

(CO)BUILDING A STRATEGIC AGENDA FOR THE AMERICAS



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100K CLIMA	The 100,000 Strong in the Americas Climate-Green Economy Initiative
AC	Andean Community
AFOLU	Agriculture, Forestry, and Other Land Use
AIIB	Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank
AILAC	Alianza Independiente de América Latina y el Caribe (Independent Alliance of Latin America and the Caribbean)
ALBA	Alianza Bolivariana para los Pueblos de Nuestra América (Bolivarian Alliance for the Nations of Our America)
AOSIS	Alliance of Small Island States
APEP	Americas Partnership for Economic Prosperity
ARU	Actives Recovery Unit
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
BASIC	Brazil, South Africa, India, and China
BCF	Billions of Cubic Feet
BRICS	Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa
CABEI	Central American Bank for Economic Integration
CAF	Corporación Andina de Fomento, Banco de Desarrollo de América Latina (Development Bank of Latin America)
CARICOM	Caribbean Community
CBP	U.S. Customs and Border Protection
CDB	Caribbean Development Bank
CEAR	Comisión Española de Ayuda al Refugiado (Spanish Commission for Refugees)
CEDLAS	Centro de Estudios Distributivos Laborales y Sociales (Distributive Study Center for Labor and Social)
CELAC	Comunidad de Estados Latinoamericanos y Caribeños (Community of Latin American and Caribbean States)
COLMEX	El Colegio de México
COMAR	Comisión Mexicana de Ayuda a Refugiados (Mexican Commission for Refugee Assistance)
CONAMA	Consejo Nacional del Medio Ambiente (National Environment Council)
CONICET	Consejo Nacional de Investigaciones Científicas y Tecnológicas (National Council of Scientific and Technological Research)
COP	Conference of the Parties
CPB	Customs and Border Protection
EAP	Economically Active Population
ECC	Enfoque del Compromiso Climático (Climate Commitment Focus)
ECLAC	Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean
EPA	U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
FARC	Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia (Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia)
GCM	Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GHG	Greenhouse Gases
HRP	Humanitarian Response Plan
IACHR	Inter-American Commission on Human Rights
IAE	International Energy Agency
IDB	Inter-American Development Bank

IDMC	Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre
IFAD	International Fund for Agricultural Development
IICA	Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture
ILO	International Labor Organization
ILPES	Instituto Latinoamericano y del Caribe de Planificación Económica y Social (Latin American and Caribbean Institute for Economic and Social Planning)
INM	Instituto Nacional de Migración (National Institute of Migration)
IOM	International Organization for Migration
IPEF	Indo-Pacific Economic Framework for Prosperity
IRC	International Rescue Committee
ITAM	Instituto Tecnológico Autónomo de México (Autonomous Technological Institute of Mexico)
JSWG	Joint Summit Working Group
LAC	Latin American and the Caribbean
LAPOP	Latin American Public Opinion Project
LGN	Liquid Natural Gas
LMC	Ley de Microprocesadores y Ciencia (Law on Microprocessors and Science)
LRI	Ley de Reducción de la Inflación (Law on Inflation Reduction)
MBD	Model-based definition
MERCOSUR	Mercado Común del Sur (Southern Common Market)
MIRPS	Marco Integral Regional para la Protección y Soluciones (Comprehensive Regional Protection and Solutions Framework)
MPI	Migration Policy Institute
MPP	Migrant Protection Protocols
NA	North America
NDC	Nationally Determined Contributions
NGO	Nongovernmental Organization
NRA	National Risk Assessment
OAS	Organization of American States
ODP	Operational Data Portal
OECD	Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development
OLADE	Organización Latinoamericana de Energía (Latin American Energy Organization)
OPEC	Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries
OXFAM	Oxford Committee for Famine Relief
PA	Pacific Alliance
PACC 2030	U.S.-Caribbean Partnership to Address the Climate Crisis 2030
PAHO	Pan American Health Organization
PEP	Permiso Especial de Permanencia (Special Settlement Permit)
PIDA	Programa Interamericano de Datos Abiertos (Inter-American Open Data Program)
PISA	Program for International Student Assessment
PROMECA	Programa Regional sobre Migración en Mesoamérica y el Caribe (Regional Programme on Migration in Mesoamerica and the Caribbean)
PTP	Permiso Temporal de Permanencia (Temporary Settlement Permit)
R4V	Plataforma de Coordinación Interagencial para Refugiados y Migrantes de Venezuela (Inter-Agency Coordination Platform for Venezuelan Refugees and Migrants)
RCM	Regional Conference on Migration
RELAC	Renewables in Latin America and the Caribbean
RMRP	Regional Refugee and Migrant Response Plan
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
SICA	Sistema de Integración Latinoamericana (Latin American Integration System)

SIRG	Summit Implementation Review Group
SISCA	Sistema de Seguimiento de las Cumbres de las Américas (Summit of the Americas Implementation and Follow-up System)
SOA	Summit of the Americas
STCA	Safe Third Country Agreement
TNS	The New School
TPS	Temporary Protection Status
U.S.	United States of America
UN	United Nations
UNAM	Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México (National Autonomous University of Mexico)
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNEP	United Nations Environment Program
UNESCO	United Nations Education, Science and Culture Organization
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNFCC	The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
UNHCR	United Nations High Commission for Refugees
UNIANDES	Universidad de los Andes
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund
UNODC	United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime
UNPF	United Nations Population Fund
UR	Universidad del Rosario
USAN	Union of South American Nations
USDA	United States Department of Agriculture
USMCA	United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement
USP	Universidad de São Paulo
UTDT	Universidad Torcuato Di Tella
VSC	Virtual Summit Community
WB	World Bank
WEF	World Economic Forum
WFP	World Food Programme
WHO	World Health Organization
WOLA	Washington Office on Latin America
WTO	World Trade Organization
WWF	World Wildlife Fund

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Introduction

WE LIVE IN TROUBLED TIMES. The possibility of recovering from the most difficult years of the COVID-19 pandemic has been overshadowed in the wake of an armed conflict in Europe that has not only devastated the region but also affected the world at large, given Russia's revisionist ambitions, China's geopolitical, economic, and technological strength, and the escalating Sino-U.S. rivalry.

This context poses many different challenges to the entire planet, and the region of the Americas is no exception. Compared to the inaugural forum held in Miami in 1994, a notable lack of optimism was evident at the most recent Summit of the Americas in Los Angeles, the first to be held in the United States after almost three decades. Hopes for a shared future seem to have been dashed; national governments in the Americas are preoccupied by domestic problems, showing little interest in and lacking ideas for cooperation with their counterparts. This is paradoxical since most of the problems are shared, and a collective response could be universally far more beneficial than individual actions.

The stagnant inter-State dialogue coexists with a disconnect between citizens and internal and international politics. The region of the Americas sorely lacks connections and interlocution on two levels, a dual deficit that obstructs effective regional collective action: domestically, between civil society, government, and high-level bureaucracy; and internationally, between national civil societies and the mechanisms of the inter-American system.

Looking ahead to the Ninth Summit of the Americas in three years' time, we need to pave the way for a more inclusive and representative dialogue at a continental level, in terms of both form and content, prioritizing the improvement of connections with citizens, civil society, and nongovernmental actors with whom decisions are made.

This provides the structural framework for this report, mainly concerned with building networks for dialogue on multiple levels among governments, academic institutions, think tanks, and civil society organizations across the continent.

Seeking a common agenda, the ideas contained in this report hope to stimulate a broader dialogue that leads to collective actions and not simply a series of solutions or formulas for decision-makers. This dialogue is not envisaged only as a conversation "with the prince" but as a discussion inviting all actors to construct a more solid and inclusive project for the futures of the Americas.

This approach is not simply born of good intentions; it is the outcome of a long process that incorporates the vision and experience of many of the hemisphere's governmental and nongovernmental actors from different fields and nationalities, all working together as part of a collaborative and interdisciplinary project. The following pages articulate, summarize, and integrate the outcomes of various initiatives, including document analysis,

specially prepared expert reports and workshops with academics and representatives of civil society organizations, former government officials. This document complements the initial report presented at the Summit of the Americas in Los Angeles in June 2022, which provided the basis for this second installment.

El Colegio de México has led this participative, transregional, nongovernmental, and plural process in coordination with the Universidad Torcuato Di Tella and the Universidad de los Andes. Over a period of 12 months, a total of 11 virtual workshops and 4 in-person seminars were held with the participation of 122 experts from across the region. Specialists also wrote nine thematic research reports and two original research papers: one analyzing the speeches given at the Ninth SOA with the MAXQDA software and the other undertaking a longitudinal and comparative study of Latin American public opinion using the Latinobarómetro database.

The inter-American strategic agenda proposed in this document is articulated from a Latin American, plural, and nongovernmental perspective for the medium and long term, helping devise solutions to the challenging current situation. In line with the temporary framework that informs the multilateral process of the Summits of the Americas, it proposes a three-year strategic look at the main challenges shared at the peak of uncertainty and global geopolitical shifts of the past three decades—a period that saw much more disconnection than dialogue in the region.

At the heart of our agenda, we consider that the region needs to simultaneously and comprehensively address three priority areas: inequalities, migrations, and the effects of climate change.

Inequality remains a major challenge in the Americas. The pandemic not only further exposed this problem but reversed the progress made over previous decades. A crosscutting perspective is required to address these inequalities from an intersectional and a gender perspective. Women have been hit the hardest by the pandemic, and yet they have also been the most adept at triggering mobility. Therefore, we support ECLAC's view in stressing that women are key for any recovery efforts to be viable.

Migration, more than ever before, is a fundamental issue facing the Americas. The region is experiencing an exceptionally intense period of migration and interconnection, with unprecedented humanitarian crises and multidirectional flows. Most government reactions to these new realities and challenges have been unilateral, disjointed, and mainly focused on security and control. Some countries have made progress on the regularization and protection of migrants and refugees, but their responses have been temporary and reactive in the face of specific situations, such as the exodus of Venezuelans. A continental-level plan is clearly required.

Climate change is a reality affecting certain sectors of the population and causing tangible effects. The Americas is at the epicenter of the climate crisis: the region includes some of the world's principal emitters of carbon dioxide, while its rich natural resources and biodiversity are crucial for addressing the problem. In short, we consider that the Americas must play a pivotal role in tackling climate change.

We approach these issues from a Latin America and the Caribbean perspective while also seeking a continent-wide dialogue that fully incorporates academia and civil society. This conversation must obviously include Canadian and U.S. organizations and institutions that are in favor of cooperation, as well as collectives that represent Latin American and Caribbean communities residing in Canada and the United States. In a strongly polarized world, we continue to promote dialogue as the only way to generate sustainable agreements.

The contributors to this report are convinced that any meaningful progress requires constancy and continuity—a steady, systematic, and permanent process instead of something prepared ad hoc on the eve of each Summit. This constitutes an additional challenge in terms of assigning resources, following up, and optimizing efforts.

Key Ideas for a Shared Future



A COMPLEX OUTLOOK FOR THE AMERICAS. Hopes for a shared future appear to be fading. Governments are more preoccupied by domestic problems than possible cooperation with other countries in the region; they lack ideas and a regional agenda. Agencies for inter-State cooperation have not coordinated common objectives. The last Summit of the Americas clearly exemplified this state of affairs by failing to produce an agenda or a roadmap to address the most urgent shared problems.



THE PRIMACY OF DOMESTIC POLITICS is a global phenomenon and not inherently negative. Yet this predominantly inward-facing approach can sometimes be dysfunctional and obstructive, especially in contexts of social and political polarization. The challenge in the Americas is how to bring domestic imperatives in line with international responsibilities. This is a complex challenge that should be addressed in the medium term and one that requires attentiveness, dialogue, human resources, and persistence. The continent's shared problems open a window of opportunity that should not be missed.



NATIONS IN THE AMERICAS HAVE MORE IN COMMON than is generally thought, despite the large power imbalances between the developed North and the developing South. A similar set of challenges—inequality, democracy, human rights, migration, the environment, violence, social unrest, education—are creating an unprecedented time in inter-American relations. Canada, the United States, Latin America, and the Caribbean must acknowledge that these similarities urgently require a constructive conversation that leads to common solutions.



A COMMON APPROACH is therefore required to find solutions at a continental level. The crisis generated by the pandemic clearly revealed that “every-man-for-himself” policies increase the costs and risks for everyone, particularly the most vulnerable sectors. Building a common agenda presupposes the need for shared actions to address problems in the region, from an integral perspective and with differentiated responsibilities. The thrust of this document is to incentivize a new kind of inter-American dialogue and to offer methods to build this agenda without merely compiling a list of good intentions. This requires realistically and gradually focusing on specific issues, with the participation of governmental and nongovernmental actors.



RESETTING THE INTER-AMERICAN DIALOGUE is urgent in order to generate an inclusive, balanced, ongoing, and multisectoral discussion intended to rethink, update, and reform the institutional architecture where needed, and to strengthen it where it is already working. Governments are no longer solely responsible for international cooperation. Social and economic actors are pivotal for understanding problems and designing and implementing solutions; their voice, participation, and empowerment are all essential. Meanwhile, linking multilateral spaces and government actions to the needs, demands, and new citizen subjectivities requires the democratization of channels of dialogue and representation in the Americas. The health of democracy relies on this virtuous intersection.



THE INTER-AMERICAN AGENDA should rest on three pillars: reduced inequalities, a humane approach to migration, and collective measures to address the effects of climate change. Our vision is not naïve: taking action in any of these three areas will obviously create winners and losers, affecting certain interests and triggering backlashes. Therefore, making progress on this agenda requires a coalition of interested parties to promote it and to overcome regressive, negationist, and obstructive ideas.



THE ACHILLES HEEL IN THE AMERICAS remains the chronic and increasing inequalities both within our societies and across the continent. The pandemic not only exposed this gulf but also reversed the progress achieved in recent decades. Regionally, the social agenda is a top priority: policies agreed at an inter-State and transnational level are needed to reduce entrenched socioeconomic inequalities, eradicate poverty, expand rights for everyone, and provide universal access to basic services.



INEQUALITIES must be tackled through an intersectional approach. A gender focus will be a strategic means of redesigning and implementing effective social policies. The economic recession, health crisis, and domestic violence hit women hardest, making it essential to increase their participation and amplify their voice in every decision-making space, and to give a strong boost to the care economy. Women are the principal agents of social mobility.



MIGRATION is another phenomenon affecting the entire continent; it includes realities as complex and diverse as the Mexico-United States border region, and the exodus of Venezuelans and Haitian emigrants. The continent's different migration systems are more interconnected than ever, yet most responses to humanitarian emergencies continue to be ad-hoc and temporary. Securitization and control measures continue to take priority over regulations to protect and integrate migrants.



CLIMATE CHANGE IS ALREADY A REALITY affecting the most vulnerable sectors of the population and causing tangible consequences: driving migration, exacerbating existing inequalities, and stoking violence. A two-prong response needs to tackle both its causes and effects simultaneously. The Americas are at the epicenter of the climate crisis: the region is home to the world's highest-emitting countries as well as others that are key in combating the problem. The region's biodiversity, forests, and woods make it the world's lung. The Americas will be pivotal in efforts to tackle climate change.



THE AMERICAS is one of the world's most violent regions. Understanding violence as a central issue that is closely tied to the erosion of democracy, and focusing on continental cooperation from this perspective is a prerequisite for peace. The violence we see today will prevent fully developed democracies from advancing in the medium and long term. By failing to tackle inequalities, obstructions to human mobility, and environmental stress, violence will continue to spread and increase. Social, migration, and environmental policies need to be harmonized with those designed to address insecurity. New approaches must overcome the limitations of the prohibitionist paradigm to combat transnational organized crime, drug trafficking, people trafficking and arms trafficking from North to South.



STRENGTHENING A SOCIAL AGENDA that tackles these problems requires creating new, integral approaches, inclusive crosscutting public policies, and a strong, inter-American institutionality. The political commitment to development should not be conditional on geopolitical factors or ideological alignments, and should not exclude anyone. New contexts require different, more agile and relevant responses, through a strategic vision with medium and long-term horizons. To be credible, this agenda must also be equipped with the appropriate budgetary resources.

