continues to lose connections in the LAC region, as well as in other more significant regions (Caucasus, Central Asia). At the same time, Russia lacks the resources to restore its lost positions. Today, Moscow uses countries such as Cuba, Venezuela, Bolivia, Nicaragua (almost all of which Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov visited as part of his Latin American tour this spring) as instruments for propaganda for the domestic audience. Russia tries to convince the population that sanctions and the rupture of relations with Europe and the United States will not hinder the country’s further development and that Russia can and will develop political and economic relations with other states worldwide based on ideological closeness. However, these mentioned states form, as mentioned above, an “anti-American camp” and, in turn, use Russia as a leverage against the United States and for the realization of urgent tactical interests. Other countries in the region, except for Brazil, which maintains a neutral position regarding the Russian-Ukrainian war, are not as eager for political communication with Moscow.

Barriers to the Spread of Chinese Influence

Despite this, there are barriers to further political and economic expansion by the People’s Republic of China (PRC) in the region. Many states fear intensifying cooperation with China due to ongoing Sino-American confrontation, aiming to avoid giving the impression that the country is choosing one side over the other.

In terms of economic factors, firstly, infrastructure development, particularly in transportation and energy projects, harms the environment and poses ecological risks, leading to a rise in anti-Chinese sentiments. It is noteworthy that China’s ecological standards are lower than those of LAC countries because, like many developing nations, China sacrificed ecology for progress during its economic development. LAC countries have high environmental protection standards due to cultural and legal proximity to developed countries such as Spain and the USA.

Another issue is security. Many countries in the region face a complex criminal environment with drug cartels and gangs whose activities can threaten the safety of Chinese personnel and create obstacles for business operations, including infrastructure construction.

Another problem is political risks. Implementing large projects, especially in the infrastructure sector, takes a considerable amount of time. Many Latin American countries are characterized by turbulent political landscapes, with active political struggles. For instance, Nicaragua experienced diplomatic relations with China during Daniel Ortega’s first presidential term (1985-1990), switched to Taiwan during the presidency of Violeta Chamorro, and reverted to China when Ortega returned to power in 2021.

Additionally, the cultural and legal differences contribute to challenges in labor relations between the Latin American workforce and Chinese employers. While labor law requirements are low in China and some other countries, they are relatively high in Latin America, leading to labor disputes when Chinese companies hire local workers.

To create a positive image, China established a network of Confucius Institutes in the region. It is expected that these institutes will attract public attention to Chinese culture. The institutes aim to explain Confucian values to Latin Americans, which form the basis of China’s foreign policy (unity, harmony, order, justice, tolerance, multilateralism, etc.). This helps promote foreign policy concepts such as the Global Security Initiative.

Conclusions and Recommendations

One of the crucial conclusions for Ukraine in the context of China’s expansion in the Latin American and Caribbean region is the significance of the cultural factor and the promotion of its interests through soft power. One of Ukraine’s key tasks in the region is to consolidate political support, including in the context of the Russo-Ukrainian war. This can be achieved by creating a positive image of the Ukrainian state in the regional information space through cultural diplomacy, Track II diplomacy, and other means. The Ukrainian Institute and the engagement of the Ukrainian diaspora in the LAC, numbering over 1 million people, are essential tools for implementing this task. Informational efforts should also counter Russian propaganda in the region by debunking myths about Ukraine spread by Russian media. Additionally, strengthening the country’s image as a reliable and predictable partner in the new foreign policy and economic partnership with Latin American and Caribbean countries is crucial.

In the context of garnering greater support, it is vital to strengthen political trust and minimize potential differences between Ukraine and the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean regarding major international issues. To achieve this, establishing a system of regular bilateral and multilateral political consultations, activating parliamentary diplomacy through organizing meetings of inter-parliamentary cooperation groups with relevant “friendship groups” in the legislative bodies of the region is necessary. Currently, the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine has seven parliamentary groups for inter-parliamentary relations with Latin American countries: Brazil (17 deputies), Cuba (40 deputies), Mexico (6 deputies), Chile (15 deputies), Argentina (11 deputies), Peru (9 deputies), and Guatemala (6 deputies). There is an obvious significant disproportion in the number of participants, which does not fully correspond to the level of bilateral political and economic cooperation. Therefore, it is advisable to review the composition of these groups, particularly the “friendship groups” with Cuba and Mexico. Moreover, it is essential to revive inter-parliamentary groups with Colombia, Paraguay, and Uruguay, which operated during the previous convocation of the Verkhovna Rada. Equally important is the question of the possibility of opening new diplomatic and consular establishments (consulates in Guatemala and Costa Rica, the latter being the fifth-largest trading partner of Ukraine in the Latin American region), their staffing, and organizational support.

To gain political support and build communication, active participation in the discussion of issues that are urgent for regional states is crucial. It should be recognized that the Russo-Ukrainian war is not a critically important issue for the countries of the LAC, and its impact on Latin American states is indirect. Therefore, attention should be paid to addressing the concerns of the region and promoting mutually beneficial communication. Among such issues, environmental protection and biodiversity stand out, aligning with the 8th point of the Peace Formula of the President of Ukraine. Ukraine suffers from the ecocide caused by the war, while the ecology of Latin American states suffers from the improper use of natural resources for economic gain, leading to environmental conflicts. Issues such as climate change mitigation, poverty reduction, improvement of healthcare systems, and digitization are areas where Ukraine can actively participate as a responsible member of the global community despite being in a state of war.

## Politic/Focus

### PC Link

#### Diplomatic engagement in Latin America drains PC

Brigida, 21 (Anna-Catherine, 5/13, “Biden’s Top Priority in Central America Is Fighting Corruption. That’s an Uphill Battle.”, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2021/05/13/biden-policy-priority-central-america-corruption/>)

Last week, U.S. Vice President Kamala Harris laid out the Biden administration’s key challenge in Central America in a few words. “We will not make significant progress,” she said, “if corruption in the region persists.” Harris, who is in charge of managing the Biden administration’s diplomatic relations with Central America, was speaking at the 51st annual Washington Conference on the Americas. Having recently passed the 100-day benchmark in office, U.S. President Joe Biden has already been confronted with several developments that illustrate just how daunting rooting out corruption will be.

Recent backsliding on judicial independence in El Salvador and Guatemala has already challenged the Biden administration to prove its willingness to make tough decisions and commit political capital to backing anti-corruption measures. In El Salvador, newly elected legislators moved on May 1—their first day in office—to replace five members of the country’s constitutional court and its attorney general, neutralizing two important checks on power as they replaced these officials with allies. In Guatemala in mid-April, lawmakers refused to swear in constitutional court judge Gloria Porras. Porras, who has a history of fighting against graft, is viewed in Washington as a key ally against corruption.

It is no surprise that democracy is on the run in the region. Corrupt officials and others there may have been emboldened by what they saw as a weakening of international scrutiny under the Trump administration, said Adriana Beltrán, director of citizen security at the Washington Office on Latin America. Now facing diminished political will among Central American politicians and elites to fight corruption, the Biden administration cannot just pick up where the Obama administration left off. Instead, it faces an uphill battle when it comes to reconstructing support within the region. Nevertheless, various Central American experts consulted for this article said the United States should still act now.

### Dip Cap/Focus

#### US investment with Latin America trades off with diplomatic engagement between the region and other parts of the world

Alghamdi 3/26/2025 [Hannan is a researcher at the Gulf Research Center (GRC) How Trump’s Policies Are Pushing Latin America Toward the Gulf <https://www.grc.net/single-commentary/239> Accessed 4/23/2025]

The resurgence of Donald Trump’s assertive foreign policy, particularly with regard to immigration, trade, and regional diplomacy, has placed a strain on the bilateral relations between the United States and key Latin American states. Faced with a revived and more unilateralist posture from Washington, these countries have increasingly sought to diversify their partnerships, looking toward regions traditionally peripheral to their foreign policy considerations. Leading among these emerging relationships is a growing alignment with the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), whose member states are actively expanding their global presence through trade, diplomacy, and investment. This commentary explores how the deterioration of U.S.–Latin America relations under the Trump administration has accelerated a broader geopolitical realignment toward the Gulf states, shaped by mutual economic interests, aligned diplomatic positions, and a shared commitment to a more multipolar and balanced global order.

From Containment to Confrontation: Strained Bilateralism under Trump

Donald Trump’s approach to Latin America has been characterized by transactionalism and coercion. His administration’s emphasis on unilateral migration enforcement, economic protectionism, and disregard for multilateral norms has undermined traditional diplomatic relationships across the region. The threat to impose escalating tariffs on all Mexican exports— beginning at 5% and potentially rising to 25%—unless the Mexican government curtailed undocumented migration to the United States reflected a coercive use of economic tools to advance domestic political objectives. In response, Mexico was compelled to deploy security forces to its southern border with Guatemala, a key transit point for Central American migrants, and to expand the Migrant Protection Protocols (“Remain in Mexico”), effectively outsourcing U.S. immigration enforcement at the expense of its own domestic sovereignty.

Elsewhere, Trump’s erratic trade posture manifested itself in the abrupt re-imposition of steel and aluminum tariffs on Brazil and Argentina, with both countries already in precarious economic positions. The justification—accusations of currency manipulation and harm to U.S. agriculture— appeared both opportunistic and misaligned with the broader tenets of hemispheric cooperation. Even Brazil’s then-president Jair Bolsonaro, a self-declared Trump ally, was taken aback by the move, which signaled Washington’s willingness to undermine regional partners when politically expedient.

More recently, diplomatic tensions have been exacerbated by the Trump administration’s refusal to honor provisions of the 1944 U.S.-Mexico water treaty. In March 2025, for the first time in the treaty’s history, the United States denied Mexico’s request for emergency water deliveries to Tijuana, citing Mexico’s failure to meet its obligations. While framed as a response to resource scarcity, the decision was widely interpreted as part of a broader pattern of diplomatic hardball, further eroding trust in the bilateral relationship.

These cumulative actions have reinforced perceptions across Latin America that the United States has become an increasingly unpredictable partner, whose commitment to regional stability is frequently subordinated to domestic political imperatives. Consequently, the region’s leading economies have accelerated efforts to recalibrate their foreign relations and reduce overdependence on Washington.

Latin America’s Engagement with the Gulf: A Diversification in Practice

Against this backdrop of frustration with the United States, the Gulf region has emerged as an increasingly appealing partner for Latin America. The GCC’s combination of vast sovereign wealth, ambitious economic diversification agendas, and an expanding diplomatic footprint coincides with Latin America’s need for alternative capital sources, trade routes, and political alliances.

Mexico: Reframing Diplomacy through Economic Opportunity

Mexico’s outreach to the GCC has been particularly visible since 2022, when then-Foreign Minister Marcelo Ebrard embarked on a ten-day tour of the Middle East. His agenda, spanning Riyadh, Doha, and Dubai, centered on repositioning Mexico as a gateway economy with access to North and South America, bolstered by institutional stability and a reformed trade framework under the United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement (USMCA). In Saudi Arabia, the MexicoSaudi Arabia Business Forum generated interest in Mexican sectors ranging from tourism and infrastructure to agribusiness and energy. Ebrard’s framing of Mexico as a strategic investment hub in an era of global realignment resonated with Gulf investors seeking to hedge against geopolitical volatility elsewhere.

This momentum has since translated into concrete outcomes. By 2023, non-oil trade between Mexico and the UAE had risen by over 20%, reaching $2.6 billion. Delegations between the two countries have explored collaborative ventures in agriculture, advanced manufacturing, and port logistics. Moreover, QatarEnergy has reportedly entered negotiations to expand its presence in Mexico’s energy landscape, particularly in the liquefied natural gas and petrochemical sectors. For Mexico, the GCC represents a financial lifeline and a long-term partner in diversifying both its export markets and diplomatic alliances.

Brazil: Forging a Bilateral Nexus of Industrial and Food Security

Under President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, Brazil has embraced a more assertive and multilateral foreign policy posture, and the country’s engagement with the GCC has been a critical dimension of this pivot. Lula’s state visit to Saudi Arabia in 2023 marked a turning point, signaling Brasília’s interest in a reciprocal investment relationship. While Brazilian exports of halal meat and iron ore have long dominated trade flows with the Gulf, the new wave of cooperation goes beyond commodity exchange.

Notable developments include the Saudi Public Investment Fund’s $2.5 billion acquisition of a 10% stake in Vale’s base metals division, which positions the Kingdom within Brazil’s critical mineral sector and a partnership between aerospace firm Embraer and Saudi entities to explore local aircraft assembly. The UAE has also intensified its Brazil engagement, most visibly through Abu Dhabi’s Mubadala fund, which committed $2.45 billion to develop a green diesel and sustainable aviation fuel plant in Bahia. "These deals and investments not only advance Brazil’s clean energy transition and reinforce the GCC’s push to become a global hub for green technology and industrial diversification, but also represent a deeper industrial entanglement between the two regions.

Argentina: Financial Necessity Meets Diplomatic Recalibration

Argentina’s economic fragility has made it particularly receptive to GCC courtship In 2023, as Buenos Aires faced a critical IMF repayment deadline, Qatar provided a $775 million loan using its Special Drawing Rights (SDRs), an IMF-issued reserve asset that can be exchanged for usable currency or lent to other nations. This act of financial diplomacy represented a pivotal moment for Argentina, which had grown weary of conditional Western financing.

Simultaneously, Saudi Arabia’s Fund for Development announced a $500 million infrastructure package, financing energy transmission projects linked to Argentina’s Vaca Muerta shale formation. The potential for collaboration in lithium extraction, particularly with Saudi delegations visiting Argentina’s northwest mining regions, suggests a future in which the Gulf plays a decisive role in Latin America’s clean energy supply chains.

Argentina’s evolving relationships with the UAE and Qatar also extend to agribusiness, logistics, and sovereign wealth collaboration. In this context, the GCC has emerged not just as an emergency funder, but as a partner aligned with Argentina’s longer-term development priorities.

Aligned Diplomatic Positions: From Gaza to Global Affairs

While economic complementarity plays a central role in the deepening ties between Latin America and the GCC, shared political values are increasingly prominent. A notable example is the coordinated stance during the 2023 Gaza conflict. Brazil, holding a temporary seat on the UN Security Council, introduced a resolution calling for humanitarian pauses in Gaza, a move supported by the UAE but vetoed by the United States. Lula’s framing of Israeli actions as akin to “genocide” reflected both domestic sentiment and a broader commitment to international humanitarian norms.

Mexico and Argentina echoed similar positions, calling for restraint, humanitarian access, and a renewed commitment to a two-state solution. These positions were in harmony with longstanding Gulf positions on the Israel-Palestine conflict and signaled an emergent Global South alignment grounded in international law and sovereign equality.