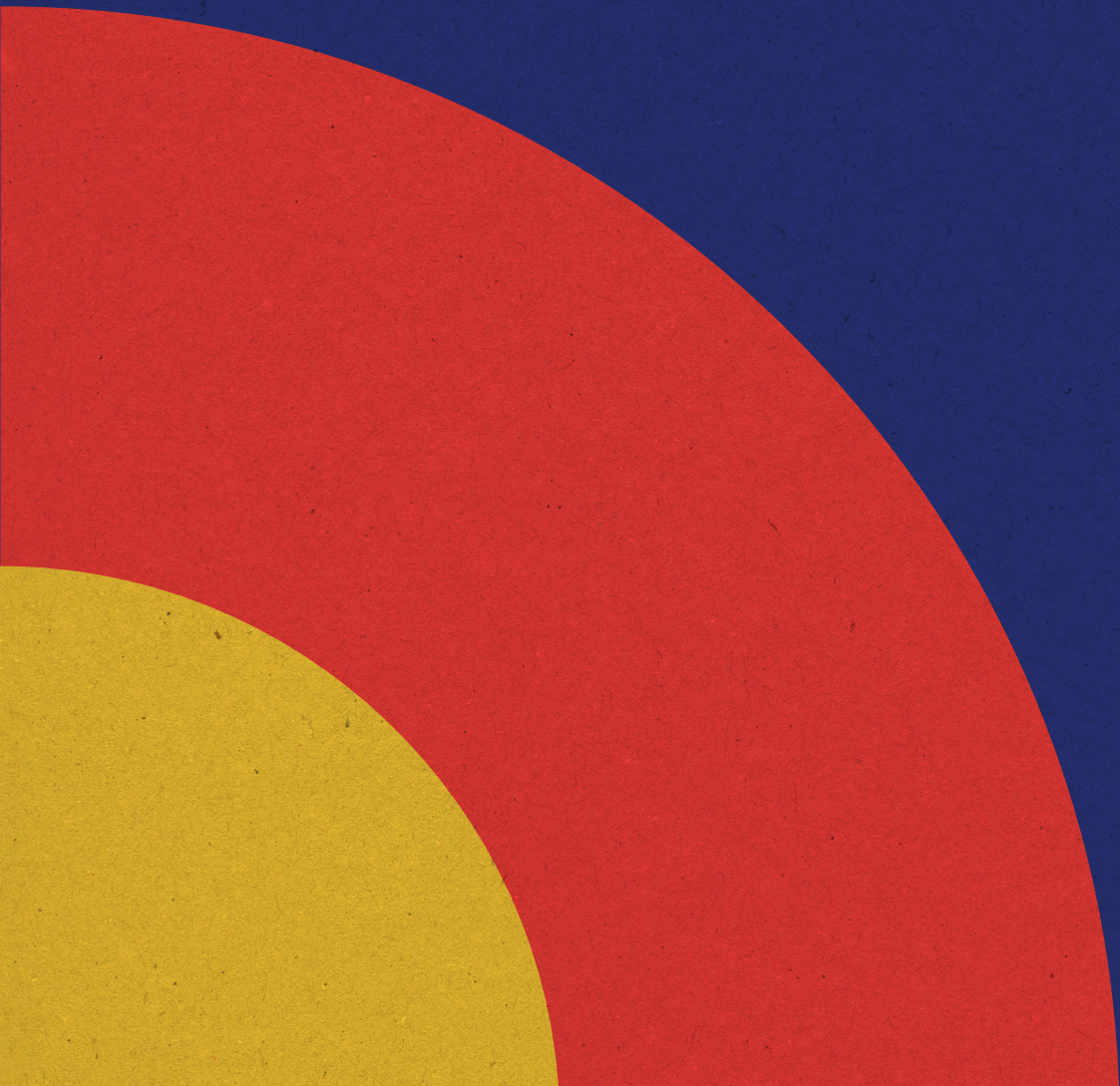


IT IS TIME TO RECAPITALIZE the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) and to formalize the foundational agreement that its leadership should be Latin American or Caribbean in order to reach a better balance between donor and recipient countries. Cooperation programs need to be multilateralized and given broader financing. And, above all, strong support needs to be provided to coordinate the work of the IDB, CAF, ECLAC, specialized U.N. agencies, and the many subregional and extraregional mechanisms.

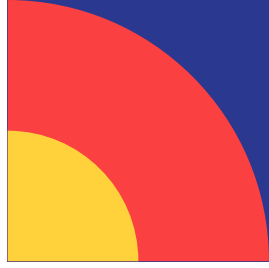
The strategic goal is to integrate a solid financing ecosystem for development.

PART ONE

Dialogue in the Americas Today:
An Overview







Lessons from the Ninth Summit of the Americas: Challenges and Opportunities

Is the glass half empty or totally empty?

In 2022, the Summit of the Americas (soA) returned to the United States after almost three decades. In contrast to the optimism of the first soA in Miami in 1994, the event in Los Angeles suffered from an inauspicious political situation in the region and lacked the necessary leadership from the United States as host country to relaunch the continental relationship. Despite the Biden administration's shift in diplomatic tone to revert the backsliding of the Trump presidency, it proved impossible to bring the regions closer. Due to the uncertainty and increasing tensions surrounding this most recent gathering, the moment was diametrically different to the period of liberal consensus in the 1990s when the First soA was held. A gulf existed between the two events.

Hopes for a relaunch not only came from a change in attitude and diplomacy by the United States after the four years of unilateralism and polarization during the Trump administration. Moreover, the dramatic social and economic aftermath of the pandemic that had ravaged the Americas—the hardest-hit region in the world—required an urgent, coordinated response to tackle the circumstances. However, the dialogue, organization and outcome of the Ninth soA fell short of expectations and proved unmatched to the challenges faced.

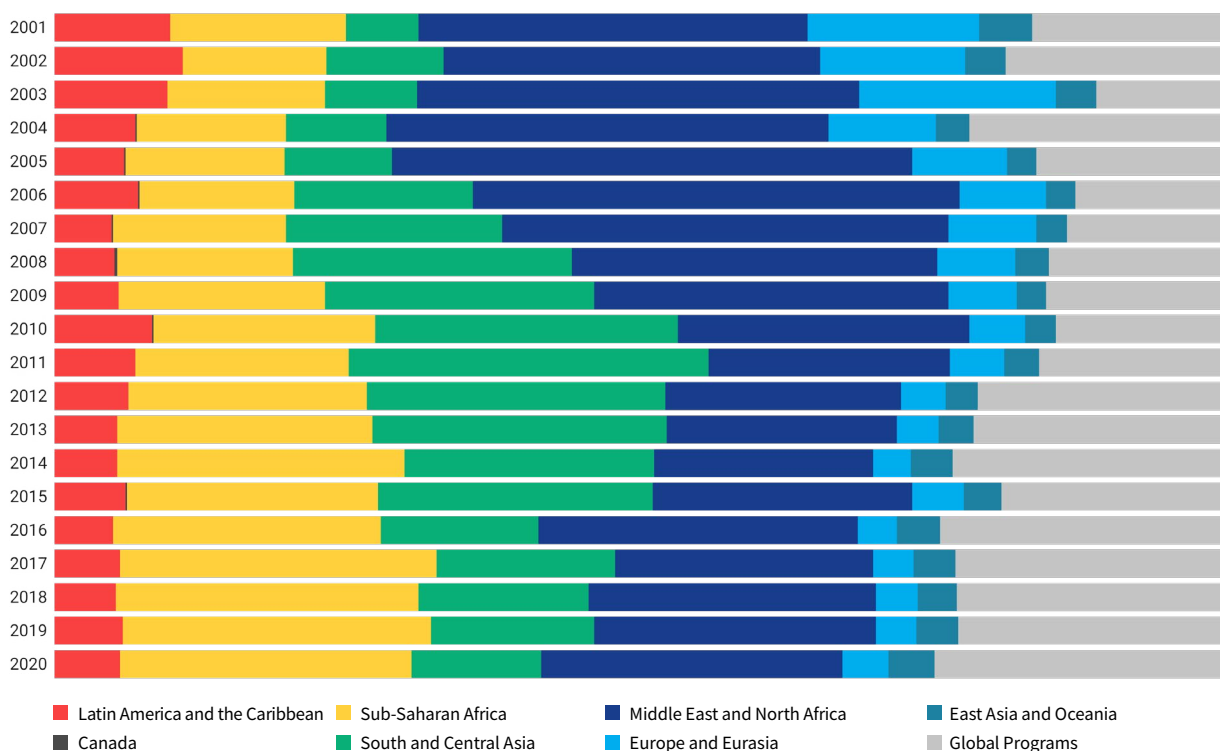
The Americas sat down for talks at a juncture unprecedented in its complexity, when the global system was overwhelmed with contradictions, dissent, pressure, and dilemmas due to mounting, simultaneous crises on several fronts: geopolitical, medical, financial, social, political, and environmental. Both the United States and Canada as well as Latin American and Caribbean countries attended the event without enough conceptual and strategic clarity to define their positions or react to these new realities.

The Ninth soA confirmed that the relationship between the United States and Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) is losing relevance for all sides, a trend observed since the early 21st century. In the past two decades, the U.S. contribution to LAC's foreign trade fell from 54% in 2000 to 38% in 2020;¹ whereas in 2000 the United States was the main trading partner for all the countries in the continent, except for Paraguay, in 2022 China now ranks highest in most South American countries in terms of commercial exchange. Latin American and Caribbean countries accounted for 20% of U.S. trade in 2020, almost the same as in 2000 (19%), but if one removes Mexico from

1 Estimates by authors based on World Bank data compiled in the World Integrated Trade Solution (wits) platform. Refers to the trade of goods. World Integrated Trade Solution (wits), United States, 2020, <https://wits.worldbank.org/> (accessed January 15, 2023).

Figure 1.1 Official development assistance

(Percentage of total disbursement in current US\$ dollars)



Source: ForeignAssistance.gov

the equation, this drops to around 6%.² Another notable example of the lack of U.S. interest in LAC is the reduction in its official development aid to the region, which fell from 9.8% in 2001 to 5.5% in 2020. This is in contrast to other regions such as Africa, where U.S. aid increased from 15% to 25%.³ A combination of factors can explain this reconfiguration in inter-American relations, such as China's emergence onto the global stage, its increasing influence and presence in Latin American and Caribbean economies, and the return of geopolitical and security issues at the center of the U.S. foreign policy agenda, linked to the fight against terrorism, conflicts in Central Asia and the Middle East, and now with a focus on Europe.

The summit in Los Angeles clearly reflected the region's political polarization and fragmentation, laying bare the enormous difficulties in resolving disputes and articulating joint initiatives. A deficit of legitimacy and representativeness ran through the entire SOA process. First, the pandemic forced the recently inaugurated Democratic administration to postpone for a year the date for the Summit proposed by its predecessor (April 2021). The highly charged political atmosphere at the start of the Biden administration following the post-electoral disputes and the storming of the Capitol on January 6, 2021, combined with the legislative paralysis caused by

² Based on United Nations data, UN Comtrade Database, "Free access to detailed global trade data," <https://comtradeplus.un.org/>

³ Foreign assistance data from the official U.S. government platform, Foreign Assistance, <https://www.foreignassistance.gov/>

the Democrat's slim majority in the Chamber of Representatives and the stalemate in the Senate, caused complications in appointing the team that would define and steer relations with Latin America and the Caribbean. At the time of the Summit, 12 of the 29 U.S. embassies in the Americas were lacking an ambassador, including the representative to the OAS. The secondary importance given to Latin America in the Biden administration's foreign policy agenda, combined with the Republican block in the Senate, meant that the United States did not have an ambassador to the OAS for two years, until the appointment of Cuban-American Frank O. Mora.⁴ The appointment of Assistant Secretary of State for Western Hemisphere Affairs, Brian A. Nichols, took eight months.

A context of social polarization, a nationalistic mood across the country, and Trumpist activism has undermined a proactive agenda of international cooperation⁵ that might lend credibility to the message that "America is back" at the forefront of the multilateral order and democratic cause. While several heads of state in the region actively demanded universal participation, as is the case within the UN, which meant including members from all countries on the continent, Biden's foreign policy emphasis on protecting and promoting democracy throughout the world led to the exclusion of the leaders of countries in the Americas with non-democratic regimes (Cuba, Nicaragua, and Venezuela). The ensuing controversy⁶ caused several heads of state to boycott the event in protest.⁷

The summit in Los Angeles clearly reflected the region's political polarization and fragmentation, laying bare the enormous difficulties in resolving disputes.

Defending democracy has been a constant element of U.S. foreign policy; its actual implementation has been less consistent due to overriding geopolitical and economic interests. This has exposed Washington to accusations of double standards. For example, the U.S. government cited this principle as the grounds for not inviting various countries to the SOA, alleging that they did not adhere to the standards of a democratic regime. However, this consideration was completely ignored at a special summit between the United States and ten countries from the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) held in Washington in May 2022.⁸ The same inconsistency exists in the U.S. Indo-Pacific strategy, which overlooks democratic credentials. Furthermore, the delicate state of U.S. democracy itself, after the putsch orchestrated by Trump, detracts from Washington's moral authority in this regard. Finally, U.S. public opinion does not seem engaged by the global confrontation between democratic

4 The nomination was sent to Congress on July 29, 2019, and confirmed 17 months later. United States Senate, "On the Nomination: Confirmation: Francisco O. Mora, of Florida, to be Permanent Representative of the United States of America to the Organization of American States," https://www.senate.gov/legislative/LIS/roll_call_lists/vote_menu_117_2.htm (accessed December 14, 2022).

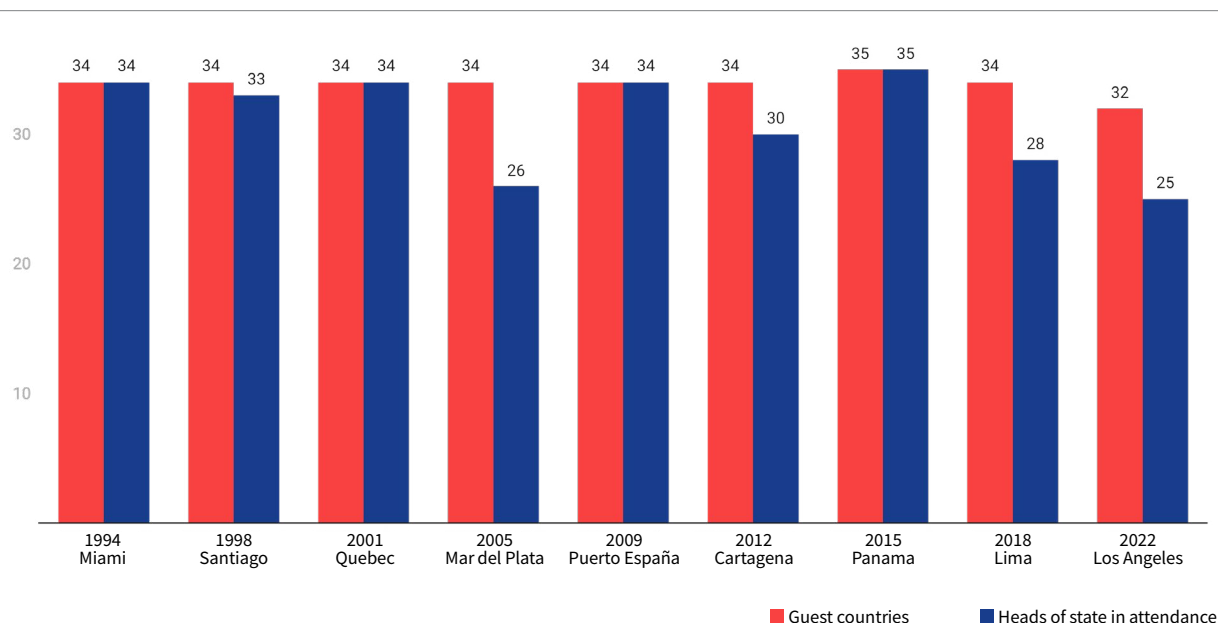
5 An iconic case refers to the difficulties of the budgetary approval facing the Biden administration's main initiative for Central America, announced on July 29, 2021, the Strategy to tackle the root causes of migration in Central America, contemplating the provision of \$4 billion over the span of four years for development projects in the region. See Peter J. Meyer, "Central American Migration: Root Causes and U.S. Policy," *Congressional Research Service, In Focus*, December 12, 2022, <https://crsreports.congress.gov/product/pdf/IF/IF11151>.

6 The controversy has a long history, since the Biden administration did not invite several Latin American and Caribbean countries to the Summit for Democracy in December 2021, whereas it did invite countries from other regions with questionable democratic credentials, according to the Global Democracy Index, sending a message of a double standard. Oliver Stuenkel, "How Biden's 'Democracy Summit' Might Actually Benefit the Americas," *Americas Quarterly*, December 7, 2021, <https://www.americasquarterly.org/article/how-bidens-democracy-summit-might-actually-benefit-the-americas/>.

7 This is the case of heads of state of Bolivia, Honduras, and Mexico. Other presidents such as those of Guatemala and El Salvador did not attend due to bilateral differences with the United States.

8 This association consists of four authoritarian governments, five very defective democracies, and one sultanate.

Figure 1.2 Participation at the Summits of the Americas



and autocratic regimes.⁹ Beyond the intrinsic merit of mounting a global defense of democracy, any attempt at strengthening multilateralism to address global challenges needs to avoid the imposition of the divisiveness stoked by the “with Washington or against Washington” approach underlying the idea of democracies versus autocracies.

Obviously, this situation does not obviate the urgent need to revitalize democracy in the Americas. However, it does require a discussion on better approaches to prevent the issue from being weaponized for political or other ends while eroding the representativeness of inter-American mechanisms. Although the issue of participation and representativeness at the Summit has always been divisive, on this occasion it meant that the Ninth Summit of the Americas was the least-attended event at the highest level in the meeting’s history, despite the fact that the host was the world’s most powerful nation and the mechanism’s founder. This points to a lack of U.S. influence or interest in the region, and to divisions within Latin America and the Caribbean.

For nongovernmental actors to participate in continent-wide discussions, the Summit of the Americas process has institutional mechanisms such as the Civil Society Forum, the Young Americas Forum, and the CEO Summit of the Americas. These spaces provide a platform for civil society organizations, a place where networks can be formed, ideas exchanged, and best practices shared. They also reveal issues of social interest and articulate proposals in documents addressed to governments and regional organizations. From our first-hand experience as the only Latin American academic network to participate in the Ninth Civil Society Forum in Los Angeles, we can make some observations on the inner workings of these meetings. Similarly, we can make suggestions for them to be more inclusive, representative, substantive, and effective in articulating proposals on social issues to make a real impact on the commitments undertaken by governments.

9 “Upholding democracy globally” is the lowest priority—of 14—according to the survey of January 11, 2023 by *Morning Consult*. See Jason I. McMann, “Measuring Americans’ Views on Isolationism, Multilateralism and the Country’s Most Pressing Foreign Policy Challenges,” *Morning Consult*, January 11, 2023, <https://morningconsult.com/united-states-foreign-policy-tracker/>

On this occasion, we observed that the Summit of the Americas Secretariat worked hard to ensure inclusion by organizing the event and the Civil Society and Young Americas summits in Los Angeles. More than 60 organizations and social leaders took part, despite the uncertainty and logistical complexities caused by the covid pandemic. Another achievement was the U.S. initiative to set up the Cities Summit of the Americas, a new subnational dialogue, held for the first time in April 2023 in Denver.¹⁰

Despite the Summit Secretariat's best efforts, the meetings were beset by logistical, format and organization problems. The working groups and expert panels lacked diversity and a plurality of ideas; discussions went around in circles and academic representatives were largely absent. A gulf clearly existed between what was desirable and what was possible in terms of civil society participation: national, urban, and international organizations were represented, whereas local, rural, indigenous, small-scale groups lacked access to spaces of regional exchange due to insufficient resources, information, connectivity, and contacts. Future Summits need to correct this problem by providing a channel for the concerns raised by these groups.

Inter-American spaces require a broader—more plural, substantive, and effective—representation of civil society.

Another drawback was the opaque selection criteria and participation processes in the institutions' exhibition stands; many projects went unnoticed despite space being available. A major failing was the lack of channels for dialogue between the three forums and other simultaneous events such as the Summit for Democracy Conference; many important opportunities for discussion and new synergies were lost as a result. Although several leaders attended some nongovernmental events on an individual basis, intergovernmental talks were virtually disconnected from civil society dialogue.

A specific meeting¹¹ between civil society and governmental representatives was held to report back on the agreements reached by the five working groups (health and resilience, clean energy, green future, digital transformation, and democratic governance). However, without enough time and support to guarantee a genuine, high-quality debate, this process ended up in an event that was limited to mere protocol. Civil society's resolutions, demands, and recommendations were therefore clearly disconnected from the heads of state's agendas and commitments. As a result, activists and social leaders felt disillusioned and frustrated, eroding the credibility of existing mechanisms.

In brief, inter-American spaces require a broader—more plural, substantive, and effective—representation of civil society. To improve the inclusiveness and diversity of representation, calls to participate must remove barriers and biases; networks need to be created so that social actors from a variety of fields can connect at different levels; communication should be stronger and technical support more widely available throughout the process. Much can be done to communicate, organize, and create synergies among the many existing channels of social participation to prevent overlaps and a watering-down of initiatives. More importantly, civil society needs to constantly participate in the monitoring and implementation of the agreements reached at a governmental level.

Despite the aforesaid drawbacks, the Ninth Summit was by no means a story of a failure foretold, and some progress and agreements were achieved. The glass is half empty, but there is enough water available to fill it. Disagreements and absences did not prevent a constructive and open dialogue between heads of state. The Biden administration sought to create a cordial political atmosphere during the dialogue and showed signs of commitment and interest in the region; he also named the former Democrat senator Christopher Dodd as Special Presidential Advisor for the Americas; Vice-President Kamala Harris was also active during the entire Summit

10 U.S. Government, State Department, "First Cities Summit of the Americas to Be Held April 26–28, 2023 in Denver" (media note), August 12, 2022, <https://www.state.gov/first-cities-summit-of-the-americas-to-be-held-april-26-28-2023-in-denver/>

11 Dialogue between civil society, civil society actors, and high-level government representatives.

alongside other members of her cabinet. This congenial spirit is not a trifling matter if we compare it to what sometimes happens in other inter-American spaces such as the OAS. Also important is the fact that no country escalated their disagreements and criticisms to the point of signaling a premature exit.

Finally, in Los Angeles the governments reached agreements that can continue to grow into the future. They signed the following five mandates, with general action lines and principles on the basis of which the different countries will need to define and adopt specific commitments: Action Plan on Health and Resilience in the Americas, Regional Agenda for Digital Transformation, Accelerating the Clean, Sustainable, Renewable, and Just Energy Transition, and Inter-American Action Plan on Democratic Governance.

In parallel, the Summit produced other significant multilateral agreements of different scopes, mostly initiatives launched by the United States as the host country. Notable among these U.S. proposals is the Americas Partnership for Economic Prosperity (APEP), designed to reactivate the economy, generate employment, strengthen supply chains, and recapitalize the IDB, a similar but less-significant proposal as the one included in the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework for Prosperity (IPEF) in May 2022; the America Health Corps to tackle the shortfall of between 600,000 and 2 million health workers in the region; on environmental issues, the 100,000 Strong in the Americas Climate-Green Economy Initiative (100K CLIMA), U.S.-Caribbean Partnership to Address the Climate Crisis 2030 (PACC 2030), Amazonia Connect, and the reactivation of the Renewables in Latin America and the Caribbean (RELAC) initiative. Moreover, the Biden administration reiterated its commitment to the “Call to Action” with the injection of \$1.9 billion of private-sector funds to boost economic opportunities in Central America’s “Northern Triangle” (El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras). In terms of public and private funding, as well as budgets for development and infrastructure projects, these U.S. initiatives have simply been recycled; their reach is limited and their resources are not new. They also lack the necessary trade and customs commitments to give access to the world’s largest economy.¹²

Agreements were reached in other areas that enjoyed U.S. support, following negotiations at other Latin American and Caribbean forums. For instance, the Joint Declaration of Agriculture Exporters¹³ at the Summit of the Americas seeks to coordinate responses to increased food insecurity and is backed by Argentina, Brazil, Canada, the United States, and Mexico, the main exporters of agricultural products and supplies on the continent. Migration was the subject of another more substantial and far-reaching agreement, and this was the first time the topic was addressed at a continental level even though it was not on the SOA’s official agenda: 21 countries were signatories to the Los Angeles Declaration on Migration and Protection.¹⁴

12 Oliver Stuenkel, Shannon K. O’Neil, Andrés Rozental, Juan Battaleme, “A Region Divided: What did the Summit of the Americas Accomplish,” Council of Foreign Relations, Global Memo, June 10, 2022, <https://www.cfr.org/councilofcouncils/global-memos/region-divided-what-did-summit-americas-accomplish>

13 U.S. Government, State Department, Joint Statement—Summit of the Americas Agriculture Producers, June 13, 2022, <https://www.state.gov/translations/spanish/declaracion-conjunta-de-exportadores-agricolas-en-la-cumbre-de-las-americas/>.

14 U.S. Government, State Department, “The Los Angeles Declaration on Migration and Protection U.S. Government and Foreign Partner Deliverables,” fact sheet, June 10, 2022, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2022/06/10/fact-sheet-the-los-angeles-declaration-on-migration-and-protection-u-s-government-and-foreign-partner-deliverables/>.

Initiatives by Latin American and Caribbean countries, especially joint proposals, were conspicuously absent. The most significant proposal from Latin America was the Joint Declaration on “Americas for the Protection of the Ocean,”¹⁵ a Chilean initiative backed by seven Latin American countries as well as Canada and the United States. Andean and Caribbean countries made specific proposals for greater access to concession funds and debt relief, but these did not translate into formal agreements or action plans.

Initiatives by Latin American and Caribbean countries, especially joint proposals, were conspicuously absent.

SOA IN GOVERNMENT SPEECHES

The MAXQDA software¹⁶ provided a detailed and original quantitative and qualitative analysis of the official speeches given by the heads of state and high-level representatives at the Los Angeles summit. This exercise revealed the widespread protest at the exclusion of some countries from the Summit. Twenty of the government representatives openly criticized the non-invitation of all countries in the region, while eleven leaders, including the U.S. president, failed to mention the issue at all in their speeches. Colombia was the only country to defend the principle of the Inter-American Democratic Charter as complete justification for the decision to exclude non-democratic regimes. The president at the time, Iván Duque, emphasized that “remaining silent in the face of the dictatorships of Venezuela, and Cuba [. . .] would make us complicit in those regimes and the pain they cause to their people. Let us debate our differences in a democratic framework, but these summits should never provide a platform for the hemisphere’s dictators.”¹⁷

Argentina, Chile, and Mexico were the most vociferous in supporting the participation of every country in the hemisphere, albeit using different arguments and emphases. The following extracts offer a good cross-section of the various views on the matter:

The silence of those who are absent today reaches out and challenges us. In order to ensure that this does not happen again, I would like it to be established that in future the fact that a country hosts the Summit does not entitle it to impose a “right of admission” on countries that are part of our Hemisphere. (Alberto Fernández, Argentina)¹⁸

15 “Joint declaration on “Americas for the Protection of the Ocean” during the Ninth Summit of the Americas, June 9, 2022, <https://www.dfo-mpo.gc.ca/oceans/collaboration/declaration-eng.html>.

16 MAXQDA is a qualitative data analysis software program designed for qualitative and quantitative, and mixed methods research.

17 From the speech given by Colombia’s president, Iván Duque Márquez, at the Plenary Session of Ninth Summit of the Americas, June 8–10, 2022, Organization of American States (OAS) and Secretariat of the Ninth Summit of the Americas, http://summit-americas.org/documentos_oficiales_ixsummit/discursos/Colombia%20-%20palabras%20del%20Presidente%20ESP.pdf (in Spanish).

18 From the speech given by Argentina’s president, Alberto Fernández, at the Plenary Session of the Ninth Summit of the Americas, June 8–10, 2022, Organization of American States (OAS) and Secretariat of the Ninth Summit of the Americas, http://summit-americas.org/documentos_oficiales_ixsummit/discursos/Argentina%20-%20palabras%20del%20Presidente%20ENG.pdf.

Historically, exclusion has never proved helpful nor is it the way forward. By excluding certain countries, the United States hardens these countries' positions. (Gabriel Boric, Chile)¹⁹

No one has the right to exclude another country, no matter the reason, and especially not for political reasons. It is up to each nation to choose its form of government. This issue should be resolved by the next Summit or else many countries will choose not to attend. (Marcelo Ebrard, Mexico)²⁰

As detailed below, although the official government speeches perceive the SOA as a multilateral forum for open and constructive dialogue, the issue of its inclusiveness and representativeness continues to be a source of tension and disagreements. For the Summit process to regain its credibility and avoid entering the same spiral of polarization, division, and fatigue that plagues other mechanisms, particularly the OAS, the issue of membership needs to be discussed and resolved collectively before the next Summit. Whatever decision is made, the host country's margin for reaching discretionary decisions needs to be limited. By failing to address this matter, the Summits will be doomed to irrelevance.

Our analysis of the official speeches in Los Angeles also focused on the level of convergence or divergence between the continent's leaders in their positions on whether to follow a liberal or a neodevelopmental economic model. The corresponding data in Figure 1.5 reveals a lack of consensus on a dominant economic development model for the future. In their speeches, the presidents and heads of state mentioned with equal frequency the policies and values associated with the liberal model (pro-market, free trade, national and foreign private investment) and those connected to the neodevelopmental economic model (market regulation, public investment, state-led economic stewardship, welfare state). However, this does not reveal two clearly differentiated blocs in the region, one pro-market and the other pro-state. The speeches combine both visions, with varying emphases, either reflecting governments' pragmatic approach to economic development models, or a lack of clarity about which course to take.

While we do not find a single discourse on economic development, we observe elements of discourses and symbols indicating a certain shared regional identity. There is still clearly a perception of the Americas as a region of shared values and, above all, one that faces a set of common problems. This represents a substrate of identity that could provide the basis for sustainable, balanced, and comprehensive systems for future cooperation. As shown in figure 1.6, the countries in this area rarely perceive diversity as a regional attribute. Even more notable is the lack of emphasis on Latin America as a peaceful region, despite it being a region without conventional wars or nuclear weapons, a narrative that has characterized the region in the 20th century in order to promote certain joint initiatives at multilateral forums.

Despite the criticisms about the SOA's lack of inclusiveness, most leaders in the Americas are strongly in favor of inter-American cooperation. The speeches emphasize collective approaches and the idea that despite asymmetries, as a continent we share values and face common problems.

19 From the speech given by Chile's president, Gabriel Boric Font, at the Plenary Session of the Ninth Summit of the Americas, June 8–10, 2022, Organization of American States (OAS) and Secretariat of the Ninth Summit of the Americas, http://summit-americas.org/documentos_oficiales_ixsummit/discursos/Chile%20-%20palabras%20del%20Presidente%20ESP.pdf (in Spanish)

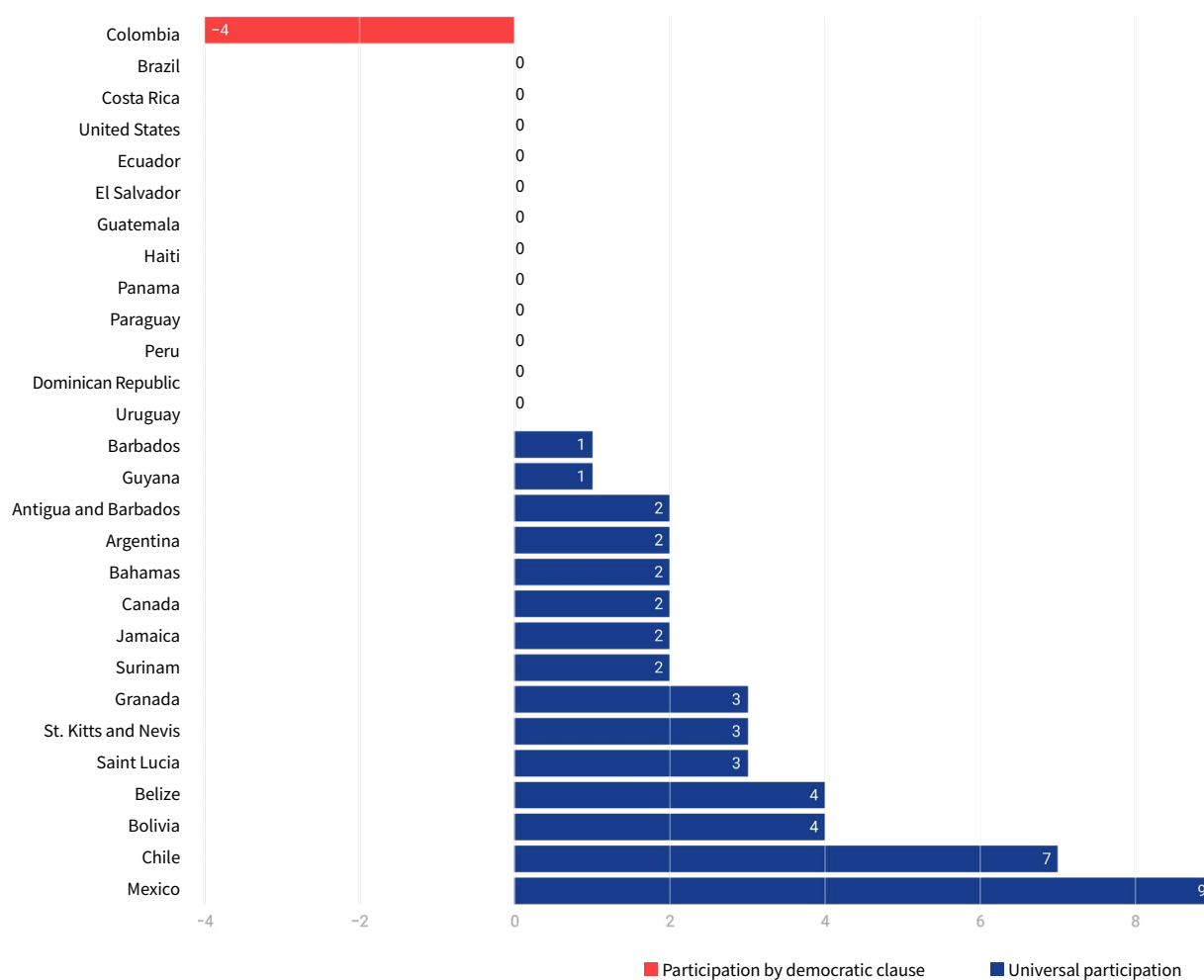
20 From the speech given by Mexico's foreign secretary, Marcelo Ebrard, at the Plenary Session of the Ninth Summit of the Americas, June 8–10, 2022, Organization of American States (OAS) and Secretariat of the Ninth Summit of the Americas, <https://www.gob.mx/sre/documentos/ix-cumbre-de-las-americas> (in Spanish)

Figure 1.3 Mentions of participation criteria in the soA



Source: compiled by author.

Figure 1.4 Mentions of participation criteria at the soA, by country



Source: compiled by author.

Perceptions on the horizontality or verticality of the political dynamic in the inter-American space are connected to aspects of regional identity. A minority of speeches referred to a horizontal dynamic between countries with different levels of development. Leaders of Caribbean countries, on the other hand, argue that a wide North-South distance exists both globally and within the inter-American system, meaning that the interests of the more developed countries are usually imposed top-down over the needs and perspectives of developing countries. This viewpoint affects the way regional institutions are perceived.

Another analysis focused on the distribution of preferences on the need to introduce reforms as well as new action and participation mechanisms within the inter-American system. References in support of reforming the system outnumber those in support of maintaining the status quo or strengthening the operation of current mechanisms. Six delegations (Argentina, Barbados, Bahamas, Bolivia, El Salvador, and Mexico) stressed the urgent need to reset the inter-American system, particularly the OAS, and to a lesser extent the IDB and the SOA. The Argentinean president indicated that if the OAS

References in support of reforming the system outnumber those in support of maintaining the status quo

“wants to be respected and once again become the regional political platform it was intended to be, [it] must be restructured,”²¹ coinciding with the Mexican Foreign Minister’s call for an immediate renovation of “the leadership of the Organization of American States and for a new stage in how we organize ourselves within the Americas.”²²

Taking the opposite view, six countries (Canada, Colombia, Guatemala, Granada, Saint Kitts and Nevis, and Surinam) want the system to remain unchanged. The other nations were agnostic on this issue. Colombia’s president stated: “I also want to state that no integration mechanism should threaten the inter-American system and the Organization of American States.”²³

Views on multilateral institutions in the Americas reveal a strong contrast between positive mentions of the SOA and frequency negative statements about the OAS, an institution perceived to be in decline, and “in many areas, a shell of its former self.”²⁴ The main criticisms of the OAS voiced in Los Angeles include its members’ lack of commitment to assign it resources; doubts about the performance of its secretary general Luis Almagro; its election observation role in Bolivia in 2019; a frequent lack of transparency and impartiality in its decisions (especially regarding the Democratic Charter’s interpretation and implementation); the risk of electoral “interventionism”; countries’ exclusions; asymmetries and biases within its agenda; and its lack of focus on development issues. However, these criticisms were not matched with specific remedies; nor were specific OAS reform timeframes or formats defined.