Beyond Gaza, this alignment extends to voting coordination in multilateral organizations, joint advocacy for a multipolar global order, and mutual support in bids for international leadership posts. The shared emphasis on sovereignty, non-intervention, and development financing without political conditions situates Latin America and the Gulf as natural collaborators in reshaping global governance institutions.

Toward a Multipolar Global South

The cumulative impact of Trump-era policies, which range from coercive trade maneuvers to punitive migration enforcement and diplomatic antagonism, has compelled leading Latin American states to reassess their priorities. What seems to emerge is a pragmatic pivot toward the Gulf, driven by economic realism, diplomatic like-mindedness, and a shared desire to construct a more equitable global order.

Mexico, Brazil, and Argentina are not abandoning the United States; rather, they are broadening their diplomatic toolkits, positioning themselves as autonomous actors capable of engaging across a multipolar world. For the GCC, Latin America offers resources, markets, and partnerships aligned with their post-oil economic ambitions. For Latin America, the Gulf represents capital, strategic leverage, and a mirror in the Global South, one that understands the costs of dependency and the value of self-determined development.

In this evolving order, the Latin America--GCC relationship may emerge as a key feature of 21stcentury South-South diplomacy--fluid, transactional, and potentially becoming more institutionalized over time. While the Trump years have disrupted traditional alignments, they may have also opened the space for new and possibly transformative interregional connections.

#### US strategy to the Middle East requires full investment of diplomacy. The negative could argue that Latin America engagement forces a trade off in priorities.

Hale 2/21 [DAVID HALE Global Fellow; Former Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs; Former Ambassador to Pakistan, Lebanon, and Jordan, Lessons from American diplomacy toward Lebanon, https://www.wilsoncenter.org/article/lessons-american-diplomacy-toward-lebanon]

New Realities

America is not to blame for Lebanon's ills, but the oscillations in US involvement weakened our friends and strengthened our foes. In most of these episodes, overly ambitious American policies and deployments crashed against the hard realities of Lebanon and the Middle East. Washington then would drop its efforts like a hot potato, only to reengage years later when the next crisis erupted. Yet, American leverage and influence had eroded during the periods of neglect. The obvious prescription is to avoid inflated expectations of what America can achieve but never abandon the playing field to the enemy. Steady engagement should replace the peaks and valleys.

We are seeing this phenomenon play out on the Israeli-Palestinian front today. During my 38-year career in the State Department, I witnessed eight initiatives to resolve this dispute with some variation of a two-state outcome. They petered out in 2014 when America tried but failed once again to bridge the gaps separating Israelis and Palestinians. During the next decade, Washington moved beyond the Palestinians, focusing instead under President Trump on the more attainable—and historic—goal of normalization between Israel and Arab states.

Since October 7, Hamas' violence and Israel's response have compelled renewed focus on Israeli-Palestinian differences, but some policymakers seem to believe they can just pick up where they left off in 2014 and rush a negotiated two-state outcome into service. Yet, during the subsequent decade of American neglect, new realities emerged. These include Iran's more central role as a protagonist in the Levant and the evaporation of public support among both Israelis and Palestinians for the hallowed principles of past American initiatives.

We should have the persistence and endurance to stay in the game and work actively so the next crisis can be managed more effectively or avoided altogether.

Three lessons

Rather than revive failed initiatives from history, it is time to conceptualize new ideas to deal with the new realities. We should also avoid the "just enough" method of crisis management, whereby an end to fighting signals American diplomacy to retreat. We should have the persistence and endurance to stay in the game and work actively so the next crisis can be managed more effectively or avoided altogether. I’ll say again, steady engagement should replace the peaks and valleys.

Another lesson from the American experience in Lebanon is the disconnect between America's optimistic vision and Middle Eastern realities. Americans like to think we live in a world conceived by John Locke, where rules, reason, and natural law prevail. But the Middle East is the land of Thomas Hobbes, where in the absence of an omnipotent Leviathan ruling a country, chaos and violence prevail. The people of the Middle East may yearn for the world of Locke, but they know they inhabit the one of Hobbes. The sooner American policymakers absorb that reality, the better.

A third lesson is that a strategy that focuses only on countering hostile proxies without addressing the malign patron—Iran—can never satisfactorily protect US interests. The Middle East is one inter-connected campaign theater. Our friends and foes know it, yet Washington—fearing a region-wide escalation—often shies away from dealing with that reality.

After Hezbollah, the Iranian Syrian proxy killed 241 US marines in 1983, the Reagan Administration never retaliated. That the Iranians then accelerated proxy attacks on American diplomatic and military facilities and the kidnapping of American officials and civilians off the streets of Beirut should have been no surprise. Weakness and accommodation only foster violence; strength and deterrence nurture peace. That is the primary lesson drawn from eighty years of American diplomatic involvement in Lebanon.

# Definitions

## Latin America

### Latin America

#### “Latin America” includes the Caribbean

Statista no date [Latin America - Statistics & Facts, https://www.statista.com/topics/3287/latin-america/#topicOverview]

Latin America comprises around 20 countries, which can be subdivided into four regions based on their geographical position: North America, Central America, the Caribbean and South America. As of 2021, Latin America accounts for about 8.37 percent of the global population, and is home to 656 million inhabitants - less than Europe, by the way, despite its larger geographical area spanning from Mexico to Cape Horn. The predominant languages spoken in Latin American countries are Spanish and Portuguese.

#### Latin America includes Puerto Rico

Bodenheimer 19 [Rebecca Bodenheimer, Ph.D. is the author of "Geographies of Cubanidad: Place, Race, and Musical Performance in Contemporary Cuba.", What is Latin America? Definition and List of Countries, July 28, 2019, https://www.thoughtco.com/what-is-latin-america-4691831]

Latin America is a region of the world that spans two continents, North America (including Central America and the Caribbean) and South America. It includes 19 sovereign nations and one non-independent territory, Puerto Rico. Most people in the region speak Spanish or Portuguese, although French, English, Dutch, and Kreyol are also spoken in parts of the Caribbean, Central America, and South America. By and large, the countries in Latin America are still considered "developing" or "emerging" nations, with Brazil, Mexico, and Argentina comprising the largest economies. Latin America's population has a high proportion of mixed-race people due to its colonial history and encounters between Europeans, indigenous people, and Africans. In addition, its population is a result of an unprecedented history of transcontinental migration: after 1492, 60 million Europeans, 11 million Africans, and 5 million Asians arrived in the Americas.

### Puerto Rico = International

#### Current precedent ambiguity places Puerto Rico in a legal lacuna of neither entirely domestic but always foreign

Duany 23 [Jorge Duany, Professor of Anthropology and Director of Cuban Research Institute, Florida International University, Puerto Ruco has been part of the US for 125 years, but its future remains contested, https://news.fiu.edu/2023/puerto-rico-has-been-part-of-the-us-for-125-years-but-its-future-remains-contested]

In a case about the **constitutionality of a tariff on goods trafficked between the island and the mainland, the U.S. Supreme Court defined Puerto Rico in 1901 as “foreign to the United States in a domestic sense”** because it was neither a state of the American union nor an independent republic.

The court also ruled that the island was “a territory belonging to … but not a part of the United States.”

This decision meant that Congress would determine which parts of the U.S. Constitution applied to Puerto Rico.

#### Lack of statehood means Puerto Rico is still a foreign entity

Duany 23 [Jorge Duany, Professor of Anthropology and Director of Cuban Research Institute, Florida International University, Puerto Ruco has been part of the US for 125 years, but its future remains contested, https://news.fiu.edu/2023/puerto-rico-has-been-part-of-the-us-for-125-years-but-its-future-remains-contested]

In December 2022, the House of Representatives passed H.R. 8393, proposing yet another referendum on Puerto Rico’s political status, which would have been the first to bind Congress to implement its results. But the Senate failed to consider the bill.

As it is now, only Congress can add new states to the Union, via an Admission Act or House Resolution that requires approval by a simple majority in the House and Senate.

Another bill – the Puerto Rico Status Act or (H.R. 2757) – was introduced in May 2023, but given the lack of congressional bipartisanship, it is unlikely that the bill will obtain enough Republican votes in the Senate.

**As a result, 125 years after the U.S. occupation, Puerto Rico is still considered “foreign in a domestic sense.”**

## “Engagement”

### QPQ

#### Engagement exclusively means rewards for the target altering the status quo – unconditional offerings are appeasement.

Roberts, 2004 (Liam Roberts, MA from the University of British Columbia, “Engagement theory and target identity: an analysis of North Korean responses to contemporary inter-Korean engagement,” University of British Columbia, Available online at: <https://open.library.ubc.ca/soa/cIRcle/collections/ubctheses/831/items/1.0092297>, accessed on 4/26/2024)

Overall

Mindful of the possibilities for misinterpretation between source and target as to which strategy is being pursued, we can distinguish between the theoretical rationale for engagement, deterrence, and compellence by the following definitions:

A diagram of a method

Description automatically generated

Engagement, then, is a rewards-based initiative that offers the target gains for cooperative action, and nothing for the status quo. The target enjoys a relatively high degree of space in determining its own participation rate with the source without risking losses. Deterrence works conversely: it is a threat-based initiative that offers the target losses for challenging action, and nothing for maintaining the status quo. The target is relatively constrained by fear of incurring further losses, but neither is it necessarily motivated to alter the status quo. Compellence is more extreme, as a threat-based initiative that demands the target pursue a specific alteration of the status quo, but it may motivate the target to confront the source, and thus may generate tension and raise the odds of conflict.

In the above table, I have not alluded to a link between a rewards-based method and a status quo preserving objective, as we should proceed with an understanding of engagement as a change-oriented strategy. If a dissatisfied state was driven to disturb the status quo in either limited or revolutionary ways, and a source state sought to mete out rewards to encourage a status quo preserving objective, this would not be engagement, but rather "appeasement" — the delivery of gains [end page 13] has no sunset clause, nor any timetable for reciprocal expectations of any kind, excepting that the target abide by general norms of international behaviour. Appeasement, then, is much costlier than engagement, as only the latter is driven by the endgame of inculcating either specific or broad changes in the target. A variety of engagement sub-streams, as described above, will also vary in terms of their cost, contingent on their applicability to specific targets. In none of these sub-streams, however, do we see appeasement’s key flaw: buying targets out without any objective of socialization or status-quo change, and no mechanism to advance long-term compliance.

### Broad Definitions – AT Limits

#### ‘Engagement’ sets a low bar – too broad

Wallin, 2013 (Matthew Wallin, Wallin is ASP’s Chief Operating Officer, a member of its board of directors, and has led ASP’s research on public diplomacy and strategic communications since 2011. As an expert in national security strategy and international relations, Matthew’s work at ASP has also focused on nuclear security, asymmetric operations, and includes launching ASP’s program on U.S.-Russia relations. Wallin completed his Masters in Public Diplomacy at the University of Southern California in 2010. While at USC, his studies focused on the public diplomacy implications of military conflict and viral communication by non-state actors. Prior to that, he received his B.A. in Political Science with a focus in international relations from California State University, Long Beach., "Engagement: What Does It Mean For Public Diplomacy?," American Security Project, https://www.americansecurityproject.org/engagement-what-does-it-mean-for-public-diplomacy/, accessed on 4-26-2024)

When presenting statistics about social media activities undertaken by the State Department’s Center for Strategic Counterterrorism Communications, Ambassador Alberto Fernandez described the number of “engagements” the CSCC’s digital outreach team had made that year as in the thousands. Explaining what an engagement is, Fernandez stated that engagements “consist of written text posted to online forums, Facebook, or the comments sections of media Web sites.” So does each post the CSCC makes in a forum count as an “engagement?” Does each post on Facebook count as an engagement? If so, this appears to set a low bar for what is considered engagement.

In another case, the military uses the term to describe personal relationships and building partner capacity. However, engagement doesn’t always imply benign activities either—as when the military uses the word “engage,” it is often in the context of destroying a target.

If anything, using the term engagement can sometimes provide the user with a perceived ability to forgo one of the most difficult parts of public diplomacy—that is demonstrating metrics which indicate whether or not one’s efforts are succeeding at influencing the target audience. In other words, the user of “engagement” may feel as though they needn’t actually explain the effects of their activities because they are “engaging” by nature of the word.

This is why analyzing the content of engagement is vital. Is a forum post engaging? Is a billboard engaging? Is a TV advertisement engaging? This can be difficult to determine, and cannot be assumed.

What practitioners and policymakers should understand is that core of public diplomacy is not really about undefined “engagement”—it is about building relationships.

By focusing on relationship-building, and eliminating engagement from the PD lexicon, practitioners and policymakers may begin to better employ the thinking that is required for better public diplomacy. Rather than speaking about PD in abstract terms, emphasizing relationship-building forces those participating in the PD debate to consider the types of activities that are necessary to gain influence. Rather than counting one-off twitter postings as engagement, practitioners should focus on substantive, comprehensive and continuing dialogue.

One of the biggest problems in public diplomacy is that few understand what it is, and the terminology itself doesn’t help. Soft power, public diplomacy, and engagement all need to be explained in order to be understood. These terms have no immediate recognition like war, peace, freedom or competition. For this reason, perhaps “building relationships” should be used more often by those exploring or explaining the subject.

### AT Consensus

#### ‘Engagement’ lacks a consensus

Resnick, 2001 (Evan Resnick, Resnick is an assistant professor at the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies at Nanyang Technological University, Singapore., “Defining Engagement,” Journal of International Affairs , Spring 2001, Vol. 54, No. 2, Rogue States: Isolation vs. Engagement in the 21st Century (Spring 2001), pp. 551-566 Published by: Journal of International Affairs Editorial Board Stable URL: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/24357749>, accessed on 4/26/2024)

While the term "engagement" enjoys great consistency and clarity of meaning in the discourse of romantic love, it enjoys neither in the discourse of statecraft. Currently, practitioners and scholars of American foreign policy are vigorously debating the merits of engagement as a strategy for modifying the behavior of unsavory regimes. The quality of this debate, however, is diminished by the persistent inability of the US foreign policy establishment to advance a coherent and analytically rigorous conceptualization of engagement. In this essay, I begin with a brief survey of the conceptual fog that surrounds engagement and then attempt to give a more refined definition. I will use this definition as the basis for drawing a sharp distinction between engagement and alternative policy approaches, especially appeasement, isolation and containment.

In the contemporary lexicon of United States foreign policy, few terms have been as frequently or as confusingly invoked as that of engagement.1 A growing consensus extols the virtues of engagement as the most promising policy for managing the threats posed to the US by foreign adversaries. In recent years, engagement constituted the Clinton administration's declared approach in the conduct of bilateral relations with such countries as China, Russia, North Korea and Vietnam.