Although the OAS is the main target of criticism and the institution facing the most calls for reform, this seems to have no direct bearing on SOA’s image or reputation. Most representatives made positive comments on the relevance of the Summits’ process as the only continental forum for high-level political dialogue. In the words of Juan Antonio Briceño, Prime Minister of Belize: “The power of the Summit of the Americas is the space it provides for all countries of the Americas to dialogue and agree on joint actions. The Summit belongs to all of the

21 Argentinean president Alberto Fernández’s speech (Ninth SOA).

22 Mexican foreign minister Marcelo Ebrard’s speech (Ninth SOA).

23 Colombian president Iván Duque’s speech (Ninth SOA).

24 From the speech given by prime minister and minister of finance of the Commonwealth of the Bahamas, Philip Davis, at the Plenary Session of the Ninth Summit of the Americas, June 8–10, 2022, Organization of American States (OAS) and Secretariat of the Ninth Summit of the Americas, http://summit-americas.org/documentos_oficiales_ixsummit/discursos/The%20Bahamas%20-%20palabras%20del%20Primer%20Ministro%20y%20Ministro%20de%20Finanzas%20ENG.pdf

Figure 1.5 Mentions of development models



Source: compiled by author

Figure 1.6 Regional identity



Source: compiled by author.

Figure 1.7 To maintain or reform inter-American institutions?



Source: compiled by author.

Americas.”²⁵ The soa is also seen as an ideal space to push for the necessary oas reform, so that, in the words of Mia Amor Mottley, Prime Minister of Barbados, it may “become a player that simply brings opportunity to our people in the Americas, from Alaska to Chile,” instead of it seeking “to become a political player.”²⁶

25 From the speech given by Belize’s prime minister, John Briceño, at the Plenary Session of the Ninth Summit of the Americas, June 8–10, 2022, Organization of American States (oas) and Secretariat of the Ninth Summit of the Americas, http://summit-americas.org/documentos_oficiales_ixsummit/discursos/Belize%20-%20palabras%20del%20Primer%20Ministro%20ENG.pdf.

26 From the speech given by Barbados’s prime minister, Mia Amor Mottley, at the Plenary Session of the Ninth Summit of the Americas, June 8–10, 2022, Organization of American States (oas) and Secretariat of the Ninth Summit of the Americas, <https://pmo.gov.bb/2022/06/11/transcript-statement-at-the-ix-summit-of-the-americas/>.

Figure 1.8 Opinions on regional institutions

Number of mentions



Source: compiled by author.

An important finding is that very few speeches mention other regional organizations—such as the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC), the Pacific Alliance, and Mercosur—or the multiplicity of UN co-operation agencies with a constant presence in LAC. In particular, the silence surrounding ECLAC was surprising. Only Caricom and the IDB had certain visibility. This shows that the SOA’s dialogue is narrow and limited in its perspective of the complex and wide-ranging regional and subregional institutions. These multilateral spaces appear to be disconnected or at odds with one another. Improving institutional links between the inter-American system with the other existing Latin American, Caribbean, and subregional mechanisms remains pending.

Given the turbulent context of the Ninth Summit of the Americas, a defined agenda was needed to set clear priorities, draw up specific proposals, establish timeframes, and assign substantive resources. However, the speeches revealed a highly disperse range of issues and only vague commitments. Figure 1.8 shows how this SOA lacked a shared focus; heads of state and delegates mentioned various issues without articulating a strategic vision for the future or thematic areas to shape the mainly generic proposals. This loose agenda might be the result of inward-facing administrations skeptical of regional governance as a means of tackling domestic challenges.

What do the speeches focus on? Environmental and energy issues are predominant, particularly in the addresses by leaders from Caribbean countries, which are especially vulnerable to the effects of climate change. Countries differ on how to respond: some emphasize mitigation and decarbonization; others prioritize funding for adaptation policies. Although most leaders acknowledge the effects and damages caused by climate change, they are not developing a roadmap to deal with them.

From an analysis of the speeches, the United States did not show strong leadership in terms of the general narrative, despite announcing new initiatives such as the Americas Partnership for Economic Prosperity, the Action Plan on Health and Resilience, the U.S.-Caribbean Partnership to Address the Climate Crisis 2030 (PACC 2030), the 100,000 Strong in the Americas Climate-Green Economy Initiative (100K CLIMA), the Amazonia-connect program, and the Los Angeles Declaration on Migration and Protection. Most of these initiatives have ambitious aims, and moving them forward will require sustained and collaborative coordination. President Biden’s opening and closing remarks were frugal, particularly on environmental and social issues, and left out major issues such as gender equality, violence, security, and foreign policy. As the host country, the United States failed to mention either the place or the role of the Americas in the current restructuring of the global economy, or in the reshaping of the global order—notable omissions given that the U.S. is seeking to rebuild its global leadership.

Analyzing the areas of interest by country reveals a disperse continental agenda. The voices of LAC nations were particularly fragmented at the Summit. Latin American and Caribbean countries arrived in Los Angeles without prior conversations or consultations—either bilaterally, subregionally, or among groups of countries with similar agendas—to propose joint initiatives or coordinate positions on the five agenda issues set by the host country.

Table 1.1 Agenda themes by country

Country	Foreign policy	Democracy and human rights	Security	Environmental	Energy	Economy	Migration	Healthcare	Social
Antigua and Barbados	2	0	0	1	1	2	1	1	3
Argentina	3	0	0	2	0	3	0	0	4
Bahamas	2	4	3	5	0	0	1	1	3
Barbados	0	0	0	6	3	5	2	2	4
Belize	5	0	0	1	1	2	0	1	1
Bolivia	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	2	1
Brazil	0	0	0	5	0	1	1	0	1
Canada	3	3	0	3	0	1	0	2	4
Chile	1	2	0	2	0	2	1	1	0
Colombia	2	7	1	3	0	4	5	0	2
Costa Rica	0	2	0	0	0	0	5	0	1
United States	0	1	0	0	1	1	2	1	0
Ecuador	1	1	3	1	0	4	5	3	2
El Salvador	0	9	1	1	0	0	1	4	2
Granada	1	2	0	1	0	1	0	0	1
Guatemala	0	0	2	2	0	7	8	0	0
Guayana	1	1	0	5	1	6	1	0	4
Haiti	0	3	2	0	0	0	2	0	2
Jamaica	0	0	1	1	1	1	0	0	1
Mexico	2	1	0	0	0	0	3	0	0
Panama	1	0	0	1	0	0	2	0	1
Paraguay	0	5	5	2	0	1	0	1	1
Peru	0	3	0	2	0	0	2	0	3
Dominican Republic	3	3	3	0	2	2	2	2	1
St. Kitts and Nevis	1	2	0	0	1	3	0	3	2
Saint Lucia	3	0	0	4	0	1	0	0	1
Surinam	1	0	0	6	0	0	0	0	1
Uruguay	0	1	0	1	0	4	0	0	0

Source: compiled by author.

Economic issues (growth, foreign investment, trade, employment, infrastructure, financing, debt, private sector, fiscal issues, technology) were a secondary priority on the agenda, followed in third place by policy matters relating to democracy and human rights. Few speeches mentioned corruption, indicating a certain disconnect with the agenda of the last SOA in Lima. The Summits show the difficulty of building and then following up on a sustained or accumulative agenda over time.

Although the Summit's official theme was announced as "Building a Sustainable, Resilient, and Equitable Future," the social agenda ranked fourth in the leaders' speeches. Almost no references or proposals were made on issues such as inequality, extreme poverty, inclusion of ethnic minorities, informal economies, women's inclusion in the labor market, fairness in salaries and senior management positions, freedom of speech, or education.

A sign of this is that the least mentioned words were women, indigenous, gender, equality, social inclusion, political prisoners, and solidarity.

Migration was not one of the five official agenda items in the Ninth Summit of the Americas (green future, democratic governability, health and resilience, digital transformation, clean energy), but the issue was raised in parallel discussions that led to the adoption by 21 nations of the Los Angeles Declaration on Migration and Protection, the first coordinated, continent-wide initiative to address migration. Though undoubtedly an important step, it does not go far enough; control and security remain the predominant responses, with less attention paid to protection, integration, regularization, and asylum.

Surprisingly, public health policies rank second-to-last on the regional agenda. The dearth of healthcare cooperation proposals indicates that the pandemic emergency and health problems in general are no longer a priority. And violence, despite affecting all aspects of the regional agenda and every country on the continent, comes last in official speeches. To illustrate this point, only one country, Chile, mentioned the Belém do Pará Convention intended to prevent, punish, and eradicate violence against women, and not a single nation spoke of the Escazú Agreement which, among other things, protects the rights and safety of environmental defenders in the Americas.

Most government representatives' focus on domestic problems partially explains the Summit's diffuse agenda. The MAXQDA software analysis supports this hypothesis: Figures 9, 10, and 11 show that the speeches mainly reference domestic issues, with twice as many mentions than regional questions. Brazil, Dominican Republic, El Salvador, and Guatemala were the most absorbed delegations in their domestic affairs.

Half of the leaders specifically address the United States, be it to make requests or appeals, to criticize or to show support. In a notable example, President Fernández invited President Biden to participate in the CELAC summit as bridge building gesture between regional organizations outside the OAS. Specific references to other countries in the Americas are less frequent and, in general, they tend to focus on neighboring nations. Canada was barely mentioned at all, a remarkable fact since this is a country that has previously articulated regional narratives and led initiatives.

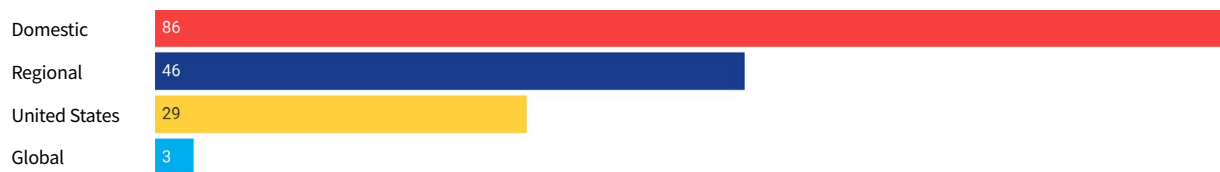
Direct references to global events, players, or themes were largely absent from speeches; the most frequently mentioned factors responsible for aggravating problems in the region were the pandemic and the war in Ukraine. Only two countries (Antigua and Barbuda, and Chile) mention China. No references are made to the UN, EU, BRICS, or the Global South, and leaders do not propose solutions at the global, multilateral level. We can conclude that the SOA does not function as a continental platform to address global, multilateral negotiations, or extraregional relationships. Governments clearly do not see the Summit as a forum for global and extracontinental discussions that might support their foreign policies beyond the hemisphere's borders.

The speech analysis clearly exposes a major disconnect between government discourses and civil society's perspectives, despite institutional efforts to include them in parallel consultation processes and summits involving nongovernmental players. These channels fail to remedy the deficit of substantive participation of civil society organizations, young people, or the private sector. As an example, despite three other nongovernmental forums and summits taking place simultaneously in Los Angeles (Ninth Civil Society Forum, Sixth Young Americas Forum, and Fourth CEO Summit), none of the government leaders referred to them directly or even mentioned them as input sources or points of reference to support their positions on certain issues. President Biden, as the leader of the host country, only mentioned civil society once in his two addresses, and he did not mention the private sector in either of them. Therefore, governmental speeches at the SOA were largely incompatible with the idea of an inclusive and equitable future.

Improving the dialogue within the inter-American sphere requires addressing the main challenges identified at the Ninth Summit, which can be summarized in the following five points:

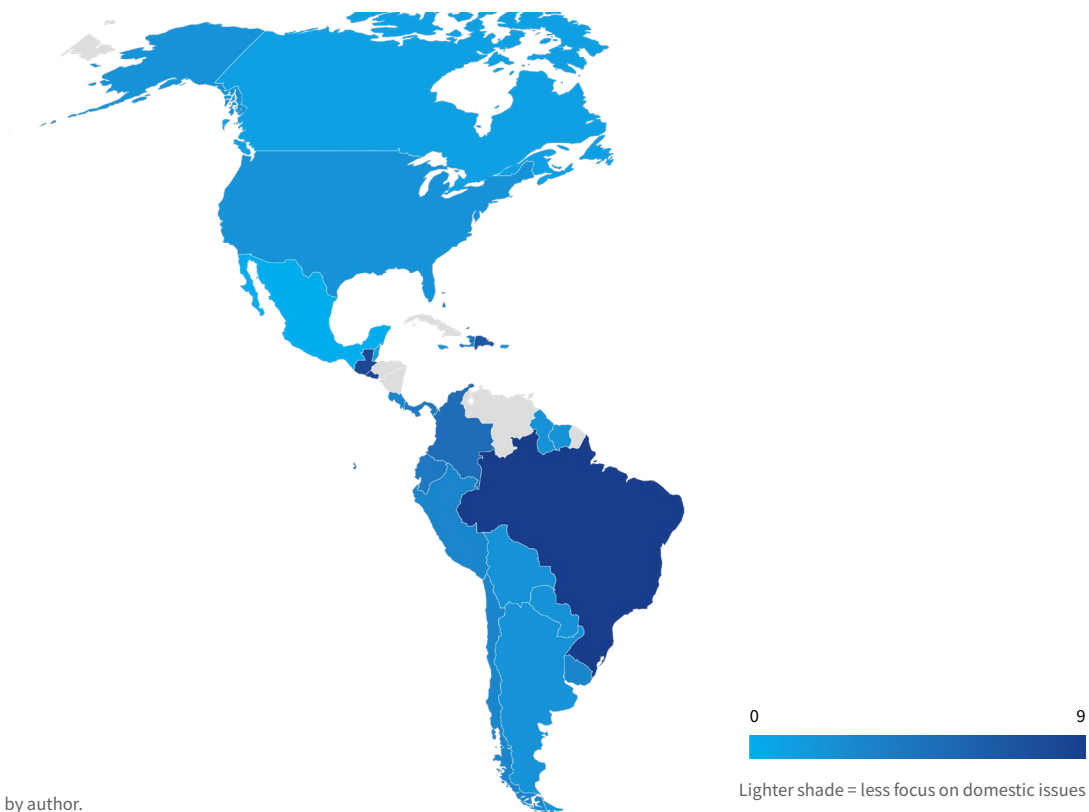
Figure 1.10 Focus of attention

Number of mentions



Source: compiled by author.

Figure 1.11 Focus on domestic issues



Source: compiled by author.

Table 1. 2 Focus of Attention

Country	Domestic	Continental	United States	Global
Antigua and Barbados	0	1	4	0
Argentina	2	1	1	1
Bahamas	4	2	2	0
Barbados	0	4	1	1
Belize	1	0	1	0
Bolivia	2	1	1	0
Brazil	9	1	2	0
Canada	1	0	0	0
Chile	3	1	3	0
Colombia	5	1	1	0
Costa Rica	3	3	0	0
United States	2	2	3	0
Ecuador	4	4	1	0
El Salvador	8	0	0	0
Granada	0	1	0	0
Guatemala	8	3	0	0
Guayana	2	6	1	0
Haiti	4	3	0	0
Jamaica	2	2	0	0
Mexico	0	1	5	0
Panama	4	0	0	1
Paraguay	2	2	0	0
Peru	3	2	0	0
Dominican Republic	7	4	1	0
St. Kitts and Nevis	3	0	2	0
Saint Lucia	2	0	0	0
Surinam	2	2	0	0
Uruguay	3	1	0	0

Source: compiled by author

1

Deficit of legitimacy and representativeness. The non-invitation of some countries, alongside the decision of some leaders not to attend, points to the forum's fading appeal, strength, and credibility. From a nongovernmental perspective, no space was made to fit different voices, opinions and ideologies from civil society.

2

Diffuse agenda. Five main official themes were established without a common thread; some issues, particularly those related to economic issues and migration, were negotiated on the sidelines of the Summit. Interlocution channels in the soa were disjointed, and the agenda was fragmented, disorganized, and lacked transparency.

3

Tower of Babel. Leaders tended to speak to their own audiences and domestic agendas instead of taking a continental perspective. A clear disconnect was evident during the intergovernmental dialogue between the discourses of heads of state and delegations, and the mandates and contributions of civil society. This heightened the sense that participants were all tailoring their messages to different audiences.

4

Non-binding agreements, without substantive resources. The agreements and mandates adopted on economic, health, energy transition and democratic governance are non-binding, lack funding or tools for their implementation. The absence of leaders from key countries in the Summit limits the ability to implement some agreements, as in the case of the Los Angeles Declaration. Most Latin American and Caribbean governments have less room for maneuver on fiscal matters, state weakness, and development aid. The most developed countries in the Americas (Canada and the United States) have a narrower political margin to channel further resources for the region's development.

5

Fragile political viability of the agreements. The political stability of the agreements is questionable given electoral uncertainties and polarization in the United States as well as in many countries of lac. Uncertainties are linked to the eventual return of Trumpist forces to the White House, the far right's gain in Congress and in state governments on issues such as the flows, terms, and conditions of continental cooperation.