### No Appeasement

#### Engagement must establish and enhance contacts across multiple issue-areas. The plan is “appeasement,” not “engagement”.

Resnick, 2001 (Evan Resnick, Resnick is an assistant professor at the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies at Nanyang Technological University, Singapore., “Defining Engagement,” Journal of International Affairs , Spring 2001, Vol. 54, No. 2, Rogue States: Isolation vs. Engagement in the 21st Century (Spring 2001), pp. 551-566 Published by: Journal of International Affairs Editorial Board Stable URL: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/24357749>, accessed on 4/26/2024)

DIFFERENTIATING BETWEEN ENGAGEMENT AND APPEASEMENT

In contrast to many prevailing conceptions of engagement, the one proposed in this essay allows a substantive distinction to be drawn between engagement and appeasement. The standard definition of appeasement—which derives from the language of classical European diplomacy, namely "a policy of attempting to reduce tension between two states by the methodical removal of the principal causes of conflict between them"29—is venerable but nevertheless inadequate.30 It does not provide much guidance to the contemporary policymaker or policy analyst, because it conceives of a foreign policy approach in terms of the ends sought while never making clear the precise means involved. The principal causes of conflict between two states can be removed in a number of ways.31

A more refined definition of appeasement that not only remains loyal to the traditional connotations but also establishes a firm conceptual distinction from engagement might be: the attempt to influence the political behavior of a target state by ceding territory and/or a geopolitical sphere of influence to that state. Indeed, the two best-known cases of appeasement, Great Britain's appeasement of the United States at the turn of the 20th century and of Nazi Germany in the 1930s, reveals that much of this appeasement adopted precisely these guises. The key elements of the British appeasement of the US-acceptance of the Monroe Doctrine permission for the US to build and fortify a Central American canal, and acquiescence to American claims on the border between Alaska and the Yukon-consisted of explicit acknowledgement of American territorial authority. 32 Meanwhile, the appeasement of the Third Reich by Great Britain was characterized by acquiescence to: Germany's military reoccupation of the Rhineland (1936); annexation of Austria (1938); acquisition of the Sudetenland from Czechoslovakia as decided at the Munich Conference; and absorption of the remainder of Czechoslovakia (1939).33 A more contemporary example of appeasement is the land for peace exchange that represents the centerpiece of the on-again off-again diplomatic negotiations between the Israeli government and the Palestinian Authority.

Thus, a rigid conceptual distinction can be drawn between engagement and appeasement. Whereas both policies are positive sanctions—insofar as they add to the power and prestige of the target state—engagement does so in a less direct and less militarized fashion than appeasement. In addition, engagement differs from appeasement by establishing an increasingly interdependent relationship between the sender and the target state. At any juncture, the sender state can, in theory, abrogate such a relationship at some (ideally prohibitive) cost to the target state.34 Appeasement, on the other hand, does not involve the establishment of contacts or interdependence between the appeaser and the appeased. Territory and/or a sphere of influence are merely transferred by one party to the other either unconditionally or in exchange for certain concessions on the part of the target state.

#### Engagement is distinct from appeasement — it doesn’t include unilateral concessions.

Pettyjohn 11 — Stacie L. Pettyjohn, Associate Political Scientist and former Transatlantic Post-Doc Fellowship for International Relations and Security (TAPIR) Fellow at the RAND Corporation, former Peace Scholar at the United States Institute of Peace, former Research Fellow at the Brookings Institution, holds a Ph.D. in Foreign Affairs from the University of Virginia, 2011 (“U.S. Policy toward Nationalist Terrorist Organizations: Isolate or Engage?,” *Engaging Extremists: Trade-Offs, Timing, and Diplomacy*, Edited by I. William Zartman and Guy Olivier Faure, Published by the United States Institute of Peace, ISBN 1601270747

Engagement: What and When?

Three general policies—reassurance, appeasement, and engagement—are considered soft-line strategies, as opposed to hard-line strategies such as deterrence, containment, and coercion. While soft-line strategies use conciliatory actions to prevent conflict, hard-line strategies use force or the threat of force to check aggression. More specifically, a state uses a policy of reassurance when it wants to demonstrate its own lack of aggression, thereby decreasing the possibility of an unwanted conflict with an adversary (Stein 1991). Similarly, appeasement occurs when a state unilaterally offers concessions to its adversary, often as a short-term strategy to avoid conflict by satisfying the adversary’s demands (Teisman 2004; Rock 2000).

Engagement differs from both these strategies and can be defined as a noncoercive, long-term policy based on interaction, dialogue, and positive [end page 140] incentives that aims to induce an instrumental change in the behavior of the target (Haass and O’Sullivan 2000; Suettinger 2000; Cha 1999, 2001; Schweller 1999). A more ambitious policy of engagement also strives to effect a more enduring change by socializing the target into a particular set of norms, thereby modifying its preferences.7 Engagement can be used to achieve a number of goals and has been implemented to deal with dissatisfied rising powers, rogue nations defying international law, and states that violate their citizens’ human rights. Today engagement is most often employed in an effort to socialize the target into liberal or democratic norms (Adesnik and McFaul 2006).

#### Distinguishing appeasement and engagement improves policy coherence.

Resnick 1 — Evan Resnick, Ph.D. Candidate in Political Science at Columbia University, holds an M.Phil. in Political Science and an M.A. in Political Science from Columbia University, 2001 (“Defining engagement,” *Journal of International Affairs*, Volume 54, Issue 2, Spring, Available Online to Subscribing Institutions via ABI/INFORM Complete)

The refined definition I propose as a substitute for existing descriptions of engagement is different in two important ways: First, it clarifies the menu of choices available for policymakers by allowing engagement to be distinguished from related approaches such as appeasement, containment and isolation. Second, it lays the groundwork for systematic and objective research on historical cases of engagement in order to discern the conditions under which it can be used effectively. Such research will, in turn, help policymakers acquire the information necessary to better manage the rogue states of the 21st century.

#### Reject broad definitions that include appeasement — overgeneralizing undermines policy education.

Resnick 1 — Evan Resnick, Ph.D. Candidate in Political Science at Columbia University, holds an M.Phil. in Political Science and an M.A. in Political Science from Columbia University, 2001 (“Defining engagement,” *Journal of International Affairs*, Volume 54, Issue 2, Spring, Available Online to Subscribing Institutions via ABI/INFORM Complete)

CONFLATING ENGAGEMENT AND APPEASEMENT

One serious flaw in scholarly conceptualizations of engagement is the tendency to view engagement as simply a synonym for appeasement, a policy approach that has fallen into disrepute since the late 1930s. In their book, Force and Statecraft, Gordon Craig and Alexander George make the following case: "constructive engagement... is essentially a policy of appeasement, though the term itself cannot be used."11 Similarly, in a recently published article, Randall Schweller and William Wohlforth refer to engagement as "simply a new, ‘more acceptable’ term for an old policy that used to be called appeasement."12 Another scholar, Victor Cha, does try to differentiate appeasement from engagement, though he does so in a manner that nevertheless renders the two policies indistinguishable. Cha claims that engagement occurs when "non-coercive and non-punitive" means are employed by a strong country toward a weak country, while appeasement is the use of the very same means by a weak country against a strong country.13 This suggests that only the strong can engage and only the weak can appease, though the actual means deployed are virtually identical in both cases.

DEFINING ENGAGEMENT TOO BROADLY

A second problem associated with various scholarly treatments of engagement is the tendency to define the concept too broadly to be of much help to the analyst. For instance, Cha's definition of engagement as any policy whose means are "non-coercive and non-punitive" is so vague that essentially any positive sanction could be considered engagement. The definition put forth by Alastair lain Johnston and Robert Ross in their edited volume, Engaging China, is equally nebulous. According to Johnston and Ross, engagement constitutes "the use of non-coercive methods to ameliorate the non-status quo elements of a rising power's behavior."14 Likewise, in his work, Rogue States and US Foreign Policy, Robert Litwak defines engagement as "positive sanctions."15 Moreover, in their edited volume, Honey and Vinegar: Incentives, Sanctions, and Foreign Policy, Richard Haass and Meghan O'Sullivan define engagement as "a foreign policy strategy that depends to a significant degree on positive incentives to achieve its objectives."16

As policymakers possess a highly differentiated typology of alternative options in the realm of negative sanctions from which to choose—including covert action, deterrence, coercive diplomacy, containment, limited war and total war—it is only reasonable to expect that they should have a similar menu of options in the realm of positive sanctions than simply engagement. Equating engagement with positive sanctions risks lumping together a variety of discrete actions that could be analyzed by distinguishing among them and comparing them as separate policies.

### Yes Appeasement

#### Appeasement is a *subcategory* of engagement.

Rock 2k — Stephen R. Rock, Associate Professor of Political Science at Vassar College, 2000 (“The Study of Appeasement,” Appeasement in International Politics, Published by the University Press of Kentucky, ISBN 0813132282, p. 23)

Nevertheless, appeasement and engagement are similar, and the two strategies overlap in certain respects. Several of the cases of appeasement examined in this volume contained elements of engagement, and could perhaps be interpreted by some as examples of the latter rather than of the former. It may, in fact, be appropriate to think of appeasement as a subcategory of engagement. For these reasons, this work on appeasement is intended to be of interest to scholars who study engagement and of relevance to practitioners of foreign policy who must decide whether and how to pursue such a strategy.

### Foreign Engagement

#### This would be the 1NC T Card, cited by 135 other scholars. Resnick line by lines aff authors attempting to make “engagement” a broader definition. We have the section most relevant for a 1NC T debate in the Exec Summary, but here is the entire article. Provides a list for what engagement should be considered

Resnick 1 [Evan, Defining Engagement, Journal of International Affairs , Spring 2001, Vol. 54, No. 2, Rogue States: Isolation vs. Engagement in the 21st Century (Spring 2001), pp. 551-566, Published by: Journal of International Affairs Editorial Board Stable, https://www.jstor.org/stable/24357749]

While the term “engagement” enjoys great consistency and clarity of meaning in the discourse of romantic love, it enjoys neither in the discourse of statecraft. Currently, practitioners and scholars of American foreign policy are vigorously debating the merits of engagement as a strategy for modifying the behavior of unsavory regimes. The quality of this debate, however, is diminished by the persistent inability of the US foreign policy establishment to advance a coherent and analytically rigorous conceptualization of engagement. In this essay, I begin with a brief survey of the conceptual fog that surrounds engagement and then attempt to give a more refined definition. I will use this definition as the basis for drawing a sharp distinction between engagement and alternative policy approaches, especially appeasement, isolation and containment.

In the contemporary lexicon of United States foreign policy, few terms have been as frequently or as confusingly invoked as that of engagement.' A growing consensus extols the virtues of engagement as the most promising policy for managing the threats posed to the US by foreign adversaries. In recent years, engagement constituted the Clinton administration's declared approach in the conduct of bilateral relations with such countries as China, Russia, North I€orea and Vietnam.

Robert Suettinger, a onetime member of the Clinton administration's National Security Council, remarked that the word engagement has “been overused and poorly defined by a variety of policymakers and speechwriters” and has “become shopworn to the point that there is little agreement on what it actually means. 2 The Clinton foreign policy team attributed five distinct meanings to engagement:3

A broad-based grand strategic orientation: In this sense, engagement is considered synonymous with American internationalism and global leadership. For example, in a 1993 speech, National Security Advisor Anthony Lake observed that American public opinion was divided into two rival camps: “On the one side is protectionism and limited foreign engagement; on the other is active American engagement abroad on behalf of democracy and expanded trade. 4

A specific approach to managing bilateral relations with a target state through the unconditional provision of continuous concessions to that state: During the 1992 presidential campaign, candidate Bill Clinton criticized the Bush administration's “ill-advised and failed” policy of “constructive engagement” toward China as one that “coddled the dictators and pleaded for progress, but refused to impose penalties for intransigence.”'

A bilateral policy characterized by the conditional provision of concessions to a target state: The Clinton administration announced in May 1993 that the future extension of Most Favored Nation trading status to China would be conditional on improvements in the Chinese government's domestic human rights record.6

Likewise, in the Agreed Framework signed by the US and North l€orea in October 1994, the US agreed to provide North I€orea with heavy oil, new light-water nuclear reactors and eventual diplomatic and economic normalization in exchange for a freeze in the North's nuclear weapons program.’

A bilateral policy characterized by the broadening of contacts in areas of mutual interest with a target state: Key to this notion of engagement is the idea that areas of dialogue and fruitful cooperation should be broadened and not be held hostage through linkage to areas of continuing disagreement and friction. The Clinton administration inaugurated such a policy toward China in May 1994 by declaring that it would not tie the annual MFN decision to the Chinese government's human rights record.' Similarly, the administration's foreign policy toward the Russian Federation has largely been one of engagement and described as an effort to “build areas of agreement and...develop policies to manage our differences. 9

S) A bilateral policy characterized by the provision of technical assistance to facilitate economic and political liberalization in a target state: In its 1999 national security report, the White House proclaimed that its “strategy of engagement with each of the NIS [Newly Independent States]” consisted of “working with grassroots organizations, independent media, and emerging entrepreneurs” to “improve electoral processes and help strengthen civil society,” and to help the governments of the NIS to “build the laws, institutions and skills needed for a market democracy, to fight crime and corruption [and] to advance human rights and the rule of law.”'0

Unfortunately, scholars have not fared better than policymakers in the effort to conceptualize engagement because they often make at least one of the following critical errors: ( 1) treating engagement as a synonym for appeasement; (2) defining engagement so expansively that it essentially constitutes any policy relying on positive sanctions; (3) defining engagement in an unnecessarily restrictive manner.

CONFLATING ENGAGEMENT AND APPEASEMENT

One serious flaw in scholarly conceptualizations of engagement is the tendency to view engagement as simply a synonym for appeasement, a policy approach that has fallen into disrepute since the late 1930s. In their book, force and Statecrafi, Gordon Craig and Alexander George make the following case: “constructive engagement...is essentially a policy of appeasement, though the term itself cannot be used.”'' Similarly, in a recently published article, Randall Schweller and William Wohlforth refer to engagement as “simply a new, ‘more acceptable’ term for an old policy that used to be called appeasement.”’2 Another scholar, Victor Cha, does try to differentiate appeasement from engagement, though he does so in a manner that nevertheless renders the two policies indistinguishable. Cha claims that engagement occurs when “non-coercive and non-punitive” means are employed by a strong country toward a weak country, while appeasement is the use of the very same means by a weak country against a strong country.'3 This suggests that only the strong can engage and only the weak can appease, though the actual means deployed are virtually identical in both cases.

DEFINING ENGAGEMENT Too BROADLY

A second problem associated with various scholarly treatments of engagement is the tendency to define the concept too broadly to be of much help to the analyst. For instance, Cha's definition of engagement as any policy whose means are “non-coercive and non-punitive” is so vague that essentially any positive sanction could be considered engagement. The definition put forth by Alastair Iain Johnston and Robert Ross in their edited volume, Engaging China, is equally nebulous. According to Johnston and Ross, engagement constitutes “the use of non-coercive methods to ameliorate the non-status quo elements of a rising power's behavior.”'4 Likewise, in his work, arm States and US foreign Polio:y, Robert Litwak defines engagement as “positive sanctions.”'5 Moreover, in their edited volume, Honey and Vinegar: Incentives, Sanctions, and Foreign Polio, Richard Haass and Meghan O'Sullivan define engagement as “a foreign policy strategy that depends to a significant degree on positive incentives to achieve its objectives. l6

As policymakers possess a highly differentiated typology of alternative options in the realm of negative sanctions from which to choose—including covert action, deterrence, coercive diplomacy, containment, limited war and total war—it is only reasonable to expect that they should have a similar menu of options in the realm of positive sanctions than simply engagement. Equating engagement with positive sanctions risks lumping together a variety of discrete actions that could be analyzed by distinguishing among them and comparing them as separate policies.

DEFINING ENGAGEMENT Too NARROWLY

The third trap that has ensnared numerous scholars is the tendency to needlessly circumscribe the parameters of engagement. This results from attempts to: define engagement as ends rather than means; stipulate the types of states that can engage or be engaged; restrict the types of behaviors that comprise engagement; and limit the types of behaviors that can be modified through engagement. Each of these restrictions hampers the taslc of evaluating the utility of engagement relative to other policies objectively accurately.

Some scholars have excessively narrowed the definition of engagement by defining it according to the ends sought rather than the means employed. For example, Schweller and Wohlforth assert that if any distinction can be drawn between engagement and appeasement, “it is that the goal of engagement is not simply tension-reduction and the avoidance of war but also an attempt to socialize [a] dissatisfied power into acceptance of the established order.”'7 Such ends-based definitions hinder the study of engagement in two ways. First, because the act of policymaking consists of selecting from a variety of alternative means in the pursuit of a given end(s), it stands to reason that policy instruments are more effectively conceptualized in terms of means rather than ends. When defined as different means, policies can be more easily compared with one another across a whole spectrum of discrete ends, in order to gauge more accurately the circumstances under which each policy is relatively more or less effective.”

Second, scholars who define engagement as the end of

peaceful socialization inevitably create a bias for future empirical research on engagement outcomes. This is because it is difficult to imagine a more ambitious foreign policy objective than the peaceable transformation of a revisionist state that rejects the

dominant norms and practices of the international system into a status-quo state that embodies those same norms and practices. The equation of engagement with socialization alone forecloses the possibility that engagement could be employed to accomplish more modest goals such as tension-reduction. Therefore, all else being equal, scholars using this loaded definition will be predisposed to conclude from examination only of the hardest cases of attempted socialization that the policy is ineffective.i Considering engagement as a set of means would enable analysts to more fairly assess the effectiveness of engagement relative to other policies in achieving an array of ends.

Scholars have also inappropriately narrowed the scope of engagement by unnecessarily limiting the types of states that can pursue engagement or the types of target states that can be engaged. Cha's conceptualization posits that only powerful states can engage and that only weak ones can be engaged. This forecloses alternative examples of weak states' initiating engagement and strong states' being engaged. As a result, Cha's interpretation risks biasing subsequent empirical studies of engagement, as one would typically expect powerful states to engage more successfully than weak states, and for weak states to be engaged more successfully than strong states. On the other side of the coin, Johnston and Ross define engagement as the effort to ameliorate the revisionist elements of “a rising major power's behavior.” This conceptualization is equally biased; rising great powers are probably the hardest types of states to socialize as opposed to declining great powers or smaller regional powers.20

Scholars have limited the concept of engagement in a third way by unnecessarily restricting the scope of the policy. In their evaluation of post-Cold War US engagement of China, Paul Papayoanou and Scott IRstner define engagement as the attempt to integrate a target country into the international order through promoting “increased trade and financial transactions. 2' However, limiting engagement policy to the increasing of economic interdependence leaves out many other issue areas that were an integral part of the Clinton administration's China policy, including those in the diplomatic, military and cultural arenas. Similarly, the US engagement of North korea, as epitomized by the 1994 Agreed Framework pact, promises eventual normalization of economic relations and the gradual normalization of diplomatic relations.22 Equating engagement with economic contacts alone risks neglecting the importance and potential effectiveness of contacts in non- economic issue areas.

Finally, some scholars risk gleaning only a partial and distorted insight into engagement by restrictively evaluating its effectiveness in achieving only some of its professed objectives. Papayoanou and IRstner deny that they seek merely to examine the “security implications” of the US engagement of China, though in a footnote, they admit that “[m]uch of the debate [over US policy toward the PRC] centers around the effects of engagement versus containment on human rights in China. 23 This approach violates a cardinal tenet of statecraft analysis: the need to acknowledge multiple objectives in virtually all attempts to exercise inter-state influence.2’ Absent a comprehensive survey of the multiplicity of goals involved in any such attempt,

it would be naive to accept any verdict rendered concerning its overall merits.

A REFINED DEFINITION OF ENGAGEMENT

In order to establish a more effective framework for dealing with unsavory regimes, I propose that we define engagement as the attempt to influence the political behavior of a target state through the comprehensive establishment and enhancement of contacts with that state across multiple issue-areas (i.e. diplomatic, militap, economic, cultural). The following is a brief list of the specific forms that such contacts might include:

DIPLOMATIC CONTACTS

-Extension of diplomatic recognition; normalization of diplomatic relations

-Promotion of target-state membership in international institutions and regimes

-Summit meetings and other visits by the head of state and other senior government officials of sender state to target state and vice-versa

MILITARY CONTACTS

-Visits of senior military officials of the sender state to the target state and vice-versa

-Arms transfers

-Military aid and cooperation

-Military exchange and training programs

-Confidence and security-building measures

-Intelligence sharing

ECONOMIC CONTACTS

-Trade agreements and promotion

-Foreign economic and humanitarian aid in the form of loans and/or grants

CULTURAL CONTACTS

-Cultural treaties

-Inauguration of travel and tourism links

-Sport, artistic and academic exchanges2’

Engagement is an iterated process in which the sender and target state develop a relationship of increasing interdependence, culminating in the endpoint of “normalized relations” characterized by a high level of interactions across multiple domains. Engagement is a quintessential exchange relationship: the target state wants the prestige and material resources that would accrue to it from increased contacts with the sender state, while the sender state seeks to modify the domestic and/or foreign policy behavior of the target state. This deductive logic could adopt a number of different forms or strategies when deployed in practice.26 For instance, individual contacts can be established by the sender state at either a low or a high level of conditionality.27 Additionally, the sender state can achieve its objectives using engagement through any one of the following causal processes: by directly modifying the behavior of the target regime; by manipulating or reinforcing the target states' domestic balance of political power between competing factions that advocate divergent policies; or by shifting preferences at the grassroots level in the hope that this will precipitate political change from below within the target state.

This definition implies that three necessary conditions must hold for engagement to constitute an effective foreign policy instrument. First, the overall magnitude of contacts between the sender and target states must initially be low. If two states are already bound by dense contacts in multiple domains (i.e., are

already in a highly interdependent relationship), engagement loses its impact as an effective policy tool. Hence, one could not reasonably invoke the possibility of the US engaging Canada or Japan in order to effect a change in either country's political behavior. Second, the material or prestige needs of the target state must be significant, as engagement derives its power from the promise that it can fulfill those needs. The greater the needs of the target state, the more amenable to engagement it is likely to be. For example, North i'iorea’s receptivity to engagement by the US dramatically increased in the wake of the demise of its chief patron, the Soviet Union, and the near-total collapse of its national economy.2'

Third, the target state must perceive the engager and the international order it represents as a potential source of the material or prestige resources it desires. This means that autarkic, revolutionary and unlimited regimes which eschew the norms and institutions of the prevailing order, such as Stalin's Soviet Union or Hitler's Germany, will not be seduced by the potential benefits of engagement.

This reformulated conceptualization avoids the pitfalls of prevailing scholarly conceptions of engagement. It considers the policy as a set of means rather than ends, does not delimit the types of states that can either engage or be engaged, explicitly encompasses contacts in multiple issue-areas, allows for the existence of multiple objectives in any given instance of engagement and, as will be shown below, permits the elucidation of multiple types of positive sanctions.

DATING BETWEEN ENGAGEMENT AND PEASEMENT

In contrast to many prevailing conceptions of engagement, the one proposed in this essay allows a substantive distinction to be drawn between engagement and appeasement. The standard definition of appeasement—which derives from the language of classical European diplomacy, namely “a policy of attempting to reduce tension between two states by the methodical removal of the principal causes of conflict between them 2’—is venerable but nevertheless inadequate.30 It does not provide much guidance to the contemporary policymaker or policy analyst, because it conceives of a foreign policy approach in terms of the ends sought while never making clear the precise means involved. The principal causes of conflict between two states can be removed in a number of ways.”

A more refined definition of appeasement that not only remains loyal to the traditional connotations but also establishes a firm conceptual distinction from engagement might be: the attempt to influence the political behavior of a target state by ceding territory and/or a geopolitical sphere of influence to that state. Indeed, the two best-known cases of appeasement, Great Britain's appeasement of the United States at the turn of the 20th century and of Nazi Germany in the 1930s, reveals that much of this appeasement adopted precisely these guises. The key elements of the British appeasement of the US-acceptance of the Monroe Doctrine— permission for the US to build and fortify a Central American canal, and acquiescence to American claims on the border between Alaska and the Yukon—consisted of explicit acknowledgement of American territorial authority.’2 Meanwhile, the appeasement of the Third Reich by Great Britain was characterized by acquiescence to: Germany's military reoccupation of the Rhineland ( 1936); annexation of Austria ( 1938); acquisition of the Sudetenland from Czechoslovakia as decided at the Munich Conference; and absorption of the remainder of Czechoslovakia ( 1939).3’ A more contemporary example of appeasement is the land for peace exchange that represents the centerpiece of the on-again off-again diplomatic negotiations between the Israeli government and the Palestinian Authority.

Thus, a rigid conceptual distinction can be drawn between engagement and appeasement. Whereas both policies are positive sanctions—insofar as they add to the power and prestige of the target state—engagement does so in a less direct and less militarized fashion than appeasement. In addition, engagement differs from appeasement by establishing an increasingly interdependent relationship between the sender and the target state. At any juncture, the sender state can, in theory, abrogate such a relationship at some (ideally prohibitive) cost to the target state.34 Appeasement, on the other hand, does not involve the establishment of contacts or interdependence between the appeases and the appeased. Territory and/or a sphere of influence are merely transferred by one party to the other either unconditionally or in exchange for certain concessions on the part of the target state.

ENGAGEMENT VS. ISOIATiON, ArPEASEMENT VS. CONTAiNMENT

The proposed definition of engagement helps clarify the distinctions between alternative foreign policy approaches that rely on positive sanctions and also makes understandable distinctions among some frequently mentioned alternative approaches that rely on negative sanctions. In current discussions on US foreign policy toward rogue states, and especially on US foreign policy toward China, engagement and containment are paired as antipodal policies. In fact, one recent scholarly article addressing US-P.R.C. relations decries the fact that “the media and many pundits have constructed US choices

as limited to ‘engagement’ and ‘containment.”’35 However, in light of the distinction I posit between engagement and appeasement, one could more intuitively construe containment to be the opposite of appeasement rather than engagement. Containment has been traditionally construed as the attempt to prevent the geopolitical expansion of a target state.36 If appeasement constitutes the cession of territory and/or spheres of influence to a target state, containment might more appropriately be considered the policy of preventing a target state from expanding its territorial scope and/or sphere of geopolitical influence. Thus, whereas a sender state can expand contacts across multiple issue areas with a target state while simultaneously deterring it from committing aggression and/or expanding its geopolitical influence by allying with its neighbors (engagement plus containment), it would be impossible for a sender state to cede territory and/or a sphere of influence to a target state while simultaneously preventing that same state from expanding its territory or sphere of geopolitical influence (appeasement plus containment).

The opposite of a policy of engagement would be one in which a state comprehensively diminishes and withdraws contacts across multiple issue areas with another state. Although such a policy would be considered a negative sanction, it does not attempt to do so through direct geopolitical means, as does a containment policy. One could label such a policy as disengagement or isolation.3’ Thus, whereas a state can yield another state territory or an enlarged sphere of influence while simultaneously abrogating contacts with that state (appeasement plus disengagement), it is impossible for a state to expand and diminish contacts with another state across multiple issue-areas (engagement plus disengagement).

The distinctions drawn between engagement, appeasement, containment and isolation allow for a more focused and coherent discussion of some of the options available for dealing with rival states. For example, current US policy toward China can be depicted as engagement plus containment. Efforts in recent years to liberalize trade with China, integrate the P.R.C. into international institutions and regimes, facilitate numerous diplomatic visits and summit meetings, and conduct bilateral exchanges of senior military personnel and academics are representative of engagement. However, at the same time, the US has elected to contain rather than appease China by taking steps to prevent the P.R.C. from expanding its territory or sphere of influence in East Asia. Most important, the US has signaled that it would not stand aside if Beijing tries to absorb Taiwan by force. Toward this end, the US has continued to sell large quantities of arms to the Taiwanese government, and, in 1995 and 1996, it played high stakes gunboat diplomacy with China in the Taiwan Straits.3' In addition, the United States has retained its Cold War military alliances with both South ICorea and Japan and has maintained a strong troop presence in both countries.3’ The US has also expressed grave concern about “Chinese intrusions” into disputed island territories in the South China Sea.“ Taken together, these steps exemplify Columbia University Professor A. Doak Barnett's 1966 injunction to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee that American policy toward China should constitute “containment but not isolation. 4'

CONCLUSION

In matters of national security, establishing a clear definition of terms is a precondition for effective policymaking. Decision- makers who invoke critical terms in an erratic, ad hoc fashion risk alienating their constituencies. They also risk exacerbating misperceptions and hostility among those the policies target. Scholars who commit the same error undercut their ability to conduct valuable empirical research. Hence, if scholars and policymakers fail rigorously to define “engagement,” they undermine the ability to build an effective foreign policy.

The réfined definition I propose as a substitute for existing descriptions of engagement is different in two important ways: First, it clarifies the menu of choices available for policymakers by allowing engagement to be distinguished from related approaches such as appeasement, containment and isolation. Second, it lays the groundwork for systematic and objective research on historical cases of engagement in order to discern the conditions under which it can be used effectively. Such research will, in turn, help policymakers acquire the information necessary to better manage the rogue states of the 21st century.