An opportunity to fill a half-empty glass

Most of the SOA's problems and failings identified in this analysis are not exclusive to this forum, and they reflect the crisis affecting multilateralism today, particularly on the continent. The other most broad-ranging institutions in the Americas—OAS and CELAC—suffer from the same failings in terms of representativeness, participation, lack of agreements or of creative, innovative solutions and responsiveness to social demands. And similarly to the SOA, member countries have cast doubt on the rules of operation and the generation of agreements. Without solving the ongoing obstructions and the lack of full representativeness in the collective decision-making of the three main existing regional mechanisms, these risk becoming so ineffective and irrelevant as to disappear in a kind of “institutional Darwinism,”²⁷ or simply becoming skeletal.²⁸

The Summit of the Americas continues to be irreplaceable as the continent's only multilateral forum where heads of state can meet

Despite its drawbacks, the Summit of the Americas continues to be irreplaceable as the continent's only multilateral forum where heads of state can meet and as such, in principle at least, it comprises all countries in the Americas. The Summit's flexibility offers diplomatic opportunities to tackle thorny issues in highly politicized settings; it opens up opportunities for governments to launch, experiment with, and prenegotiate new ideas and approaches. The Summits' high media profile enables them to attract large national and international audiences and to receive the do-

mestic support needed for subsequent agreements. Therefore, in the current climate of multilateral fragility, the SOA is worth strengthening; however, to be meaningful the Summit requires more and better representativeness, a sharper focus, a set of verifiable commitments, and, above all, civil society's active participation. Otherwise, it will be impossible to fill the half-empty glass of continental regionalism.

The existing spaces within the summit where other nongovernmental actors converge, are an institutional asset that should be strengthened in order to overcome the chronic weaknesses of inter-American dialogue mechanisms. Greater democratization of the entire Summit process is essential for civil society to be able to make an impact on the positions taken by governments. Given the highly volatile and polarized political, social, and economic regional context, the continent needs an ongoing, plural, and action-oriented dialogue between governments, academia, and civil society to (co)build a strategic agenda for the Americas. The process should be joined-up and participative; civil society's participation in decision-making is essential for sustainable, ground-up solutions. Governments still bear greater responsibilities than other actors, but today governments cannot solve problems on their own. Interpresidential diplomacy, intergovernmental dialogue, and regional multilateralism will be unsustainable in the long term without the input and collaboration of organized civil society.

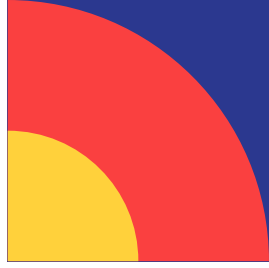
27 T.J. Pempel, “Soft Balancing, Hedging, and Institutional Darwinism: The Economic-Security Nexus and East Asian Regionalism,” *Journal of East Asian Studies*, vol. 10, no. 2 (May-August 2010), pp. 209–238, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/23418821>.

28 Guadalupe González, Mónica Hirst, Carlos Luján, Carlos Romero, and Juan Gabriel Tokatlian, “Coyuntura crítica, transición de poder y vaciamiento latinoamericano,” *Nueva Sociedad*, no. 291, February 2021, <https://nuso.org/articulo/coyuntura-critica-transicion-de-poder-y-vaciamiento-latinoamericano/>.

Historically, the United States has taken the lead in launching inter-American initiatives, but today there are more windows of opportunity for Latin American and Caribbean nations to be more proactive in defining the continental agenda. Increasing multipolarity and globalization of problems has generated conditions that are conducive to constructing collective, thematic, and regional dialogues, which gradually help balance out the structural asymmetries in the Americas.

Our core message is that, notwithstanding their problems, we must not give up on the Summits. On the contrary, we must work hard to make them more inclusive and effective. When well-conceived and properly carried out, they offer an opportunity to fill up the half-empty glass. To this end, we offer some proposals in the latter part of this report.





Views on the United States in Latin America and the Caribbean

TO DEMOCRATIZE DISCUSSIONS on the future agenda of cooperation in the Americas, it is instructive to consider public opinion in the region's countries. Links between public opinion and foreign policy are increasingly salient: globalization and interdependence between nations has shaped citizens' world views and daily lives; polarization on domestic issues has spilled over into foreign affairs agendas; calls for transparency and accountability include aspects of foreign policy praxis; and, finally, on the one hand, nations' leaders rely on the active support from their citizens on international issues, and on the other, multilateral organizations require public legitimacy in order to function.

Analyzing public opinion in Latin American in regards to the United States and compared to opinions held of other countries, particularly China, is important for several reasons. First, solid information is useful in order to identify challenges and opportunities related to the “common ground for social dialogue” within the Americas, in a context of unprecedented and accelerated changes that requires careful and nuanced understanding.¹

Second, this comparison is relevant because if the aim is to connect decision-makers in the Americas with their respective citizens and civil society actors, then it is worth observing how Latin American societies are perceiving the changes taking place in the international system.

Third, current challenges of political representation and the erosion of democracies in many countries across the continent raise questions about how social attitudes and perceptions—in this case regarding the United States—correlate to the positions held and the discourses of governing elites, as well as their level of stability, fragmentation, and polarization.

Fourth, if variations in public opinion regarding the United States within and between countries does not reflect the orientation of their respective leaders, this could respond to changes in whether the United States is perceived positively or negatively by the populations of Latin America and the Caribbean in general.

Finally, it is critical to examine how views on the United States have changed given the rise of China and the European Union's changing role. The United States has been an inescapable frame of reference for Latin American and Caribbean countries when considering their national models and international coalitions. Hence the current interest in visualizing how this reference fluctuates with the rise of potential competitors, a high-profile development during the pandemic, both in Latin America and the Caribbean as well as in the United States, due to discussions about vaccine access.

1 A comprehensive study of the common ground of favorable attitudes in the Americas would require information on the perceptions and attitudes of the U.S. in regard to Latin America and the Caribbean that is equivalent or comparable to the information gathered by Latinobarómetro and LAPOP. Given the lack of databases on U.S. public opinion on Latin America, our analysis looks at this interaction from an exclusively Latin American perspective.

Below, we offer an analysis of Latin American and Caribbean social attitudes toward the United States based on data from Latinobarómetro² and LAPOP³ as well as specialized literature and recent findings from other opinion surveys. We identified the most general opinion patterns in the region regarding United States in comparison to China, we organized them into eight main messages based on empirical data, and provide reflections on how to channel a better interlocution between our countries and societies in current inter-American spaces.

1. Public opinion in Latin America and the Caribbean on the United States is generally positive and stable

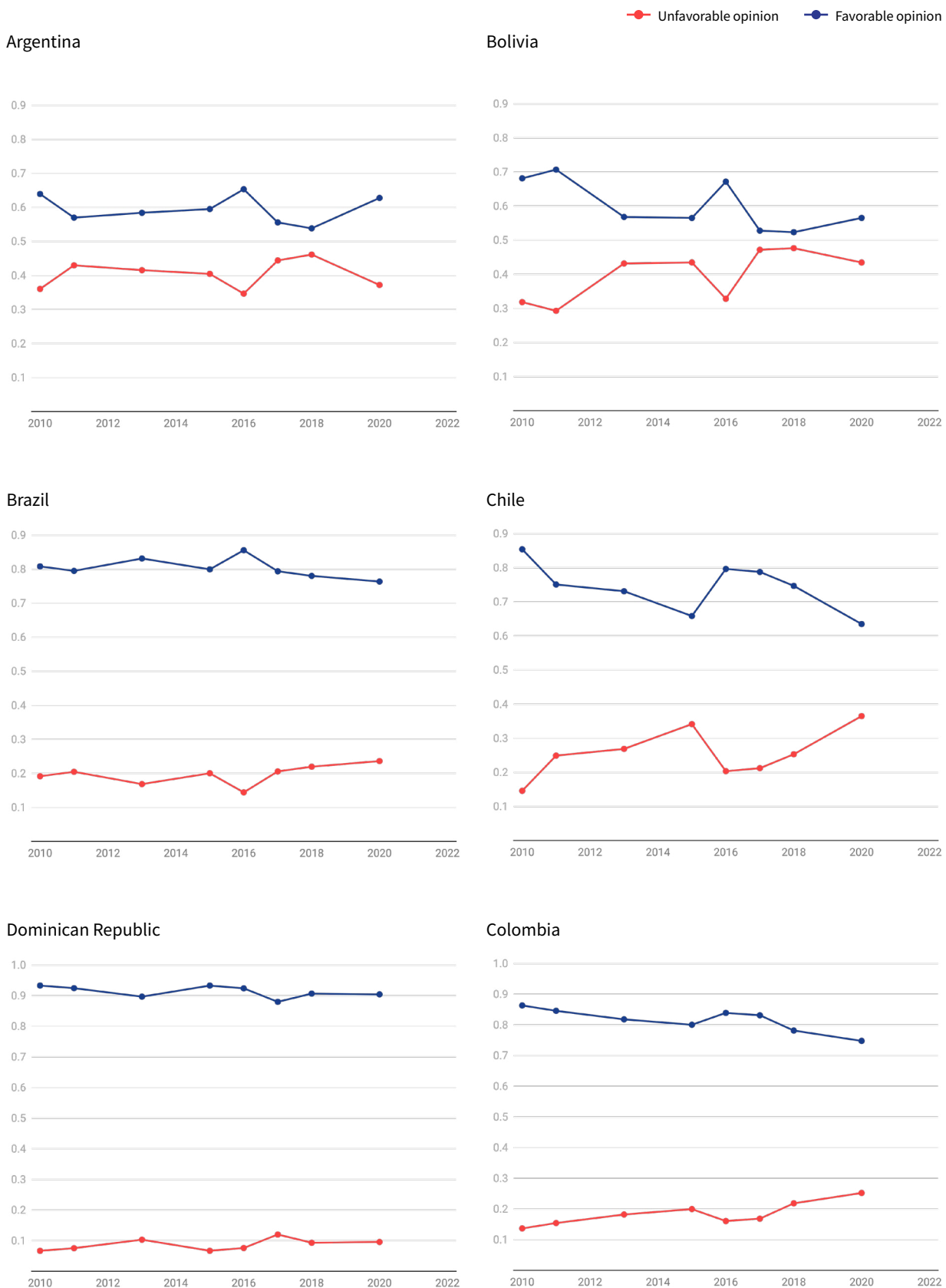
Figure 2.1 shows that positive opinions outweigh negative ones in all countries surveyed, with the exception of Mexico during a specific period that coincided with the Trump administration. Even in those countries with former or current political coalitions that are antagonistic toward the United States (such as Ecuador, Venezuela and Nicaragua), the general population's views do not always match those at a governmental level. For example, in Argentina and Brazil, the shift in attitude toward the U.S. can barely be attributed to changes in government. Hence, despite variations over time and between countries, these shifts occur within a constant range and the population's attitudes remain relatively stable over time, especially in Brazil and Dominican Republic.

If we analyze positive attitudes toward the United States between 2010 and 2020, we find significant differences, by up to 20 percentage points, among LAC countries. Figure 2.2 shows an average of positive public opinion (“favorable” and “very favorable”) for each country, and we can observe that the sharpest contrast in the region exists between Argentina and Dominican Republic—with Argentina having the least positive opinion of the United States and Dominican Republic the most favorable. However, even the least positive view represents a percentage of almost 60%, which means that three fifths of the country's population has a “very favorable” or “favorable” attitude toward the United States. However, we should bear in mind that a relatively stable “baseline” support of 60% can mean different things in different countries and sectors, which opens up many possibilities when considering a relationship with the United States.

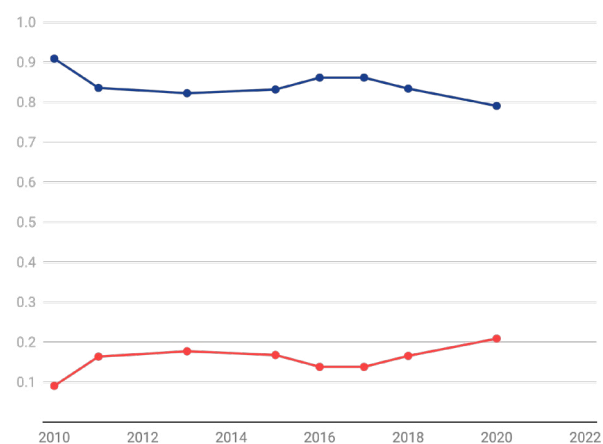
2 Latinobarómetro databases can be accessed at <https://www.latinobarometro.org/lat.jsp>.

3 The Latin American Public Opinion Project (LAPOP) of Vanderbilt University's databases and publications are available at <https://www.vanderbilt.edu/lapop/>.

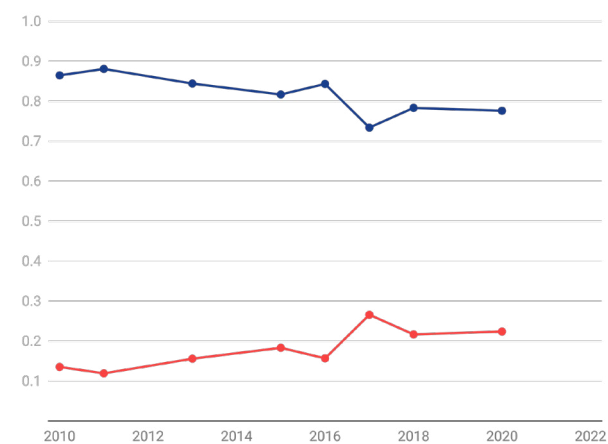
Figure 2.1 Opinions on the United States by country (2010–2020)



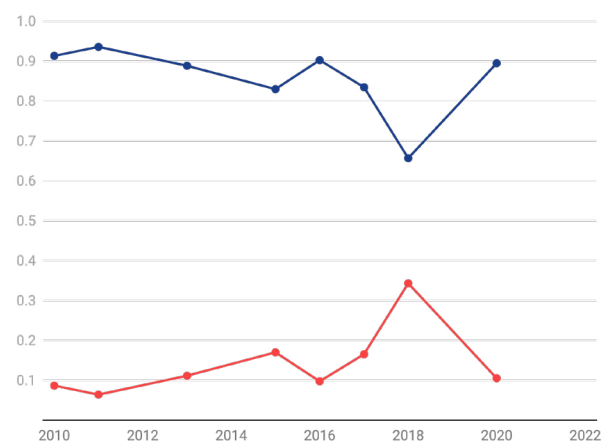
Ecuador



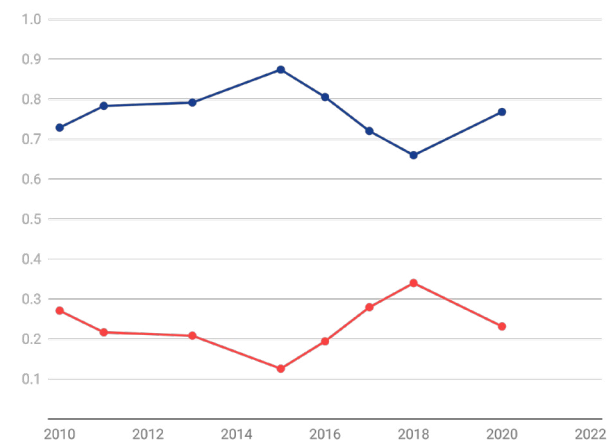
Costa Rica



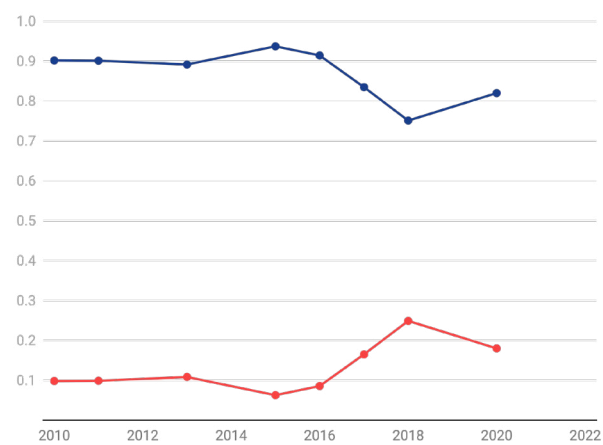
El Salvador



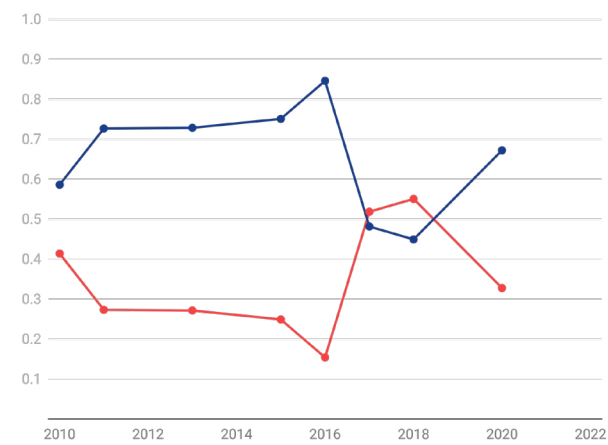
Guatemala



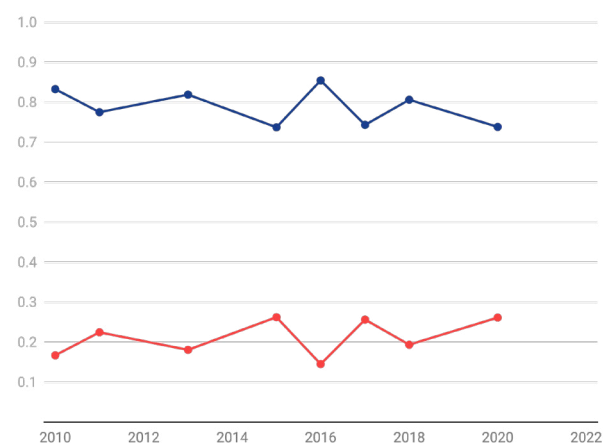
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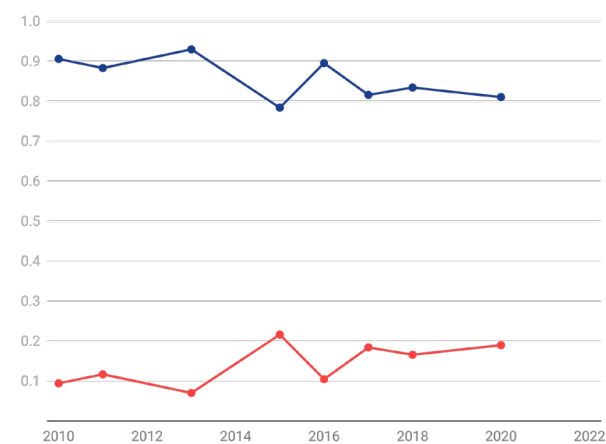
Mexico