#### Engagement MEANS something – literature review of “engagement” as a term of art and its sub-sets

Haass and O’Sullivan 2000 [Richard Haass, formerly a senior aide to President George Bush, is Vice President and Director of Foreign Policy Studies at the Brookings Institution, Washington DC, and author of The Reluctant Sheriff: The United States After the Cold War (Washington DC: Brookings Institution Press, 1997). Meghan L. O’Sullivan is a Fellow with the Foreign Policy Studies Program at the Brookings Institution. Together, they are editors of Honey and Vinegar: Incentives, Sanctions, and Foreign Policy (Brookings Institution Press, 2000), vol. 42, no. 2, Summer 2000, The International Institute for Strategic Studies, Terms of Engagement: Alternatives to Punitive Policies, brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/2000survival.pdf]

The term ‘engagement’ was popularised in the early 1980s amid controversy about the Reagan administration’s policy of ‘constructive engagement’ towards South Africa. However, the term itself remains a source of confusion. Except in the few instances where the US has sought to isolate a regime or country, America arguably ‘engages’ states and actors all the time simply by interacting with them. To be a meaningful subject of analysis, the term ‘engagement’ must refer to something more specific than a policy of ‘non-isolation’. As used in this article, ‘engagement’ refers to a foreign-policy strategy which depends to a significant degree on positive incentives to achieve its objectives. Certainly, it does not preclude the simultaneous use of other foreign-policy instruments such as sanctions or military force: in practice, there is often considerable overlap of strategies, particularly when the termination or lifting of sanctions is used as a positive inducement. Yet the distinguishing feature of American engagement strategies is their reliance on the extension or provision of incentives to shape the behaviour of countries with which the US has important disagreements. Today’s rapidly globalising world, no longer beset by Cold War competitions, creates new possibilities for engagement as a foreign-policy option. In particular, the growing recognition of the drawbacks of punitive policies in this new environment has spurred a search for alternative strategies. There are increasing doubts about the wisdom of using sanctions, particularly when exerted unilaterally in a globalised world economy, to dissuade problem regimes from their agendas. Not only has the record of sanctions in forcing change been poor, but the costs of such policies to civilian populations and American commercial interests has often been substantial. Just as faith in sanctions has been shaken, the limits of military force have been exposed: despite relentless bombings, Saddam Hussein remains in power, and events in Kosovo demonstrate how even the most carefully orchestrated military campaign can result in serious collateral damages. Moreover, the dissolution of Cold War alignments has both opened new opportunities for engagement strategies and created new rationales for them. Due to the heightened economic vulnerability and strategic insecurity of former Soviet allies, the incentives that the US can offer have new potency. At the same time, because America’s allies are freer to shape their foreign-policy agendas subject to their own desires, the US needs to seek out policies with appeal which extends beyond rigid American preferences. During the 1990s, many of America’s closest allies in Europe revealed a preference for using incentives rather than punitive actions to achieve foreign-policy goals.2 Many different types of engagement strategies exist, depending on who is engaged, the kind of incentives employed and the sorts of objectives pursued. Engagement may be conditional when it entails a negotiated series of exchanges, such as where the US extends positive inducements for changes undertaken by the target country. Or engagement may be unconditional if it offers modifications in US policy towards a country without the explicit expectation that a reciprocal act will follow. Generally, conditional engagement is geared towards a government; unconditional engagement works with a country’s civil society or private sector in the hopes of promoting forces that will eventually facilitate cooperation. Architects of engagement strategies can choose from a wide variety of incentives. Economic engagement might offer tangible incentives such as export credits, investment insurance or promotion, access to technology, loans and economic aid.3 Other equally useful economic incentives involve the removal of penalties such as trade embargoes, investment bans or high tariffs, which have impeded economic relations between the United States and the target country. Facilitated entry into the economic global arena and the institutions that govern it rank among the most potent incentives in today’s global market. Similarly, political engagement can involve the lure of diplomatic recognition, access to regional or international institutions, the scheduling of summits between leaders – or the termination of these benefits. Military engagement could involve the extension of international military educational training in order both to strengthen respect for civilian authority and human rights among a country’s armed forces and, more feasibly, to establish relationships between Americans and young foreign military officers. While these areas of engagement are likely to involve working with state institutions, cultural or civil-society engagement entails building people-to-people contacts. Funding nongovernmental organisations, facilitating the flow of remittances and promoting the exchange of students, tourists and other non-governmental people between countries are just some of the possible incentives used in the form of engagement. While policy-makers should give greater consideration to the idea of engagement, incentives will be applicable only in a limited set of circumstances. In addition, unlike other foreign-policy tools, engagement is open to charges of appeasement from its critics. Sceptics have also argued that engagement strategies can invite problems of moral hazard, where a cash-strapped regime watching America ‘buy out’ North Korea’s nuclear programme may be inspired to embark on its own endeavour in the hopes of later ‘selling’ it to the US. Moreover, as a strategy which often depends on reciprocal actions between the US and the target country, engagement is likely to involve even higher risks and uncertainties than other foreign-policy strategies. But both the promises and the risks suggest the urgent need for a considered analysis of the strategy of engagement. Guidelines need to be formulated, drawing on instances where the US and Europe have previously used incentives rather than employed penalties alone in dealing with recalcitrant regimes. Two critical questions must be asked: when should policy makers consider engagement; and how should engagement strategies be managed in order to maximise the chances of success? Once these guidelines are formulated, they can be used to assess recent US policy towards many problem states. American relations with China, Cuba, Iran, Libya and North Korea are of particular interest, either for the promises that alternative strategies of engagement may hold or as examples of on-going attempts at engagement. Rather than examining the possibility of engaging allies, or even ‘friendly tyrants’, these cases represent some of the greatest challenges confronting American foreign policy-makers today.4 Although prospects for further engagement with Iraq are not considered in detail here, we make no pretensions that Iraq should not be included among the most problematic of America’s state-to-state relations. Indeed, engagement is explicit in United Nations Security Council resolutions, which offer Iraq specific rewards in exchange for compliance. However, Saddam Hussein – in spurring the UN resolutions mapping the path to better relations with its neighbours and the West – has rejected the possibility of any mutually reciprocal engagement for the time being.

Perhaps most obviously, incentives should be used when they are the most sensible option considered alongside other policy choices. The situation with North Korea in 1994 clearly demonstrates how this can be the case. Washington had campaigned ardently to secure the backing of North Korea’s neighbours for the imposition of multilateral sanctions, but had achieved only limited success. At the same time, the US military was sceptical that bombing could successfully eliminate the threat of continued North Korean nuclear development. Moreover, American civilian and military personnel leadership feared that the use of either punitive approach could trigger a military attack by North Korea across the thirty-eighth parallel. Against this background, the US turned to engagement and crafted an agreement which promised economic and political incentives in return for restraints on North Korean nuclear capability. This accord subsequently has been critical in minimising the threat posed by nuclear weapons on the Korean Peninsula. Moreover, even when engagement appears to be a long shot, it often makes sense as a strategy that will open opportunities for employing other types of policies further down the road. Engagement strategies – if tried and unsuccessful – can build support for sanctions or military force among other countries. Given that multilateral action is almost always preferable to unilateral action, a failed engagement strategy can still be a success. This paradox is demonstrated most clearly in the case of Iraq. The Iraqi invasion of Kuwait in August 1990 revealed that previous US attempts to engage Saddam Hussein from 1988–90 had abjectly failed. The diversity and breadth of the international coalition that America forged in 1990, and the successful military campaign that followed from it, are well known. US efforts to mobilise this coalition were greatly facilitated by the fact that the United States had pursued a policy which sought cooperation with Iraq for the years preceding the invasion.5 This earlier policy prevented Iraq’s Arab neighbours – who had urged the US to engage Saddam Hussein in the late 1980s – from justifying the invasion of Kuwait on the grounds that it was an Iraqi response to American pressure. Instead, previous engagement efforts gave the Bush administration credibility which allowed it to garner support beyond its traditional allies for both sanctions and military force. Even when external considerations or calculations do not prompt engagement efforts, engagement can be a promising strategy. For instance, countries with acute economic and strategic vulnerabilities can make good engagement partners. In the past, economic weaknesses or strategic insecurities were seen as indications that a country could be easily or quickly isolated; policies involving sanctions, diplomatic pressure or military force often followed. However, such vulnerabilities can also be interpreted as providing important windows to engagement. Exploiting such circumstances requires a detailed and accurate understanding of the domestic realities within the target country. Not only must policy-makers be aware of economic and strategic details and events, they – or the intelligence community which advises them – also need a precise appreciation of what motivates people in positions of power. Accurate assessments of economic and strategic vulnerabilities have enabled American policy-makers in the past to craft promising engagement strategies with former adversaries. For example, the Soviet collapse heightened Vietnamese economic and strategic insecurities and assisted American negotiators in charting a mutually acceptable course to normalisation of relations. During the Carter administration, Vietnam had resisted normalisation unless it would be done under Hanoi’s own specified conditions; however, in the 1990s, judicious use of American aid and other incentives (including the lifting of economic sanctions) was sufficient to entice Hanoi to comply with most American concerns before normalisation occurred. Similarly, the case of détente with the Soviet Union reveals how an accurate appreciation of economic and strategic vulnerabilities is also critical to engagement between more equal powers. Henry Kissinger and Richard Nixon recognised that the political and economic incentives they were willing to offer Soviet leader Leonid Brezhnev in exchange for reductions in weapons and limitations on defence research would appeal to a Soviet Union anxious for Western technological assistance and political recognition internationally. However, some cautionary words are in order. Almost any economic incentive enhances the foreign-exchange supply of unsavoury regimes which, even if not used directly for nefarious behaviour, can free up other reserves for such purposes. In addition, certain types of economic incentives – such as aid or the provision of material goods – have a limited ability to ensure compliance with agreements or ongoing moderated behaviour. To the extent that they involve one-off transfers, such incentives can fuel a cycle of demands as the engaged regime seeks to maximise the ‘price’ extracted for the desired changes. Therefore, policy-makers should seek to employ economic incentives, such as the adjustment of tariff rates or investment or trade credits, which are selfperpetuating in the sense that they provide enduring benefits to both sides as long as the relationship is viewed as mutually beneficial. Similarly, the provision of aid or other goods with economic value spaced out over an extended period of time – such as the regular delivery of fuel oil to North Korea throughout the late 1990s – can also provide motivation for on-going compliance. The best potential candidates for conditional engagement are often those countries where decision making is the most concentrated. Promising partners in engagement must not only be willing to commit their governments to undertake a contractual relationship, but must be to do so as well. This distinction, while having little relevance for relations with US allies whose populations expect and generally support cooperation with the United States, is an important one when addressing engagement with ‘rogues’ or other problem regimes. The fact that some regimes may be willing, but not able, to cooperate with the West implies that certain types of regimes do make better candidates for engagement than others. For instance, the authoritarian nature of a regime can often facilitate engagement, rather than thwart it. The strong position of Brezhnev was a key factor in delivering the achievements of limited US–Soviet cooperation in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Having consolidated his power, Brezhnev was able to control internal criticism and challenges to détente. In short, the strong position of the Soviet leader eliminated many uncertainties inherent in negotiating with other types of regimes; if Nixon and Kissinger could develop an agreement appealing to Brezhnev, they could be confident that it would not fall prey to internal squabbling during its implementation – at least on the Soviet side. By contrast, engagement can be frustrated by the nature of some democratic regimes. European efforts to engage Iran were hindered by the complex and volatile domestic politics of Iran’s hybrid theocracy-democracy and the inability of the European Union to understand how these internal politics created constraints on Iranian actors. Although ostensibly geared to capitalise on moderating Iranian trends, by the time the EU’s ‘critical dialogue’ policy was launched in December 1992, the Iranian political system had already become mired in political conflict. Not only were significant clashes occurring between individuals and factions, but fundamental ideological questions about the nature of the Iranian system were being debated. In such an environment, those more moderate elements that Europe sought to engage risked being discredited in Iran for undertaking a contractual relationship with the West. At the same time, few Iranian actors had sufficient domestic room to manoeuvre to make bargains with Europe about human rights, terrorism and weapons of mass destruction. These internal political dynamics – in conjunction with the failure of European policy-makers to appreciate them – dashed unrealistic European hopes of promoting political moderation through engagement. For the United States, an engagement strategy makes the most sense when adequate domestic political support – or the potential for creating it – exists among key constituencies. As the policy of ‘constructive engagement’ with South Africa in the 1980s demonstrates vividly, the viability of an engagement strategy is limited if it is inconsistent with the sentiments and interests of politically important groups of Americans at home. Throughout the 1980s, the Reagan administration sought to continue its policy of engaging the government of President P.W. Botha. However, strident objections were voiced by the US Congress and influential civic groups who increasingly viewed this variety of engagement as morally abhorrent. It was ultimately this domestic repulsion – reflected in the US Congress’ overwhelming bipartisan vote to override President Reagan’s veto of the Comprehensive Anti-Apartheid Act in 1986 – that forced a new, more limited type of engagement strategy more consistent with American moral concerns.

From the policy-maker’s perspective, it would be ideal if a well-prepared domestic base in favour of engagement existed even before an engagement strategy were considered. However, the architects of engagement can use political or economic means to craft such bases. In a bitter post-war atmosphere, the efforts of the Carter administration to normalise relations with Vietnam stumbled in part because there was no domestic constituency supporting Carter’s endeavours. In contrast, years later, the Clinton administration was able to bring this process to fruition with the backing of carefully solicited, influential congressional leaders and the support of American businesses, even in the face of organised opposition from various veteran’s lobbies. In 1988–90, economic incentives were combined with political penalties to try to induce Iraq to modify its behaviour. While perhaps not the specific intention of the architects of engagement with Saddam Hussein, the extension of US government agricultural credit guarantees to Iraq appealed to American industrial and agricultural interests which saw Iraq as a large, promising market, and thus created one American constituency in favour of continued engagement.6 As the underlying basis of most forms of engagement is cooperation between governments, it seems logical that engagement works best when pursuing modest goals and often falters when pursuing ambitious ones.7 Modest goals are those which are not perceived by the regime to threaten its survival. Classifying objectives in this manner helps to explain engagement’s uneven record of success in the pursuit of what appear to be similar goals. Positive inducements have been used not only to advance non-proliferation objectives with North Korea, but American encouragement and incentives also helped South Korea, Taiwan, Sweden, Brazil, Argentina, South Africa, Ukraine, Belarus and Kazakhstan to choose a path of de-nuclearisation.8 Yet engagement strategies failed to curtail the development of weapons of mass destruction by Iran and Iraq. Presumably, unlike the majority of the countries foregoing nuclear-weapons programmes, Iran and Iraq believed that their development of unconventional weapons was essential to their survival. In these instances, larger issues of regional security must be addressed; any amount of incentives will be insufficient to coerce regimes to take action which, in their view, amount to suicide. The difficulties of enticing a regime to make changes or concessions which it perceives as threatening to its survival are obvious. However, engagement strategies can claim some triumphs in achieving greater democratic expression or the promotion of human rights – achievements which often come at the direct expense of a regime’s control. For instance, US engagement with China has contributed to the emergence of a political system which, while still repressive, is far more moderate than it would be in the absence of engagement. In comparison with the performance of sanctions in achieving these sorts of goals, even a qualified record of engagement is impressive. Experience with South Africa suggests that the success of engagement in pursuing ‘ambitious’ goals is at least in part attributable to the flexibility of engagement as a foreign-policy strategy. Unlike a sanctions-only policy, engagement strategies can target a number of actors in a society and provide them each with a different package of incentives, thereby creating the impetus for change from many directions. In its second, and most successful stage, engagement with South Africa involved economic penalties which sought to inflict harm on the economic interests of the élite and thereby push the leadership into negotiations with its political adversaries. At the same time, engagement placed a new emphasis on cultivating and supporting broader elements of South African society, especially within the opposition and civil society. Moreover, a widely followed investment code gave the private sector, both in South Africa and abroad, an active role in agitating for reform. It was the cumulative effect of these multiple-engagement strategies geared towards different tiers of society that finally contributed to altering white attitudes and changing the South African domestic political agenda.