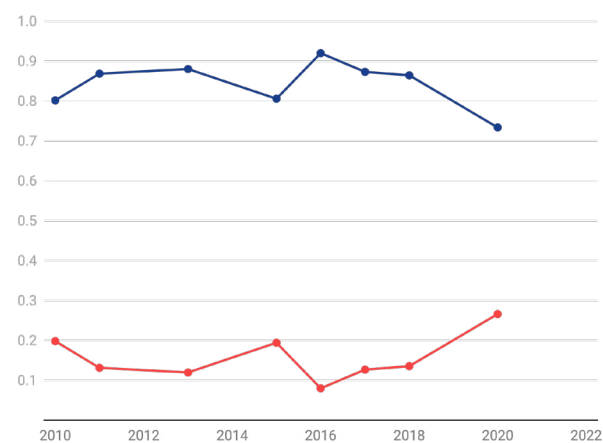
Nicaragua



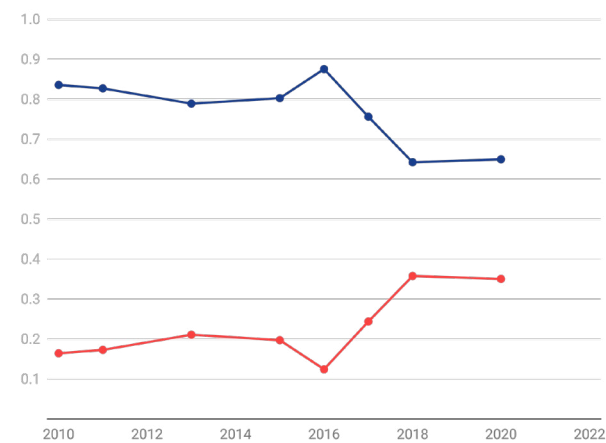
Panama



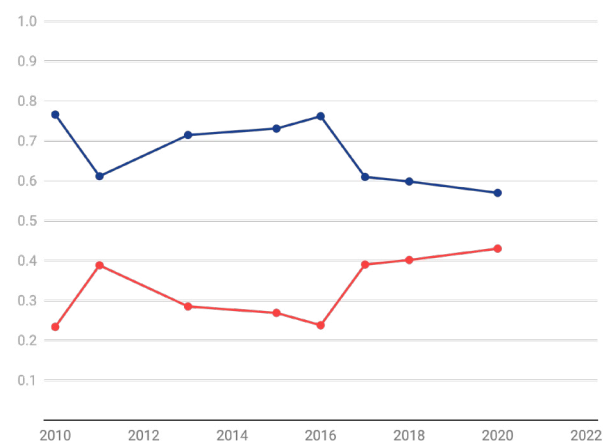
Paraguay



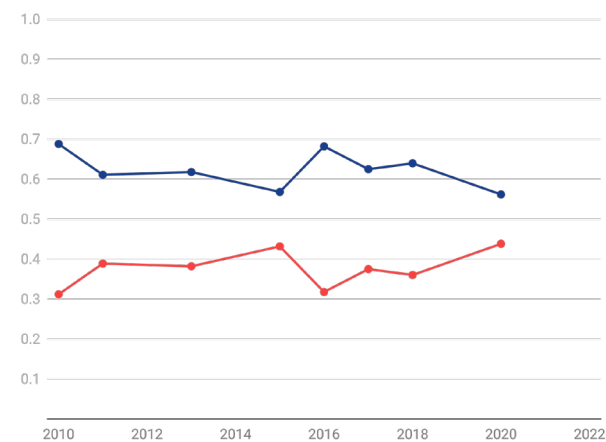
Peru



Uruguay

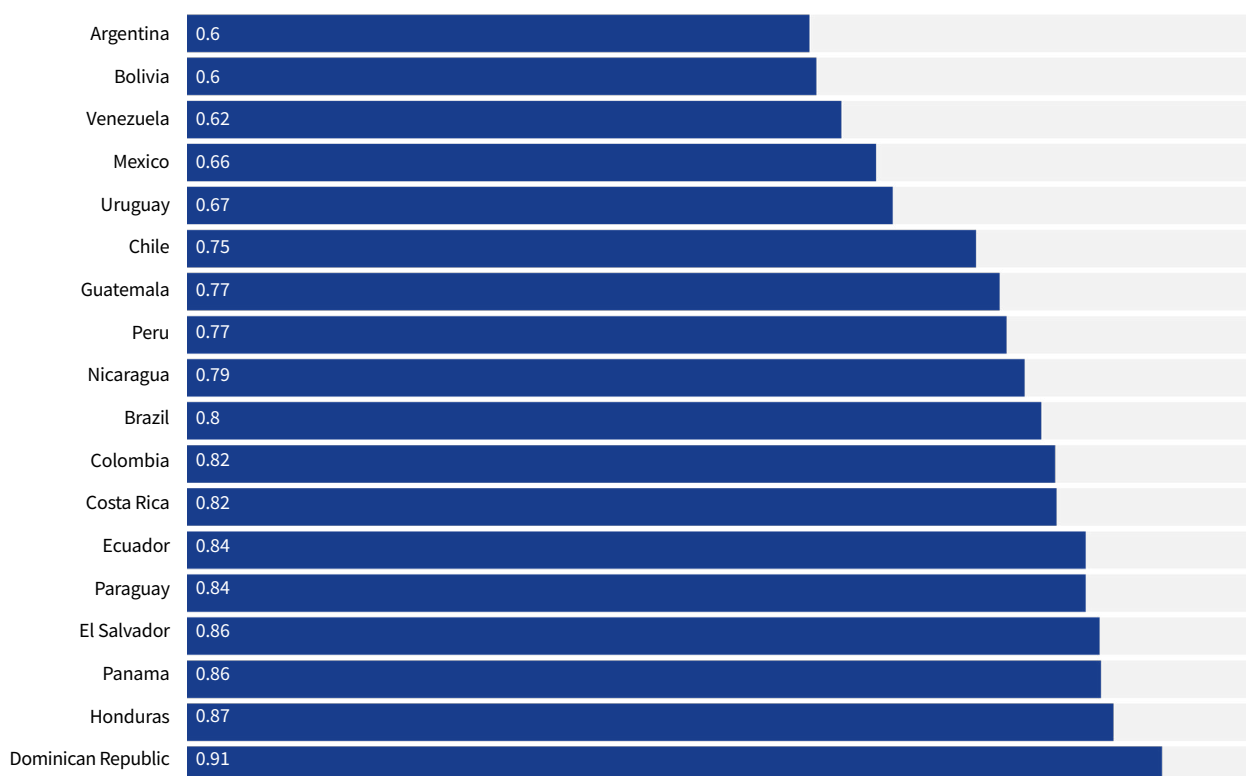


Venezuela



Source: Latinobarómetro.

Figure 2.2 Average favorable opinion on the United States, by country (2010–2020)



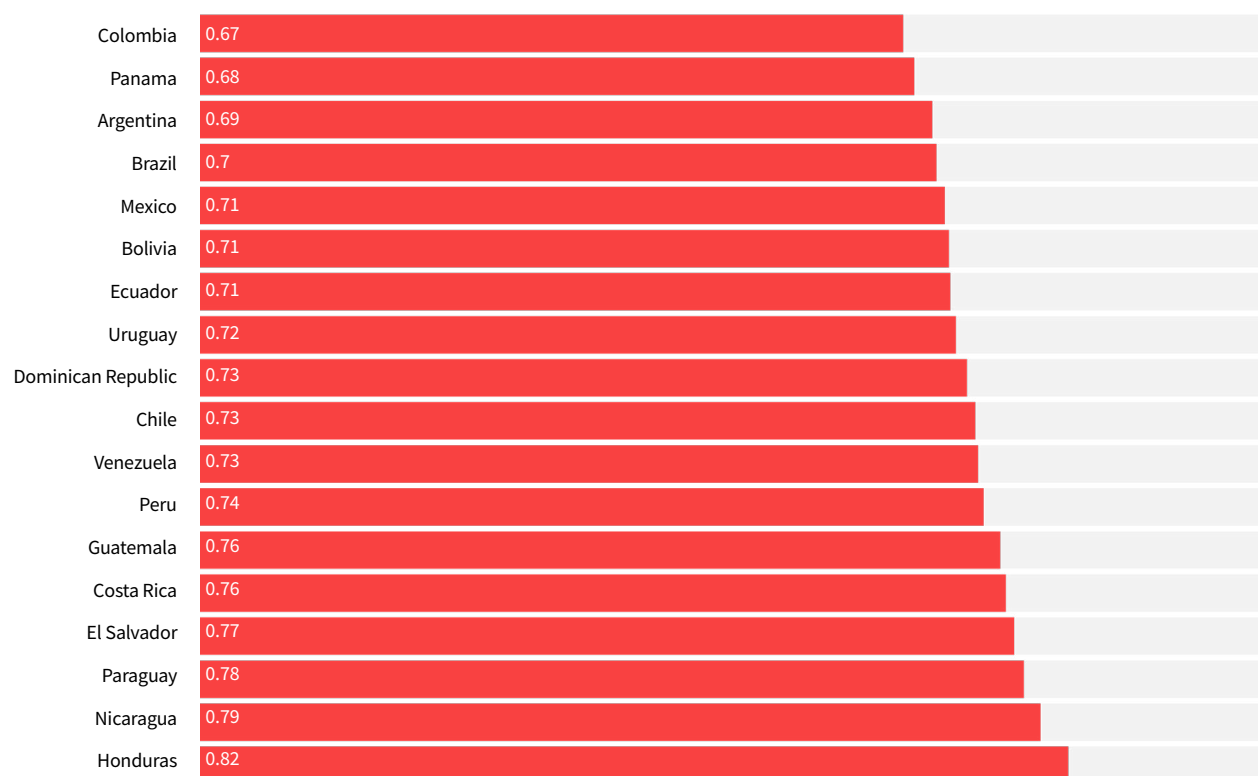
Source: Latinobarómetro.

2. Public opinion on China in LAC is also generally positive

Similarly to the case of the U.S., China's image in Latin American and Caribbean public opinion is mainly favorable, although variations exist between countries and over time. However, establishing whether or not a pattern exists in opinions on other countries would require a larger dataset over a longer period of time. Even so, we can still compare a favorable image with the equivalent view toward China. Figure 2.3 shows that, although public opinion on China is positive in every country interviewed by Latinobarómetro, the highest values are slightly lower than in the case of the United States and the lowest values marginally higher. In the region of the Americas, Colombia has the least favorable view of China, whereas Honduras is most positive about the Asian giant.

In short, this data indicates that, compared to the attitude toward the United States, views on China are more homogenous across Latin American and Caribbean nations, though slightly less favorable. A highlight is the fact that a positive image of China is not necessarily linked to its economic presence relative to other countries. China is viewed most favorably in two Central American countries (Honduras and Nicaragua), whereas public opinion in South American countries, where China is the largest or second-largest trade partner (such as Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Peru and Uruguay), is relatively less positive.

Figure 2.3 Average favorable opinion on China (2010–2020)



Source: Latinobarómetro.

3. The net public opinion on the United States is more variable

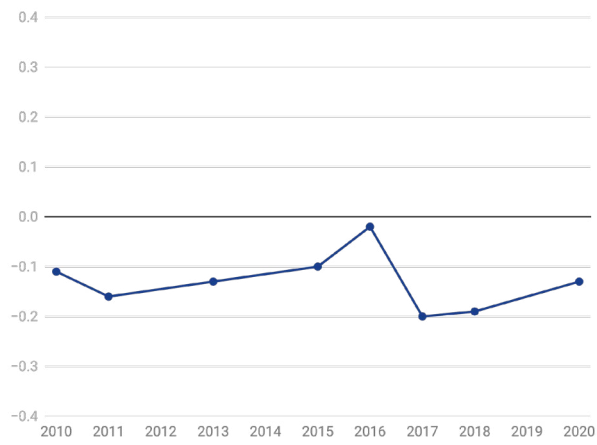
A simple way of assessing favorable public opinion about the United States compared to China is by calculating what we refer to here as the net public attitude toward one country as opposed to the other. The net opinion on the U.S. can be calculated by subtracting the positive view of China from the positive opinion of the United States. For example, if one country has an average positive attitude toward the United States of 9 points and a 7 point average positive attitude toward China, then the net positive view of the United States will be 2 points. If public opinion on China is more positive, then the other country will have a negative score.

By using this method, we can see (Figure 2.4) that some countries such as Argentina, Bolivia, Chile, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Peru, Uruguay, and Venezuela, have held a negative net opinion of the United States on specific years. This calculation shows that public opinion of the United States varies more than opinions on China.

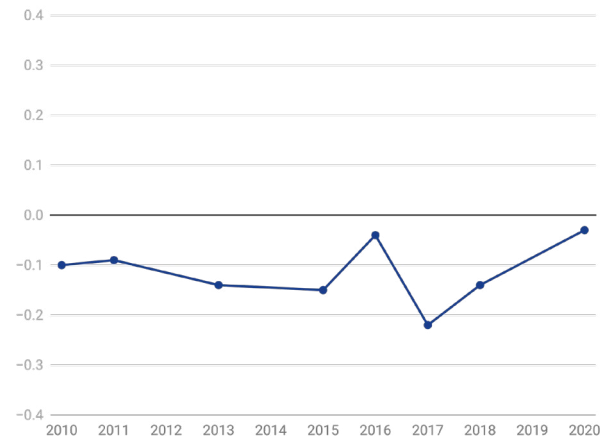
The similarity or contrast between Latin American countries and the United States in terms of public opinion on China is worth analyzing. Although the data does not correspond exactly so as to allow for a rigorous analysis, the Gallup poll in the U.S. offers an interesting point of comparison. The Gallup time series shows that the percentage of favorable opinions on China among the U.S. population fell from 42% in 2010 to 20% in 2020, a clear contrast to the stability of China's positive image in LAC as registered in the Latinobarómetro time series.

Figure 2.4 Net favorable opinion on the United States (2010-2020)