Successful engagement demands a well-delineated road map, which can outline with great precision the conditions that must be fulfilled for success, and the benefits that can be reaped on both sides as the relationship advances. The utility of such agreements can be seen in the contrast between Carter’s failed efforts to normalise relations with Vietnam and the later success of normalisation. During the Carter administration, the relationship between US humanitarian aid to Vietnam and Vietnam’s full accounting for Americans missing in action and prisoners of war was left vague. Given that this trade-off was key to unlocking domestic support for the process of normalisation in each country, the respective leaderships were unwilling to move forward without receiving explicit guarantees from the other side. This Catch-22 closed a window of opportunity to normalise relations before Cold War political considerations all but obliterated the opportunity to do so. The centrepiece of the successful engagement strategy adopted by the Bush administration and continued by President Clinton was a meticulously crafted road map charting movement forward towards normalisation. This detailed plan enabled both sides to maintain a level of momentum which was sustainable and conducive to eventual success. The argument in favour of detailed road maps is not just due to the positive outcome of the Vietnam case once such an agenda was employed; certainly, the use of a precise agenda was not the only factor that differed in each episode.9 Relying on road maps also makes intellectual and psychological sense. Often, America has no record of interaction with the regimes it is trying to engage, or worse, its history with them has been hostile, suspicious, or belligerent. In such situations of little or no trust, engagement is a gamble for both sides. The creation of road maps not only diminishes uncertainty but, by laying out incremental steps, serves as a series of confidence-building measures to stabilise an uncertain relationship At the same time, agreements which lay out the groundwork for the gradual improvement of relations also facilitate the implementation of engagement by minimising the potential for misreading the actions of the other country. Particularly in countries where US intelligence capabilities are limited, such accords take on even greater importance by reducing the need to determine the ultimate intentions of the target country. By clearly delineating acceptable and unacceptable actions, policy-makers can better discern whether belligerent rhetoric or questionable behaviour indicates a departure from engagement or is merely intended for domestic political purposes. The case of Iraq makes this point most clearly. Given the vague confines of US engagement with Iraq and limited intelligence concerning Iraqi behaviour, American policy-makers struggled to interpret the behaviour of Saddam Hussein during 1988–90. Had a framework been agreed to, it is likely that Saddam Hussein would have violated obligations specified under it, highlighting Iraq’s troubling behaviour and suggesting growing radicalism well before the Iraqi invasion Kuwait in August 1990. Instead, American policy-makers had few benchmarks against which to assess Hussein’s actions, and tended to interpret them in a way that justified their policy rather than challenged it.10 While there are many clear benefits to road maps, their use also entails real responsibilities. First, careful and on-going evaluation of any engagement policy is crucial – the credibility of a calibrated agenda is only as good as its latest step. If the target country discovers that it is possible to move to the next stage without satisfying earlier conditions, or if the regime suspects that its compliance with commitments is not verified, much of the rationale behind such a framework will be undermined. In these circumstances, an explicit agreement regarding the steps necessary to achieve a better relationship becomes a ruse, not a tool. Second, the provision of a road map obligates the US or Europe to follow certain steps as much as it binds the target country. The consequences of the relationship breaking down as a result of American intransigence are grave. Not only are the potential gains of a detailed agenda forgone if US non-compliance forces an end to the agreement, but any hope for crafting an alternative policy which commands both adequate domestic and international support will be dashed by the failure of the United States to live up to its earlier responsibilities.11 Social Engagements The use of incentives to engage a country’s civil society is almost always a good idea. At times, opaque domestic politics in the target country may frustrate efforts to discern who is in a position of power and who can deliver on promises made in exchange for certain incentives. Or the overriding goal may be the change of a regime. These sorts of situations may preclude conditional engagement, when the US seeks to establish a contractual relationship with the government of a country. However, they may be ideal times for the initiation of ‘unconditional’ engagement – the offering of incentives without any expectation of reciprocal acts. While in theory, any type of incentive could be offered unconditionally, cultural incentives or inducements to civil society are the most appropriate measures because they are the least likely to shore up dubious regimes.12 Such incentives may also be the most suitable option when US or European governments are faced with domestic lobbies determined to isolate certain regimes. In these cases, even the most strident domestic groups are unlikely to protest measures geared towards easing physical hardship and cultural isolation of the population at large in the target country. The provision of economic incentives to the private sector of a target country can be an effective mode of ‘unconditional’ engagement, particularly when the economy is not state dominated. In these more open economic climates, those nourished by the exchanges made possible under economic engagement will often be agents for change and natural allies in some Western causes. To the extent that economic engagement builds the private sector and other non-state actors, it is likely to widen the base of support for engagement with America specifically and the promotion of international norms more generally. Certainly, US engagement with China has nurtured sympathetic pockets, if not to American ideals per se, then at least to trade and open economic markets and the maintenance of good relations to secure them. The only constraint on the scope and development of ‘unconditional’ engagement is the range of available collaborators in civil society or the private sector. Fortunately, globalisation and the explosion of economic entities that has accompanied it – while making economic isolation more difficult to achieve – presents a multitude of possible partners for unconditional engagement with non-state actors. Similarly, limited forms of military engagement are almost always helpful in achieving foreign-policy goals, whether these aims be ‘modest’ or ‘ambitious’. In societies such as Pakistan, where the military is a key institution in political and daily life, maximising contact with the armed forces particularly makes sense. If the transfer of arms or dual-use technology would be counterproductive, programmes like America’s International Military Educational Training amount to sound investments and should almost never be rescinded as a sanction. Not only do they enable the US to influence the conduct of the military today, they allow America to build connections with military leaders who may be important political figures later in their political careers. Mixing honey and vinegar To be most effective, incentives offered in engagement strategies almost always need to be accompanied by credible penalties. In some cases, the penalties will involve the imposition of new sanctions or military force if the target country continues with egregious behaviour. For instance, in the view of many, the threat of sanctions and military force were significant factors in Pyongyang’s ultimate decision to accede to the 1994 Agreed Framework in which North Korea agreed to gradual denuclearisation in return for increased cooperation with the West.

Similarly, engagement is only effective when the alternative, disengaging, is a credible option. For example, the European ‘critical dialogue’ policy with Iran stumbled because it effectively involved no ‘sticks’. Rather than bolstering the leverage that could be used in conjunction with incentives to alter Iranian behaviour, extensive economic ties between Europe and Iran undermined the ‘critical dialogue’ policy. As an important source of energy for European needs, as well as a market for its goods, Iran was confident that, regardless of its behaviour, Europe would not sever its mutual economic bonds. As a result, European desires to settle disputes such as that surrounding the fatwa on Salman Rushdie lacked urgency in Iranian eyes. Economic interdependence is not tantamount to leverage; as important as economic influence is the other party’s belief that you are willing to jeopardise it in order to meet your wider objectives. Coordinating with allies There is growing consensus that sanctions, when employed unilaterally, are rarely effective. Not surprisingly, a corollary exists for the provision of incentives; engagement strategies which disregard the international environment in which they are crafted are also likely to fail. Just as a US embargo on a country’s oil sales is ineffective in coercing changes when Europe will buy the barrels America forgoes, incentives are less powerful when their equivalents are being offered elsewhere unconditionally. For example, had China been willing to donate or to sell subsidised fuel oil to North Korea, or to assist Pyongyang in the construction of additional energy sources, the package offered under the Agreed Framework would have carried far less weight. The differing policies of Western countries towards Iran demonstrate how a failure to coordinate policies can diminish the force of either a punitive approach or an engagement strategy. European efforts to influence Iran through substantial economic contacts have all but undermined American attempts to use economic coercion to pressure the Islamic regime into changing its behaviour. Rather than leaving it without export markets and foreign-exchange resources, European and Asian companies quickly filled the gap created by the American withdrawal from Iran. US secondary sanctions mandated under the 1996 Iran-Libya Sanctions Act requiring the imposition of penalties on foreign firms that invest in Iran’s oil sector have also proven to be largely feckless; instead of making Iran desperate for investment, the law has stoked not only transatlantic tensions, but also frictions between the US congressional and executive branches.13 Constraints on linkage Conceptually, the perfect engagement strategy would be much like that envisioned by Kissinger and Nixon in the formulation of détente. The target country would be persuaded to moderate its behaviour in a variety of realms, not only because each incentive offered was enticing but because the whole set of incentives was reinforcing. Ideally, by ‘linking’ progress on one front with progress on the other fronts, America could maximise its leverage and move the entire relationship forward. However, this grand plan claimed only modest successes with the Soviet Union, while any attempts to create such a strategy with China have failed. Why? Linkage is only effective when the US is willing to hold the entire bilateral relationship hostage to one overriding concern. The United States was able to secure a North Korean commitment to terminate its nuclear programme in 1994 precisely because America was able to identify nuclear proliferation as the area of principal importance to it. American willingness to jettison the prospect for improved relations in any other area in the absence of progress in the nuclear realm made a sort of linkage effective. In contrast, US efforts to link mostfavoured nation (MFN) trading status for China to the improvement of human rights there resulted in bitter domestic battles and an embarrassing retreat by President Clinton from one of his original campaign promises. While certainly the threat to terminate special trading status for China was grave, Beijing correctly calculated that the United States was unwilling to jeopardise the entire US–Chinese relationship in the interest of human rights. Both the Chinese and Soviet experiences suggest that linkage strategies are particularly ill-suited to managing complex relationships with important global powers. In these instances, where it is often impossible to identify one overwhelming concern, the maintenance of multiple, ‘de-linked’ agendas, can be a more appropriate way to manage multi-faceted relations. Such an approach is consistent with the realities of the post Cold War world, where American foreign policy is concerned with promoting a range of objectives across a wide variety of issue areas. Trade issues, democratisation, non-proliferation, human rights, the rule of law, intellectual property rights, and many other concerns can be pursued in tandem. Even more important, the use of multiple road maps allows progress to be made on some aspects of a complex relationship even while snags or serious rifts may hold back advancement on other fronts. The creation and maintenance of multiple road maps inevitably narrows the range of incentives that can be used to spur progress in each area. Therefore, policy-makers should strive to offer incentives that are closely related to the area of concern. For instance, when possible, economic incentives should be employed to shape behaviour in economic matters, such as trade. Such ‘germaneness’ is of great importance in the construction and maintenance of multiple agendas. Not only is it warranted in order to spread the range of incentives across issue areas, but there are good reasons to believe that incentives which are directly connected to the area of interest are those most likely to form the basis of successful policy. First, germaneness facilitates negotiations that are an inherent part of engagement. When trying to influence a group of political actors to take specific actions, policy-makers are more apt to get the desired response when they employ levers that affect these individuals most directly. Second, adopting a strategy which meets the germane criterion is easier to defend at home as the relationship between the actions taken and the effects desired is more obvious. Finally, as germaneness facilitates efforts to maintain multiple agendas, it is a critical part of limiting negative spillovers when setbacks occur in one realm of the overall relationship. Although adherence to germaneness results in a certain loss of leverage in each discrete circumstance overall, the benefits of doing so outweigh the costs. Building support at home Engagement strategies often fail not simply because of disagreements between the US and the country it is engaging, but because American domestic political considerations warp the strategy or make it untenable. Détente between the US and the Soviet Union is the best case in point. Kissinger and Nixon carefully crafted their ‘linkage’ strategy, where the Soviet Union would be offered political and economic incentives in return for restrained behaviour in the strategic arena. This trade-off did encourage Brezhnev to negotiate and sign significant arms-control agreements, and certainly, some of the agreements and the summits at which they were signed accorded the Soviet Union much desired increased political status. However, Kissinger’s capacity to pursue détente was damaged by the inability of the Nixon administration to deliver the promised trade concessions. While Kissinger and Nixon had promised the Soviet Union MFN trading status in return for its cooperation in other global arenas, they failed to convince Congress of the importance of this deal. As a result, Congress passed the Jackson-Vanik amendment, which linked MFN status to the internal behaviour of the Soviet regime. This move tied the hands of Kissinger and helped undermine the strategy of détente. Although the strong backing of domestic public opinion will always be valuable to those implementing an engagement strategy, the support of Congress and representatives of key constituencies and businesses is critical to success. Securing support for engagement among these key actors in democratic societies requires intense coordination between various branches of government. As the case of North Korea aptly illustrates, engagement strategies are too often hindered by executive efforts to evade congressional involvement and congressional attempts to thwart executive endeavours. From the perspective of the executive branch, a strength of the Agreed Framework was that it was not a treaty with North Korea. While this technicality spared the agreement from the necessity of Senate ratification, Congress later asserted itself through its reluctance to finance commitments made under the accord. For several reasons, the executive branch should take the lead in implementing engagement strategies. Not only is the articulation of the rationale behind the chosen foreign-policy strategy best handled by the President and his principals, but clearly the executive branch is uniquely positioned to negotiate with foreign countries and their leaders. However, rather than regarding Congress as an impediment to the smooth implementation of engagement, the President and his advisers need to consider Congress as another partner in a multi-faceted consultation. Ideally, these efforts would go beyond simply briefing Congress about the state of relations with candidates for engagement, to include the appointment of joint executive/ congressional delegations and fact-finding missions. In return for such efforts, Congress should recognise that the executive branch needs discretion in order to negotiate with target countries in the reasonable expectation that it can deliver the incentives it extends.

#### Large amount of literature – neg and aff

Haass and O’Sullivan 2000 [Richard Haass, formerly a senior aide to President George Bush, is Vice President and Director of Foreign Policy Studies at the Brookings Institution, Washington DC, and author of The Reluctant Sheriff: The United States After the Cold War (Washington DC: Brookings Institution Press, 1997). Meghan L. O’Sullivan is a Fellow with the Foreign Policy Studies Program at the Brookings Institution. Together, they are editors of Honey and Vinegar: Incentives, Sanctions, and Foreign Policy (Brookings Institution Press, 2000), vol. 42, no. 2, Summer 2000, The International Institute for Strategic Studies, Terms of Engagement: Alternatives to Punitive Policies, brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/2000survival.pdf]

The briskly globalising post-Cold War world of today is arguably more complicated than the globe of a decade or so ago. Moreover, the countries that the US has uniformly labelled as ‘rogues’ have proven to be more varied than such a classification suggests. Given these complexities, and others that are likely to arise, it is no surprise that policies such as containment and tools such as sanctions have been insufficiently nuanced to deal with the multitude of challenges facing the US. This reality demands that policy-makers explore, and, where appropriate, utilise, a greater variety of foreign-policy tools and strategies. Engagement, although often overlooked in favour of punitive policies, has the potential to widen significantly the spectrum of serious policy options. Engagement, however, is clearly not a panacea. Not only are such strategies often difficult to implement domestically, but even with perfectly crafted, managed and executed engagement strategies there are no guarantees of success. Because engagement relies so heavily on the politics and inclinations of the target country and its willingness to work with the US, the very nature of engagement is more precarious and volatile than other foreign-policy strategies. Nevertheless, a place for engagement strategies exists in the foreign-policy tool kit. In some cases, conditional engagement is an appropriate vehicle for change; in most others, unconditional engagement can be pursued. Despite all the caveats, engagement offers a promising alternative to policies of punishment that have either not achieved their objectives, or have done so only at extremely high costs to the United States and the target country. The posture and policies currently taken by the United States in some of its most problematic relationships – such as Cuba, Iran and Libya – demand reevaluation. Quite possibly, these relationships could be substantially improved if they incorporated varying degrees of engagement. Where the US is already involved in engaging difficult regimes, as with China and North Korea, policymakers would benefit from a more systematic understanding of engagement strategies in order to ensure the smooth management of many of these stilluncertain partnerships. For all these reasons, engagement strategies should be accorded equal deliberation – if not necessarily adoption – alongside the options of military force, sanctions, covert action and diplomacy.

#### Narrower phrase than economic diplomacy is commercial diplomacy

Diplo no date [https://www.diplomacy.edu/topics/economic-diplomacy/]

Definition of economic diplomacy

Economic diplomacy is concerned with ‘international economic issues’ to ‘enhance prosperity’, which has been ‘the main priority for states in most regions of the world.’

In a broad sense, economic diplomacy can be defined as any diplomatic activity that promotes the state’s economic interests. It also includes diplomacy that uses economic resources to achieve a specific foreign policy objective.

In a narrow sense, economic diplomacy is about export promotion and inward investment. This is sometimes called commercial diplomacy.

#### Narrower phrase than economic diplomacy is trade and investment promotion

Diplo no date [https://www.diplomacy.edu/topics/economic-diplomacy/]

Trade and investment promotion

Trade and investment promotion represent the cutting edge of economic diplomacy. While the agencies at home, the foreign ministry, and the economic ministries prov1ide direction, much of the work is carried out in the field, by embassies and by overseas offices of promot2ion agencies, within the home country policy framework.

These activities hinge on close coordination between the ministry of foreign affairs (MFA), economic ministries, and official promotion agencies, plus associations of business and industry, and their overseas network.

#### “Deep engagement” is a term of art with a healthy amount of international relations theorization

Avey et al 18 [Paul C. Avey, associate professor of political science at Virginia Tech. Jonathan N. Markowitz, Assistant Professor of International Relations at the University of Southern California. and Robert J. Reardon, Assoc Professor and Director, Master of International Studies School of Public and International Affairs at NC State, Disentangling Grand Strategy: International Relations Theory and U.S. Grand Strategy, The Scholar, Volume 2, Issue 1, November 2018, 28-51, https://tnsr.org/2018/11/disentangling-grand-strategy-international-relations-theory-and-u-s-grand-strategy/]

Deep Engagement

Theoretical Anchor

Hegemonic stability theory provides the underlying principles for the deep engagement approach to grand strategy.53 This position shares much with what some have labeled “selective engagement.”54 Deep engagement draws on a separate branch of realism than the restraint position and argues that balancing is not feasible when one state’s material capabilities far exceed those of all others. States are more likely to bandwagon with, rather than balance against, the hegemon. Not only is balancing unlikely, according to this framework, but the world is more peaceful and prosperous when there is a preponderance of power.55 The hegemon can utilize its superior military and economic tools to provide public goods, such as regional security, that underwrite a stable international order. The provision of security alleviates regional security dilemmas and deters aspiring powers from challenging the hegemon’s authority.56 Absent the hegemon’s presence, regional balances of power will not form and costly arms races will occur. Moreover, a distant hegemon will be dragged into the conflict, thereby harming its interests. Globally, the clear preponderance of power makes conflicts over prestige unlikely, removing another source of war. Thus, escalating spirals of hostility are unlikely at both the global and regional levels.

Advocates of deep engagement argue that the benefits of maintaining the hegemonic order outweigh the costs. Costs are low because other states are unlikely to balance and military spending is not a major drain on resources.57 Moreover, peripheral wars are choices rather than necessities, and so do not generate major costs for this strategy so long as the hegemon exercises prudence.58 The hegemon also benefits from increased security, extracts enormous privileges from the system, and enriches itself through the rise in global prosperity.59 The hegemon’s ability to shape international institutions facilitates order and lowers transaction costs for managing the international system. For instance, the hegemon can use economic institutions to mold the global economic system to its comparative advantage.60 International security institutions allow the hegemon to coordinate with allies to maintain regional stability.61 However, in contrast to liberal internationalism, proponents of deep engagement argue that such institutions are unlikely to be effective in the absence of a hegemonic state powerful enough to underwrite them.

Objectives

Deep engagement aims to deter threats to the homeland and the global commons. It also focuses on maintaining stability in three key regions — Asia, Europe, and the Middle East — rather than just preventing a hegemon from emerging. Thus, Stephen Brooks and William Wohlforth advocate economic globalization, promoting institutions, defending allies, and preventing conflict that would threaten the U.S.-led international order.62 Proponents of deep engagement argue that the United States can, and should, continue to lead the international order: It can because it remains the only superpower and its position is durable;63 it should because its presence stabilizes economic and security relations between states. Without a hegemon, regional actors will fail to balance potential peer competitors, harming U.S. security and prosperity. Finally, changes to the status quo adversely affect the United States because the system reflects American interests.

Maintaining a stable, open, and U.S.-led order in the world’s core regions requires that the United States pursue several objectives. First, the United States must oppose the emergence of a regional hegemon and work to dampen strictly regional security competition in key areas. Without U.S. leadership, local balancing will be inefficient. Moreover, security competition generates negative externalities — such as conventional arms racing, nuclear proliferation, and trade disruption — that increase the risk of regional and global instability. In contrast to the restraint approach, deep engagement adopts nuclear pessimism, which highlights the dangers of nuclear accidents, inadvertent escalation, and loose nuclear weapons. These risks outweigh any potential stabilizing effects of nuclear weapons.64 Thus, deep engagement contends that paying the costs associated with protecting American allies helps to deter and contain potential peer competitors and regional instability. This also gives the United States leverage over its allies, minimizing the risk of entrapment.65

Proponents of deep engagement argue that the United States can, and should, continue to lead the international order...

Second, deep engagement aims to protect the United States and its allies from terrorism and violent domestic instability. But it does not view these threats outside of the core regions as major dangers. For example, the risk of a terrorist attack or civil conflict in sub-Saharan Africa is a smaller concern than it would be in Saudi Arabia. Deep engagement might support efforts to prevent failed states, civil war, ethnic conflict, and humanitarian disasters, but only if such outcomes have the potential to threaten stability in the core regions.

Deep engagement supports the spread of democracy but does not view it as a grand-strategy objective because overt democracy promotion can undermine support for other U.S. objectives.66 Efforts to protect human rights through humanitarian intervention or democracy promotion distract leaders from core objectives and may lead policymakers to pursue unnecessary or impossible objectives, squander resources, and produce negative externalities.

Policy Levers

Supporters of deep engagement seek to construct a military capable of maintaining existing alliance commitments and troop deployments abroad. These tools serve as the backbone of U.S. influence by deterring adversaries and reassuring allies. Brooks, Ikenberry, and Wohlforth make the point clearly:

The United States’ overseas presence gives it the leverage to restrain partners from taking provocative action. Perhaps more importantly, its core alliance commitments also deter states with aspirations to regional hegemony from contemplating expansion and makes its partners more secure, reducing their incentive to adopt solutions to their security problems that threaten others and thus stoke security dilemmas.67

To this end, the United States has constructed a set of commitments that include formal defense pacts with 68 countries that, together with the United States, represent 75 percent of world economic output.68 America’s commitment to NATO and the security structures in the Middle East and Asia should continue. Moreover, contrary to the restraint approach, the deep-engagement position argues that forward-deployed forces are necessary to maintain command of the commons and allow the U.S. presence to surge in an emergency. International commitments and U.S. troop presence also encourage intelligence sharing and cooperation in counterterrorism efforts, as well as reducing domestic instability in these regions.

Proponents of deep engagement argue that critics overstate the costs of this grand strategy. For one thing, offsetting arrangements with allies defrays the financial costs of deploying troops abroad. In terms of terrorism, U.S. troops may contribute to anti-Americanism, as some claim, but they are hardly the decisive factor.69 Were most U.S. troops to come home tomorrow, the terrorist threat would not disappear, nor would much money be saved. Regarding entrapment, alliances allow the United States significant freedom to maneuver and tend to give Washington more influence over its weaker partners.70

In this framework, military force is a tool to maintain, not alter, the status quo. Hence, deep engagement supports the use of force to protect existing commitments but does not support using military force to spread democracy or, except in extreme cases, remove human rights violators from power. As Brooks and Wohlforth write,

[T]hose who advocate ambitious projects to assertively spread democracy and liberal principles and foster dramatic improvement in human rights, by the sword if necessary, make the same mistakes as proponents of pulling back: they fail to appreciate the major benefits America derives by sustaining its long-standing grand strategy.71

Proponents of deep engagement seek to maintain U.S. force-structure projections made toward the end of the Obama administration but are not opposed to modest increases. This level of military power is necessary to maintain existing commitments and deployments, and it requires an amount of military spending that is both affordable and likely to decrease as a percentage of GDP over time.72 A larger military is unnecessary because deep engagement does not seek to undertake new military missions or commitments outside core regions.

#### This concept of deep engagement is more recently being discussed in relationship to Latin America. Ryan C. Berg’s 2023 article, Insulate, Curtail, Compete: Sketching a U.S. Grand Strategy in Latin America and the Caribbean. It is filled with potential solvency advocates.

https://csis-website-prod.s3.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/2023-05/230511\_Berg\_LAC%20Grand%20Strategy\_0.pdf?VersionId=9rKCzi48MiRcV1ymZVFOpV0.yVCW5RKr

## “Diplomatic Engagement”

### DoS

#### The DoS is on the frontlines of diplomatic engagement

Department of State, no date (ND)(Ethan Rosenzweig, SENIOR OFFICIAL Ethan Rosenzweig “Office of the Chief of Protocol,” <https://www.state.gov/bureaus-offices/secretary-of-state/office-of-the-chief-of-protocol/>, accessed on 4/26/2024)

Our Mission

The Office of the Chief of Protocol seeks to advance the foreign policy goals of the United States by creating an environment for successful diplomacy. Our team extends the first hand that welcomes presidents, prime ministers, ruling monarchs, and other leaders to our country. By serving on the front lines of diplomatic engagement, we promote cross-cultural exchange and build new bridges of understanding between people and governments around the world.

#### Budgets prove – the DoS is tasked with diplomatic engagement

The Secretary of State, no date (ND) (“CONGRESSIONAL BUDGET JUSTIFICATION Appendix 1: DEPARTMENT OF STATE DIPLOMATIC ENGAGEMENT Fiscal Year 2025,” https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/2024-03/FY-2025-Congressional-Budget-Justification-Appendix-One-Department-of-State-Diplomatic-Engagement.pdf)

Overview

The Secretary of State’s FY 2025 Budget Request for Diplomatic Engagement (DE) revitalizes the workforce to succeed in critical mission areas, securely expands the Department’s infrastructure and overseas presence, sustains our multilateral commitments, serves U.S. Citizens around the world, and maintains the United States’ commitment to its Afghan partners.