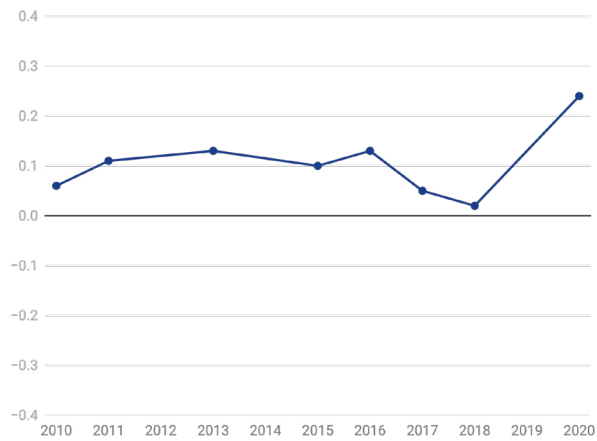
Argentina



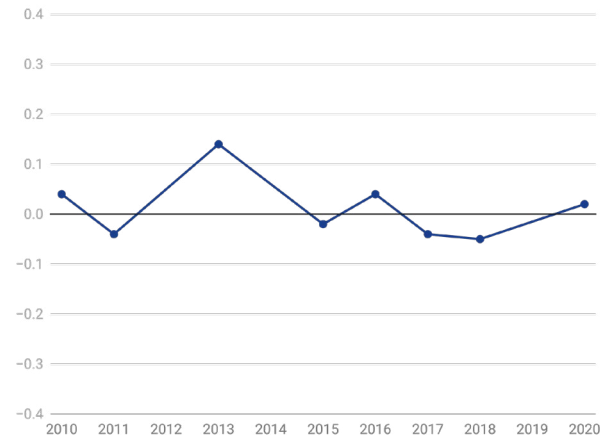
Bolivia



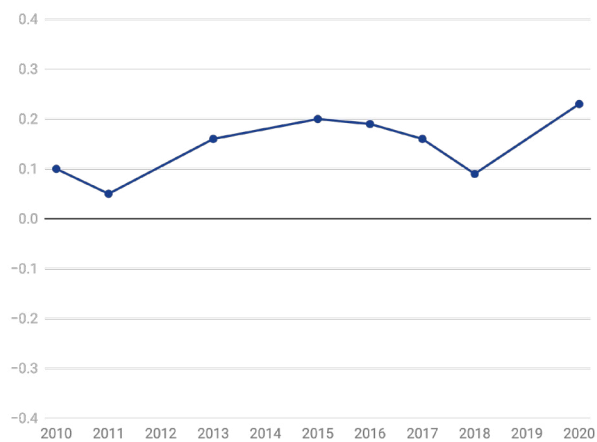
Brazil



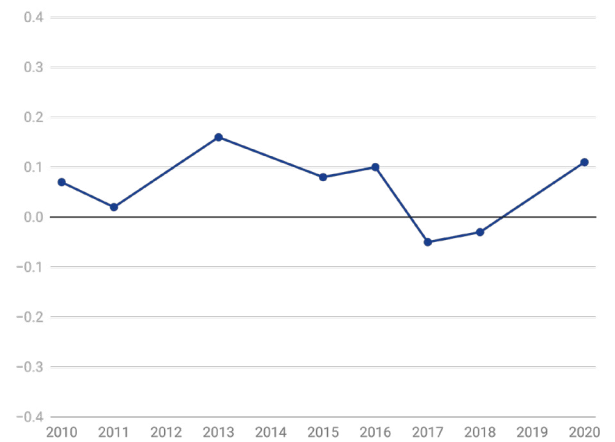
Chile



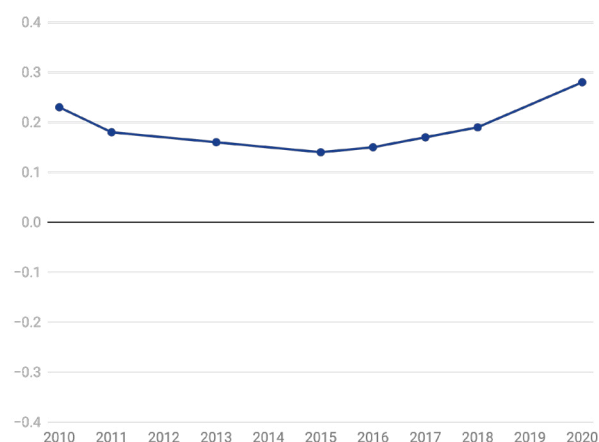
Colombia



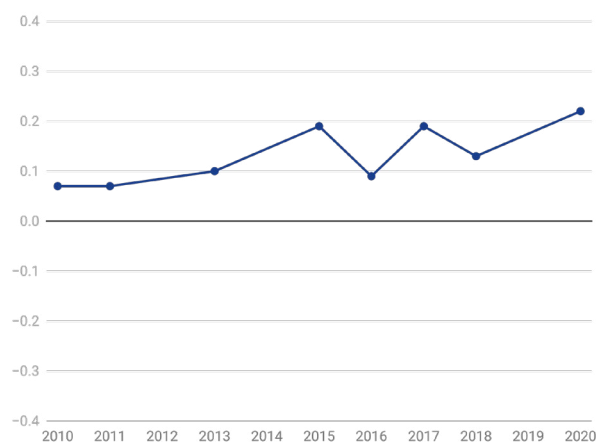
Costa Rica



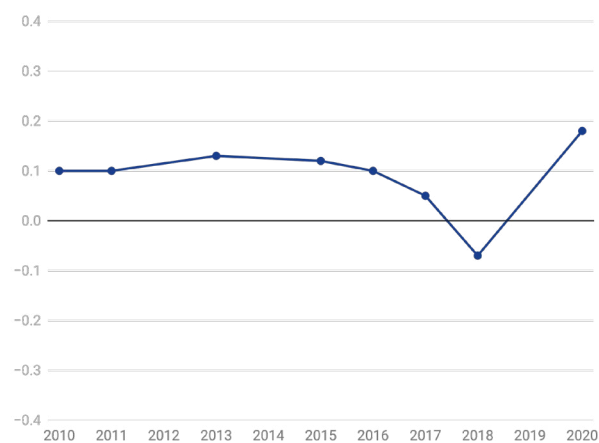
Dominican Republic



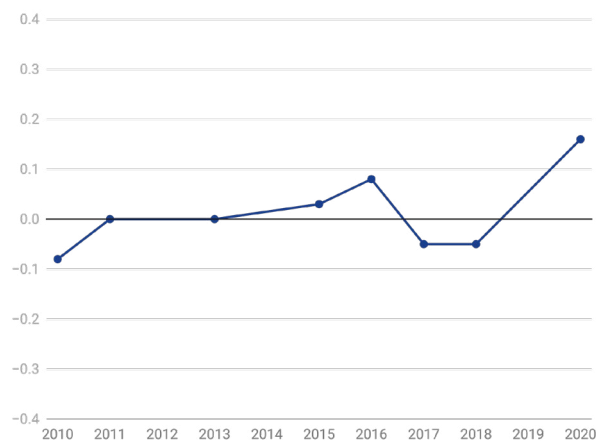
Ecuador



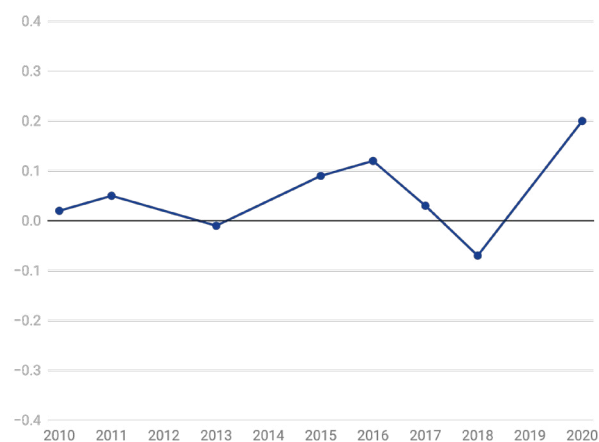
El Salvador



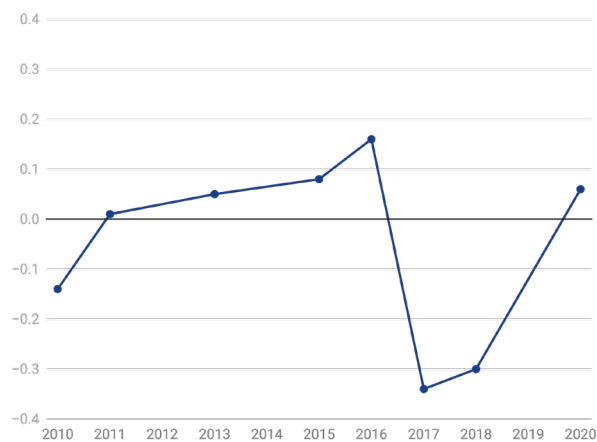
Guatemala



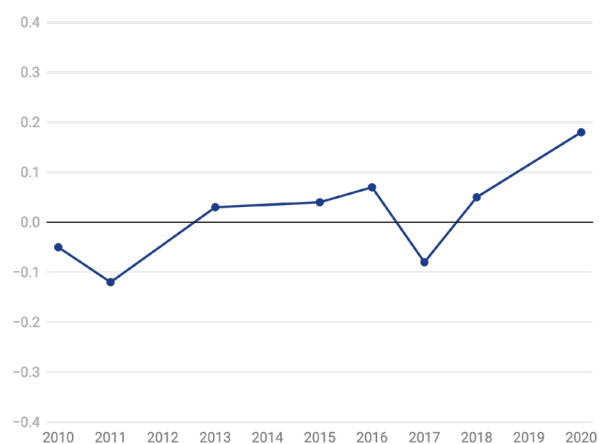
Honduras



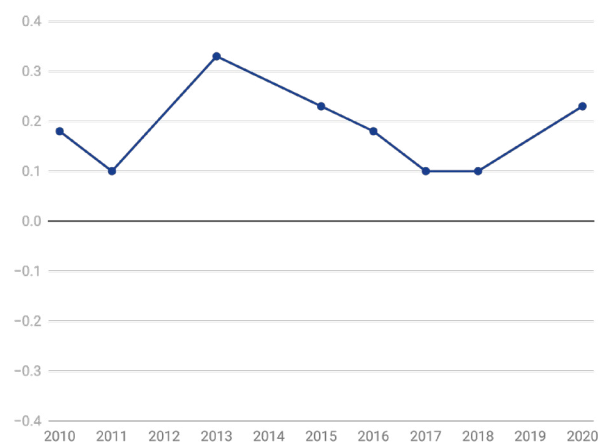
Mexico



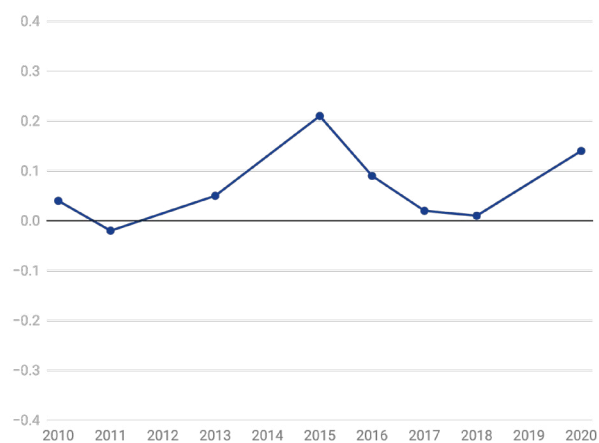
Nicaragua



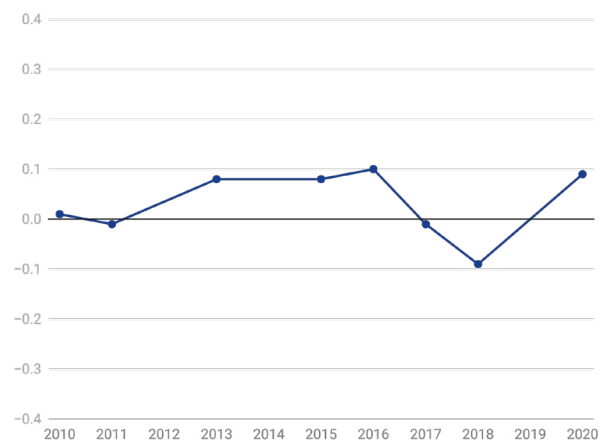
Panama



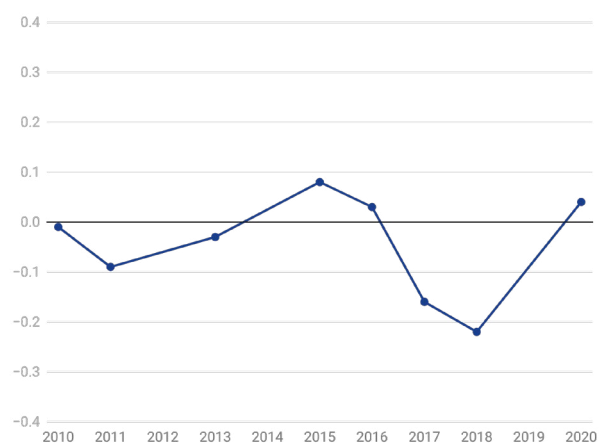
Paraguay



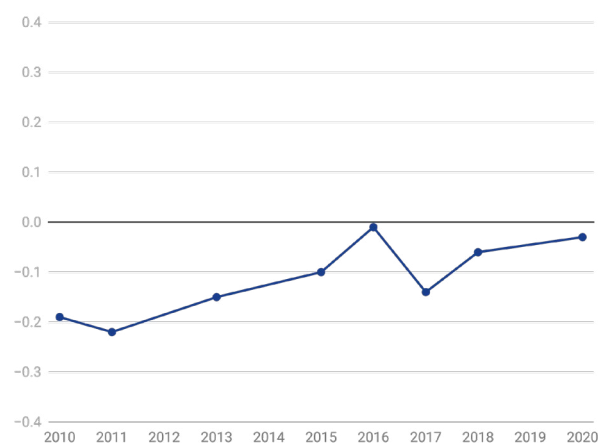
Peru



Uruguay



Venezuela



Source: Latinobarómetro.

For the purposes of this report, we need to consider the possible implications of this contrasting perception of China as a challenge if we hope to constructively channel inter-American dialogue. Does this mean that while the U.S. population is becoming less favorable toward China, Latin American nations are developing closer ties to it? Not necessarily. Such a zero-sum reading is simplistic and mistaken, although it often triggers strong media reactions and is a recurring source of anxiety among attentive audiences and decision-makers in the United States.

As we can see below, our analysis sheds a different light on the data, revealing two highly significant issues: Latin American and Caribbean public opinion appreciates both world powers for different reasons, and also perceives the United States and China separately, without making a connection to their bilateral relation.

China has attracted support from both the left and the right, albeit for different reasons.

4. No correlation exists in the varied opinions on the United States and China

This statement holds true both at a national and an individual level. Figure 2.5 illustrates the lack of a direct relationship between both opinions at the national level⁴ and, as can be observed, each country's specific characteristics make it difficult to predict these orientations. For example, Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Mexico, Dominican Republic, and Uruguay have similar opinions on the United States but different ones on China. Nicaragua is a particular case with strongly favorable views on both countries. Finally, Panama is predominantly pro-United States.

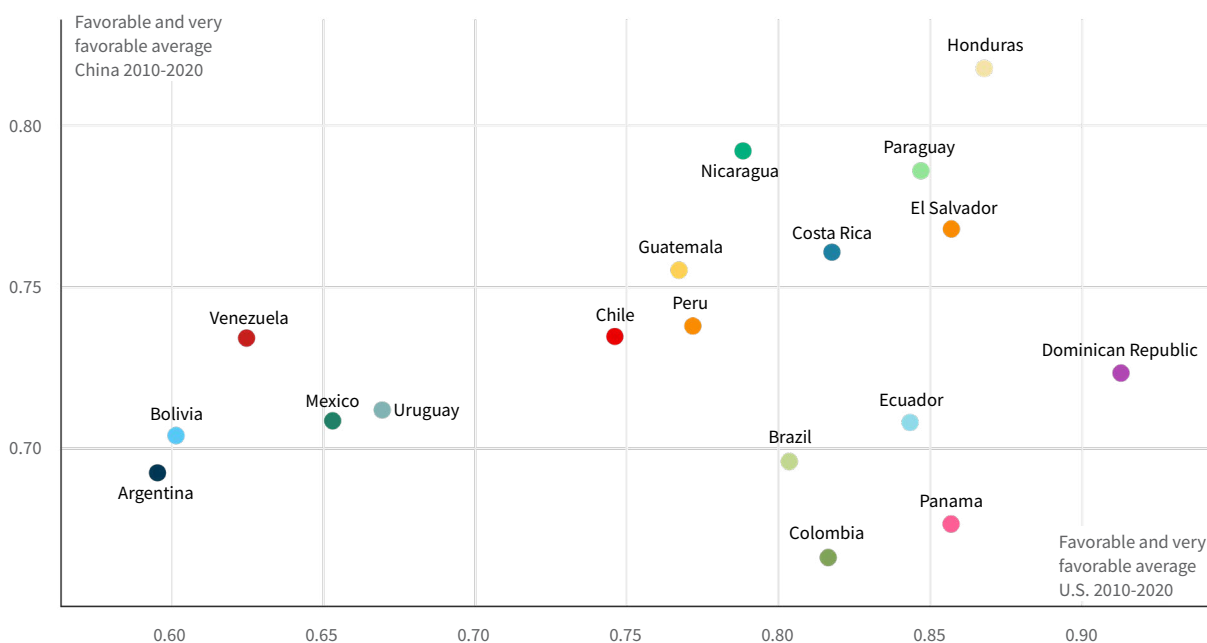
Respondents' individual characteristics, particularly their ideological orientation, do not elucidate the relationship between opinions on both countries. Left-leaning individuals often emphasize economic dependency, previous military interventions, and coercive U.S. diplomacy, whereas those on the right dwell on economic and political freedoms as a development model and appreciate the country's global leadership. Therefore, we might expect individuals' ideology to weight on their assessment of the United States. However, in regard to China, cultural and historical distance impedes knowing beforehand the extent to which ideology will influence opinion.

Figure 2.6 examines the connection between favorable views on the United States and China, and the respondent's ideological orientation, on a scale from 1 to 10, from left to right. As we move toward the right of the ideological spectrum, views on the United States grow more positive, while the favorable attitude toward China remains relatively constant. Morgenstern and Bohigues⁵ also reached this conclusion with the argument that China has attracted support from both the left and the right, albeit for different reasons. Leftists value China for ideological and anti-imperialist reasons, while those on the right view China positively for its role in trade and investment. Ideology holds sway for one group, while the other takes a pragmatic position.

4 Respondent opinion had four possible values: (1) very unfavorable, (2) slightly unfavorable, (3) slightly favorable and (4) very favorable. The chart shows the aggregate opinion by country between 2010 and 2020.

5 Scott Morgenstern and Asbel Bohigues, "Battling for the Hearts and Minds of Latin Americans: Covariance of Attitudes toward the United States and China," *Latin American Research Review*, 2021, 56 (2), pp. 280–299.

Figure 2.5 Opinion on the United States vs. opinion on China



Source: LAPOP.