### Crocker

#### Diplomatic Engagement is a process of direct talks aimed to alter a target countries perceptions of its interests over an area of mutual disagreement

Crocker, 9 - (Chester A., professor of strategic studies at the Walsh school of Foreign Service at Georgetown, "Terms of Engagement," New York Times, 9-13-2009, http://www.nytimes.com/2009/09/14/opinion/14crocker.html,//BR/)

PRESIDENT OBAMA will have a hard time achieving his foreign policy goals until he masters some key terms and better manages the expectations they convey. Given the furor that will surround the news of America's readiness to hold talks with Iran, he could start with "engagement” — one of the trickiest terms in the policy lexicon. The Obama administration has used this term to contrast its approach with its predecessor's resistance to talking with adversaries and troublemakers. His critics show that they misunderstand the concept of engagement when they ridicule it as making nice with nasty or hostile regimes. Let's get a few things straight. Engagement in statecraft is not about sweet talk. Nor is it based on the illusion that our problems with rogue regimes can be solved if only we would talk to them. Engagement is not normalization, and its goal is not improved relations. It is not akin to detente, working for rapprochement, or appeasement. So how do you define an engagement strategy? It does require direct talks. There is simply no better way to convey authoritative statements of position or to hear responses. But establishing talks is just a first step. The goal of engagement is to change the other country's perception of its own interests and realistic options and, hence, to modify its policies and its behavior. Diplomatic engagement is proven to work — in the right circumstances. American diplomats have used it to change the calculations and behavior of regimes as varied as the Soviet Union, South Africa, Angola, Mozambique, Cuba, China, Libya and, intermittently, Syria. There is no cookie-cutter formula for making it work, however. In southern Africa in the 1980s, we directed our focus toward stemming violence between white-ruled South Africa and its black-ruled neighbors. This strategy put a priority on regional conflict management in order to stop cross-border attacks and create better conditions for internal political change. The United States also engaged with the Cubans in an effort aimed at achieving independence for Namibia (from South Africa) and at the removal of Cuban troops from Angola. In Mozambique, engagement meant building a constructive relationship with the United States, restraining South African interference in Mozambique's internal conflicts and weaning the country from its Soviet alignment. More recently, the Bush administration's strategy for engagement with Libya ultimately led to the re-establishment of diplomatic relations and the elimination of that country's programs to develop weapons of mass destruction. While the details differ, each case of engagement has common elements. Engagement is a process, not a destination. It involves exerting pressure, by raising questions and hypothetical possibilities, and by probing the other country's assumptions and thinking. Above all, it involves testing how far the other country might be willing to go. Properly understood, the diplomacy of engagement means raising questions that the other country may wish to avoid or be politically unable to answer. It places the ball in the other country's court. Engagement, of course, comes with risks. One is that domestic opponents will intentionally distort the purposes of engagement. Another risk is that each side may try to impose preconditions for agreeing to meet and talk — and ultimately negotiate. But we will not get far with the Iranians, for example, if we (and they) insist on starting by establishing the other side's intentions. Another risk is that, no matter what we say, the rogue regime may claim that engagement confers legitimacy. A more consequential danger is that a successful engagement strategy' may leave the target regime in place and even strengthened, an issue that troubled some critics of the Bush administration's 2003 breakthrough that led to the normalizing of relations between the United States and Libya. But by far the greatest risk of engagement is that it may succeed. If we succeed in changing the position of the other country's decision-makers, we then must decide whether we will take yes for an answer and reciprocate their moves with steps of our own. If talk is fruitful, a negotiation will begin about taking reciprocal steps down a jointly defined road. Engagement diplomacy forces us to make choices. Perhaps this is what frightens its critics the most. As the Obama team works to fend off accusations that it is rushing into Russian, Iranian, Syrian or even North Korean arms, it will need to get the logic and definition of engagement right. In each case, we will need a clear-eyed assessment of what we are willing to offer in return for the changed behavior we seek. Engagement diplomacy maybe easier to understand if the Obama administration speaks clearly at home about what it really requires.

### No Military

#### Diplomatic engagement doesn’t include military activities nor war-making

Faizullaev, 2022 (Alisher Faizullaev, Professor Alisher Faizullaev, D.Sc., Ph.D., is a Professor Emeritus at the University of World Economy and Diplomacy, Tashkent, and former Ambassador of Uzbekistan to the United Kingdom, Benelux countries, the European Union, and NATO., Diplomacy for Professionals and Everyone, Series Editor Jan Melissen (Leiden University and University of Antwerp) Volume 20 of Diplomatic Studies, isbn 978-90-04-51735-6 (e-book))

As Neumann noted, “Diplomacy is about the handling the Other.”9 However, it is not handling the Other by any means. Diplomacy as an idea has some basic assumptions. Diplomacy happens when actors are distinctive, dissimilar and separated, but they engage and interact with each other to manage their differences and resolve issues of mutual concern. Unlike war or military engagement, diplomacy entails peaceful interaction between the involved parties. War is a combative engagement that usually employs violence, force, strikes, deception, disinformation, abruptness and unpredictability. Bull remarked: “War also exemplifies the conduct of international relations by official agents; diplomatists differ from soldiers in that they confine themselves to peaceful means.”10 Diplomacy is a nonviolent engagement characterized by dialogical forms of interaction that are supported by social graces. War and diplomacy approach interaction among entities differently: war manages differences through aggression and destruction, while diplomacy does so through constructive dialog, relationship-building and problem-solving.

### No Mil-to-Mil

#### Military to military exchange is distinct from diplomacy

Quirk, 2015 (Sean P. Quirk, Quirk, Lieutenant (junior grade), is a U.S. Navy Surface Warfare Officer stationed in Pearl Harbor, Hawaii. He is also a Young Leader and non-resident WSD-Handa Fellow with the Pacific Forum CSIS. He previously lived in Beijing, China., "Reconciling China’s Plan: Strategic Intervention, Tactical Engagement," Diplomat, https://thediplomat.com/2015/11/reconciling-chinas-plan-strategic-intervention-with-tactical-engagement/, accessed on 4-26-2024)

While engaging in strategic diplomacy, Washington should simultaneously pursue a campaign for U.S-China mil-to-mil exchange as a means to let off steam in the pressure cooker that is the South China Sea. U.S. forward-deployed forces – the tip of the spear – would need to work tactfully in meaningful naval exchanges with the PLAN to balance U.S. government officials that would confront Beijing’s actions in diplomatic forums. From the track-II U.S.-China Strategic Dialogue to the official DCT between both countries defense departments, increasing mil-to-mil exchange is a common refrain coming from bilateral dialogues and military experts. Both countries’ defense apparatuses should orchestrate a full range of meaningful exercises that show tangible cooperation between their militaries, ultimately cultivating “military trust.” These exercises could include joint training on maritime air encounters, counter-piracy, humanitarian assistance/disaster relief (HADR), emergency evacuations, and naval escort exercises, such as those that were recently completed. In a multilateral capacity, the United States and China could go so far as to joint-host training events as an East Asian corollary to Rim of the Pacific (RIMPAC), which the United States hosts in Hawaii every two years. Both militaries could invite their partners in the region, particularly members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), to a large multilateral training environment that builds trust across several international fronts.

A new era of U.S.-China mil-to-mil exchange should imitate diplomatic meetings as regular, recurring events. Military exchanges between the two countries are currently episodic and highly vulnerable to political and congressional cancellation. The result? The bulk of military unit “exchanges” between the two navies consist of adversarial shadowing of warships and unsafe military air interceptions – antagonistic events that should not form the foundation of our navies’ interactions. When official exchanges do occur, they are beneficial but often heavily scripted and cursory. Port visits by U.S. warships to Hong Kong and mainland China are the most common means of unit-level naval exchange. Yet political sensitivities stymie engagement of much value-added trust, replacing substance with formality. Even the cultural exchanges that are common in all U.S. port visits are uncommon with port calls in China; activities such as crew-to-crew receptions, community service, and athletic games between U.S. and Chinese forces do occur but are far too rare for the world’s two biggest powers.

### Yes Military & DoD

#### Diplomatic engagement includes actions by the DoD and military diplomacy

Bratton, 2015 (Dr. Patrick Bratton, Associate Professor of Political Science at Hawaii Pacific University and Associated Faculty at AGS, “Overview of the Diplomatic Landscape,” International Relations, Peace and Development Studies, A publication by Arcadia University and the American Graduate School in Paris, <https://scholarworks.arcadia.edu/agsjournal/vol1/iss1/2/>, accessed on 4/26/2024)

Military or security diplomacy is the use of the armed forces for diplomatic engagement. In the early 2000s, Dana Priest's book The Mission brought the concept to the attention of the American public. While reporting on US military actions in the Balkans and other places, Priest was surprised at how the Department of Defense had seemingly taken over roles that outsiders would have traditionally thought belonged to the diplomatic corps. In particular, she pointed to the role and great resources the US Combatant Commanders, such as CENTCOM and PACOM, were given to construct region-wide US policy beyond the narrow bilateral roles to which embassies were limited. She went so far as to compare them to "Proconsuls of Empire." Much had to do with the post-Cold War draw down of some US government agencies (like the US Information Agency, the USIA), and the expansion of Military Operations Other Than War (MOOTW) the US military found itself in during the 1990s (Somalia, Haiti, Bosnia, Kosovo, etc.).13 This role grew rapidly with the US War on Terror and subsequent wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. Even as these wars draw to a close, its new emphasis on security engagement and “capacity building” will ensure that military diplomacy is here to stay for the foreseeable future.14 However, this “militarization" of foreign policy has not gone unquestioned. Critics were not limited to those usually critical of military action or US foreign policy, but came to include US Secretaries of State and Defense such as Robert Gates and Hillary Clinton.15

It is important to see this as a phenomenon that is changing diplomacy beyond the US. Rising powers and regional organizations have all expanded their security diplomacy in the past 10-20 years.16 First, as more countries interact with each other on security issues and want to cooperate with the militaries of other countries, they have followed the US example and correspondingly developed their own agencies and personnel for military diplomacy. Second, many of the more complex diplomatic and security issues call for contributions from the military or other security services. Much of the security community in the past twenty years has focused on "governance" and state capacity issues and how these are at the heart of problems as diverse as state failure, civil-wars, and many soft security issues (arms and drug trafficking, organized crime, piracy, etc.). In response to these complex non-traditional security issues, most countries are trying to implement a "whole of government" response that brings together diplomats, military, law enforcement, customs, environmental, medical and health, and other public and private actors to work together to deal with these issues. So it is likely that, for better or for worse, most militaries around the world will become more and more involved in international affairs.

### Process

#### Diplomatic engagement is a process

Dikole, 2018 (Kacho Tebo Dikole, MA from University of Nairobi, “Role of Foreign Policy Diplomatic Engagement in Promoting Development in Africa: A Case of Botswana,” University of Nairobi, Institute of Diplomacy and International Studies, <http://erepository.uonbi.ac.ke/bitstream/handle/11295/105707/Dikole_Role%20Of%20Foreign%20Policy%20Diplomatic%20Engagement%20In%20Promoting%20Development%20In%20Africa%20A%20Case%20Of%20Botswana.pdf?sequence=1>, accessed on 4/26/2024)

Diplomatic engagement is associated with the approach to foreign policy that some have dubbed smart power.2 The essence of diplomatic engagement could be cause an effect on the on the perception of the target State across multiple issue areas. According to Carrie, foreign policy diplomatic engagement is a process in which the States develop relationships of increasing interdependence on each other.3

### Yes Quiet Diplomacy

#### Diplomatic engagement includes quiet diplomacy

ÖZKAN, 10 - Sevilla University, Spain (MEHMET ÖZKAN\* and BİROL AKGÜN\*\* “Turkey’s Darfur Policy: Convergences and Differentiations from the Muslim World” Insight Turkey Vol. 12 / No. 4 / 2010 pp. 147-165

The term ‘quiet diplomacy’ describes two things: first, the overall framework is diplomacy, rather than sanctions and military actions; while second, the adjective ‘quiet’ refers to the style of the diplomatic engagement defined as a combination of measures that include behind the scene engagements, secret negotiations, and subtle coaxing.36 Basically it is defined as “discussing problems with officials of another country in a calm way”.37 In the literature, as Graham argues, the term ‘quiet diplomacy’ is used extensively to refer to many types of soft diplomatic initiatives but in a loose way without having any agreed definition.38 However, for the purposes of this article, drawing on the existing literature39 we define ‘quiet diplomacy’ using three characteristics.

The first and most important characteristic of any initiative that would be called quiet diplomacy is that there must be some sort of personal and direct diplomacy between the heads of states or governments. This is the most logical first step because only with such type of interaction could the initiator talk, reason and discuss the issue and be able to persuade his counterpart or involved parties in a conflict. This is also important as it shows the seriousness of the initiator and gives assurance to the other side that the initiator indeed cares about the issue in question and is interested in helping solve it. Despite criticism, the visit of Sudanese President Omar Al Basher twice in 2008 and several other meetings at international forums such as the Arab League summit in Khartoum was aimed to serve for this purpose: talking directly to the head of state and criticizing him “in a most sincere and open way”.40 These meetings were also aimed at creating a balanced approach between the EU and the US’s position and those of the Arab and African countries.41

## “Definitions – Economic Engagement”

### Economic Means

#### Economic engagement is determined by monetary incentives – and can include removing penalties or offering aid

Haass & O’Sullivan, 2010 (Richard N. Haass, formerly a senior aide to President George Bush, is Vice President and Director of Foreign Policy Studies at the Brookings Institution. Meghan L. O’Sullivan, is a Fellow in the Foreign Policy Studies Program at the Brookings Institution., “Terms of engagement: alternatives to punitive policies,” Pages 113-135 | Published online: 07 Dec 2010, Cite this article <https://doi.org/10.1093/survival/42.2.113>, accessed on 4/26/2024)

Many different types of engagement strategies exist, depending on who is engaged, the kind of incentives employed and the sorts of objectives pursued. Engagement may be conditional when it entails a negotiated series of exchanges, such as where the US extends positive inducements for changes undertaken by the target country. Or engagement may be unconditional if it offers modifications in US policy towards a country without the explicit expectation that a reciprocal act will follow. Generally, conditional engagement is geared towards a government; unconditional engagement works with a country’s civil society or private sector in the hope of promoting forces that will eventually facilitate cooperation.

Architects of engagement strategies can choose from a wide variety of incentives. Economic engagement might offer tangible incentives such as export credits, investment insurance or promotion, access to technology, loans or economic aid.3 Other equally useful economic incentives involve the removal of penalties such as trade embargoes, investment bans or high tariffs, which have impeded economic relations between the United States and the target country. Facilitated entry into the global economic arena and the institutions that govern it rank among the most potent incentives in today’s global market. Similarly, political engagement can involve the lure of diplomatic recognition, access to regional or international institutions, the scheduling of summits between leaders – or the termination of these benefits. Military engagement could involve the extension of international military-educational training in order both to strengthen respect for civilian authority and human rights among a country’s armed forces and, more feasibly, to establish relationships between Americans and young foreign military officers. While these areas of engagement are likely to involve working with state institutions, cultural or civil-society engagement entails building people-to-people contacts. Funding non-governmental organisations, facilitating the flow of remittances and promoting the exchange of students, tourists and other non-governmental people between countries are just some of the possible incentives used in this form of engagement.

## Sanctions

### Lifting Sanctions

#### Change, ease, and lift are differentiated in the literature – this also identifies key negative arguments in the “lift sanctions” debate.

Crisis Group 23 [Sanctions, Peacemaking and Reform: Recommendations for U.S. Policymakers, August 28, 2023, https://www.crisisgroup.org/united-states/8-sanctions-peacemaking-and-reform-recommendations-us-policymakers]

The reasons why sanctions pose obstacles to peace efforts are multi-faceted, but three main problems stand out. First, U.S. sanctions are sticky: they are hard to change, ease or lift because of domestic politics and bureaucratic inertia. In particular, the political pressures surrounding decisions to ease or rescind sanctions mean that presidents may be loath to incur the costs that such decisions may entail, including fear of alienating members of Congress whose support they need to advance other priorities. Secondly, Washington has no system for comprehensively assessing sanctions’ harms or effectiveness – and thus the U.S. cannot gauge whether they are helping or hurting efforts to achieve the peace and security goals in whose name they have been launched. Thirdly, as sanctions have proliferated, they have become increasingly complex, making them hard to disentangle or reform. Sanctions have become less likely to sway conflict parties, who have no faith that the penalties will be lifted – or the effects alleviated – if they make concessions.