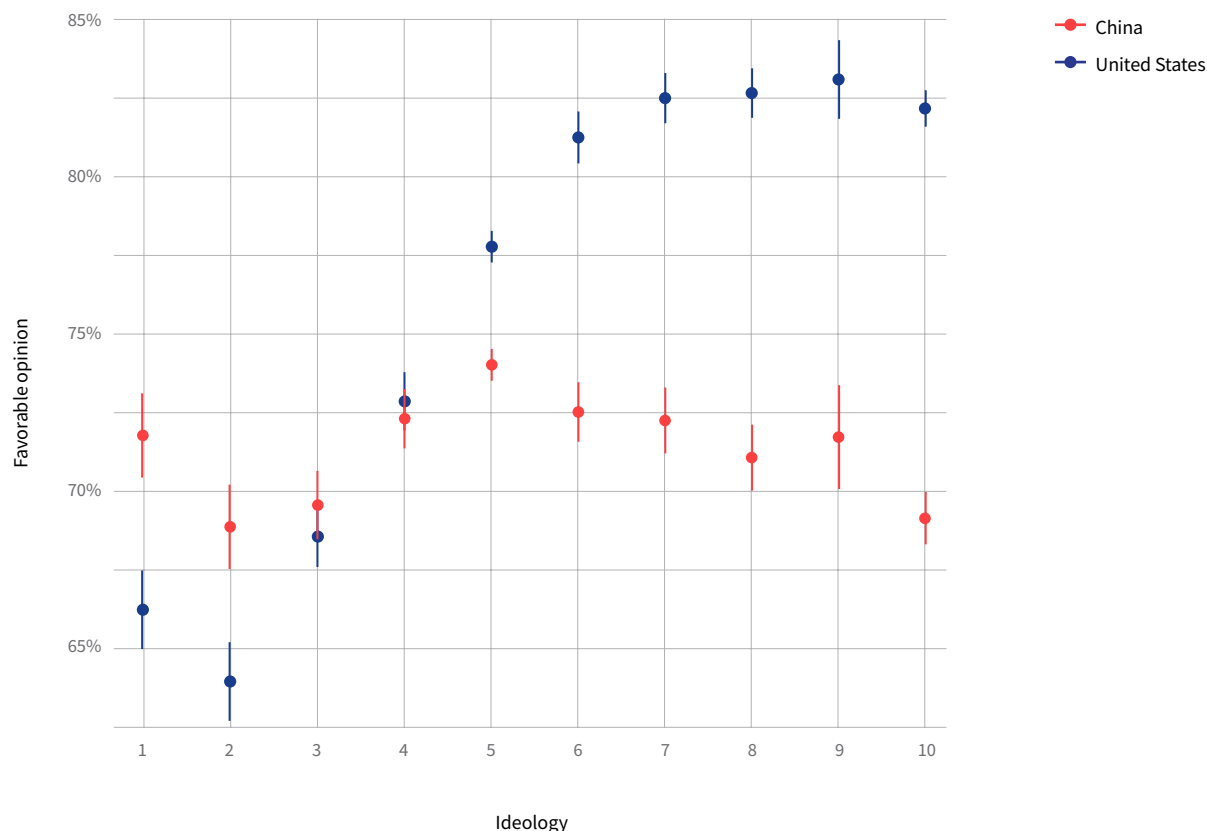
5. Views on democracy do not determine opinions on the United States or China

Unlike ideology, which influences views on the United States but not on China, attitudes toward democracy do not appear relevant in explaining sentiments about one or the other. Figure 2.7 shows that people who prefer democracy over authoritarian regimes have a more positive opinion of China than of the United States, suggesting that the “filter” through which they view China is not connected to its type of government. Furthermore, those without firm preferences for democratic or authoritarian regimes are more favorable toward the United States than toward China. This same stance exists among those who consider that, under certain circumstances, authoritarianism can be preferable to democracy. The United States seems to be most appealing for those without much interest in issues of democratic governance.

A note of caution. The above data is tentative and should therefore be read in light of the results of a recent study by LAPOP⁶ which appraised people’s willingness to trade away elections for material guarantees and access to basic income and services: “In most Latin American and Caribbean countries, more than 50% prefer a system that guarantees material assistance over one that guarantees elections.” The study also found that younger adults were more likely to trade away elections for material guarantees, and that individuals who consider China “very trustworthy” are 10 percentage points more likely to be willing to prioritize material goods over elections, compared to those who consider China “not at all trustworthy.” This finding requires further investigation, since

6 The study is based on a sample of 14,651 participants across the Americas. Katherine Oung, “Who Is Willing to Trade Away Elections for Material Guarantees?”, *Insights Series*, 153, LAPOP, AmericasBarometer and Vanderbilt University, September 13, 2022, <https://www.vanderbilt.edu/lapop/insights/IO953en-1.pdf>.

Figure 2.6 Opinion on the United States and China vs. ideological orientation



Source: LAPOP.

it points to a profound decline in the perception of what kind of benefits democracy can offer to the region and how this weakening might be related to, or overlap with, a stronger Chinese presence in the region.

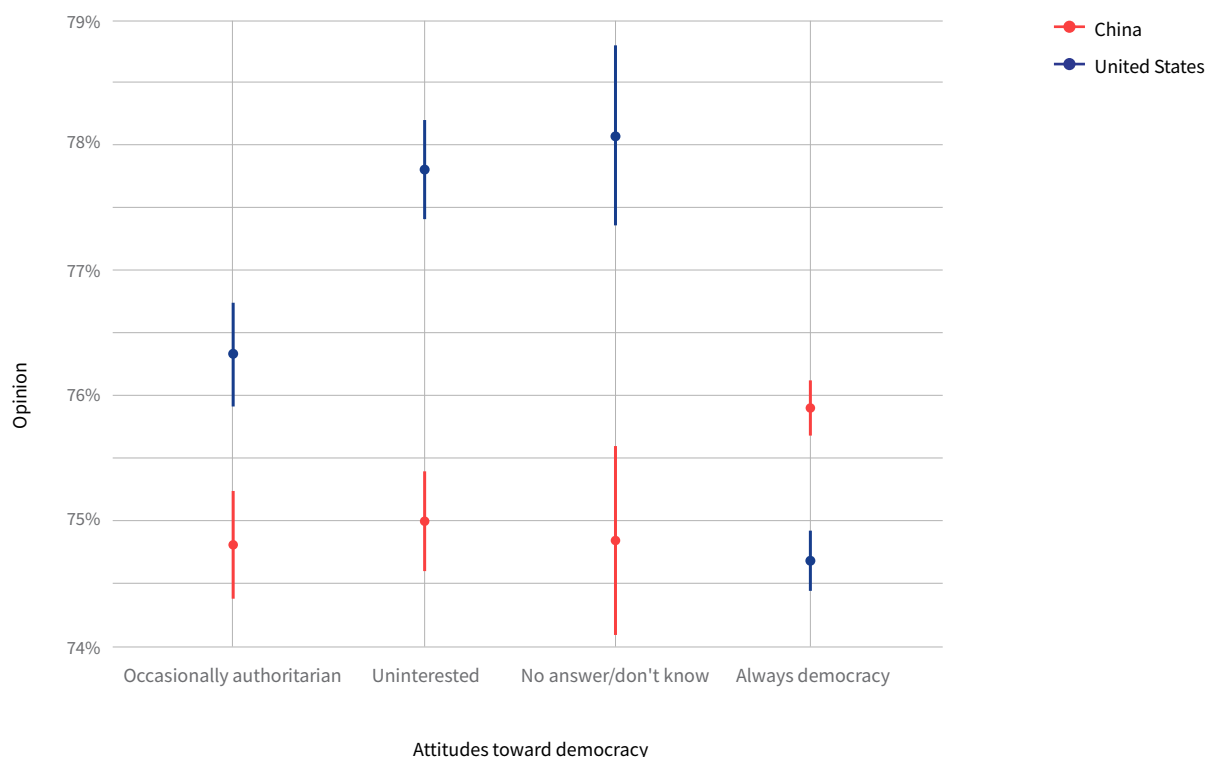
6. The United States still holds appeal for its development model and as a place to live

Research by Morgenstern and Bohigues⁷ reveals a greater acceptance of the U.S. as opposed to the Chinese development model, though with a certain covariance between both responses. For example, Argentina, Chile, Colombia, Panama, and Dominican Republic have a similar percentage of favorable opinions on China's model (nearly 10%) but show a significant variation in their responses to the acceptance of the U.S. model (ranging from 15 to 55%).

Another survey conducted by the Friedrich Ebert Foundation, Nueva Sociedad, and Latinobarómetro shows similar results. On average, Latin Americans prefer the United States as a development model and as a place to

⁷ Morgenstern and Bohigues, "Battling for the Hearts and Minds of Latin Americans."

Figure 2.7 Opinion on the United States and China vs. attitudes toward democracy



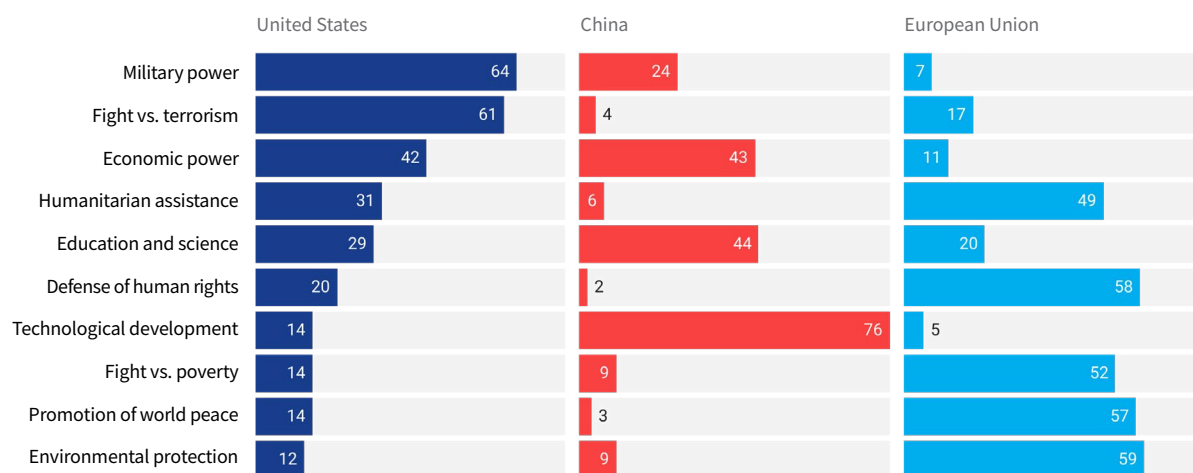
Source: LAPOP.

settle, despite admitting that the United States is not particularly welcoming of migrants.⁸ The same survey asked respondents about their views on China, Germany, Russia, and the United States and found that the United States (47%) was perceived most favorably in the region, followed by Germany (43%), China (19%), and Russia (17%).

One notable finding is that the United States is recognized as an economic and military power, but that the European Union is seen to be ahead of the United States on issues of climate change, human rights, world peace, and the fight against poverty. In this sense, the survey reveals the general perception that the United States has lost its ability to lead on these issues.

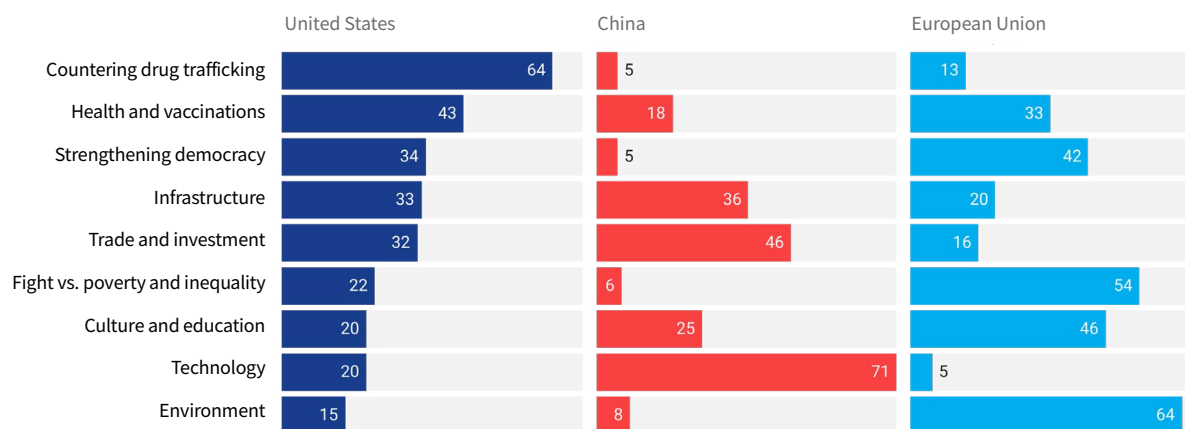
8 The U.S. development model is preferred to Germany, Japan, China, and Russia. See Carlos A. Romero, Juan Gabriel Tokatlian, Carlos Luján, Guadalupe González González, and Mónica Hirst, “¿Qué se piensa en América Latina sobre la Unión Europea?”, *Nueva Sociedad*, Fundación Friedrich Ebert, Nueva Sociedad and Latinobarómetro, March 2022, <https://nuso.org/articulo/como-AL-ve-a-europa/>.

Figure 2.8 Global leadership. Comparison between the United States, China, and the European Union (by issue)



Source: Friedrich Ebert Foundation / Nueva Sociedad / Latinobarómetro

Figure 2.9 Is the United States, China, or the European Union the best partner? by issue



Source: Friedrich Ebert Foundation / Nueva Sociedad / Latinobarómetro

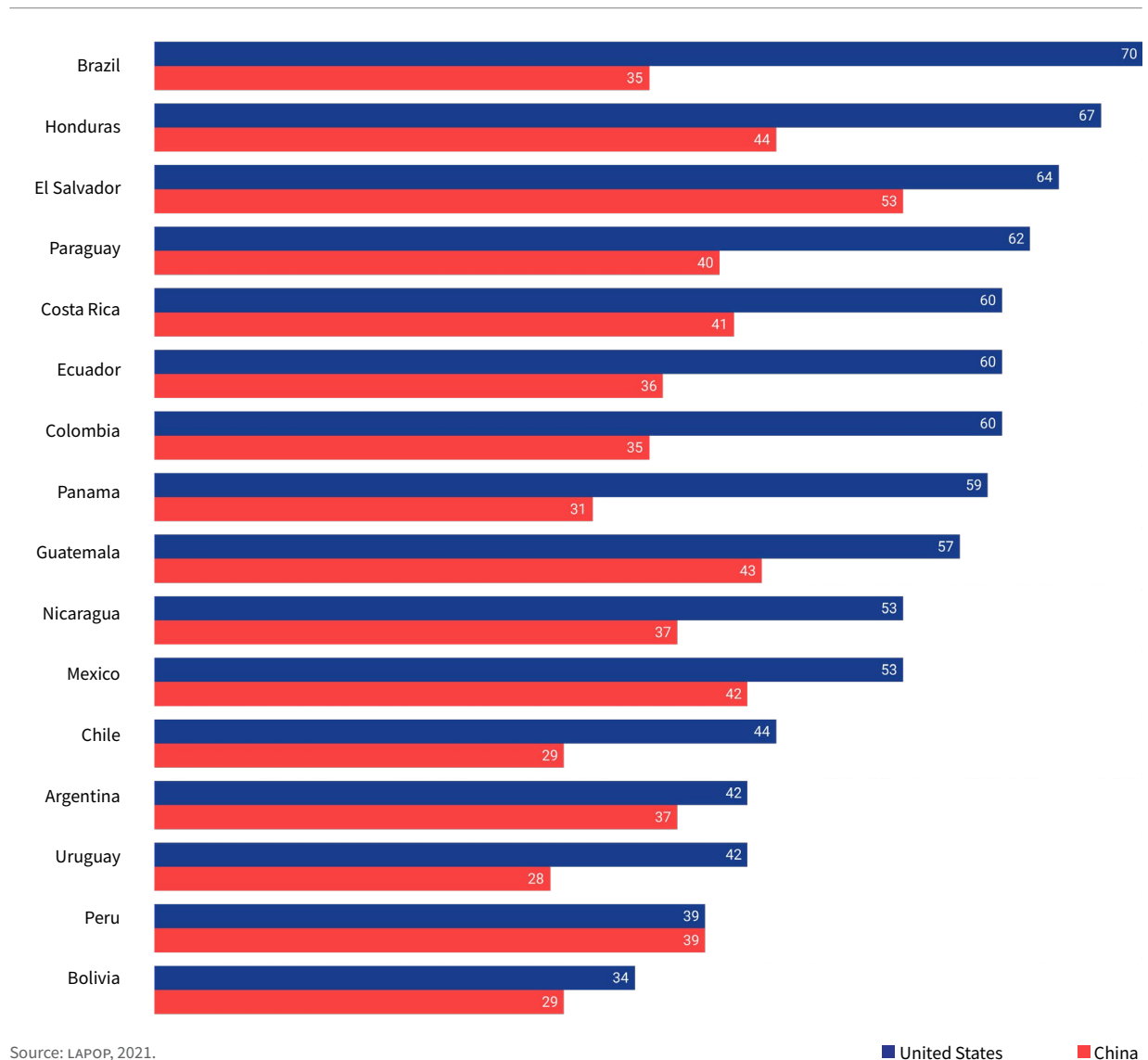
7. Trust in China wanes as United States maintains stronghold in Latin America

Figure 2.10 shows the data gathered by LAPOP in 2021⁹ on people's trust in the United States and China. As can be seen, in each case—except in Peru—trust in the United States is higher than trust in China, especially in Brazil.

The LAPOP time series depicts the changes in trust levels among the populations of Latin America and the Caribbean towards the governments of China and the United States from 2012 to 2021. Despite the increase in

9 Noam Lupu, Mariana Rodríguez, and Elizabeth J. Zechmeister (eds.), *LAPOP's 2021 AmericasBarometer takes the Pulse of Democracy*, Nashville, LAPOP, 2021, https://www.vanderbilt.edu/lapop/ab2021/2021_LAPOP_AmericasBarometer_2021_Pulse_of_Democracy.pdf.

Figure 2.10 Trust in United States vs. China, 2021



Chinese diplomatic activity and trade between China and LAC, trust in China has steadily declined since 2016. Out of the eleven countries surveyed about trust in China, seven (Brazil, Colombia, Costa Rica, Honduras, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, and Uruguay) reported a decrease, while four (El Salvador, Guatemala, Mexico, and Peru) shown an increase. Figure 2.11 illustrates that trust in China appears to have declined while trust in the United States has risen, following a drop between 2016 and 2018, which coincided with Donald Trump’s administration.

8. The Trump administration damaged the image of the United States in LAC

Donald Trump’s period in the White House increasingly polarized public opinion in Latin America in relation to the United States. Figure 2.11 shows a reduction in “somewhat favorable” and “somewhat unfavorable,” indicating more polarization compared to previous years. This pattern was repeated in various countries in the region

Figure 2.11 Evolution of trust in the United States and China (2012–2022)

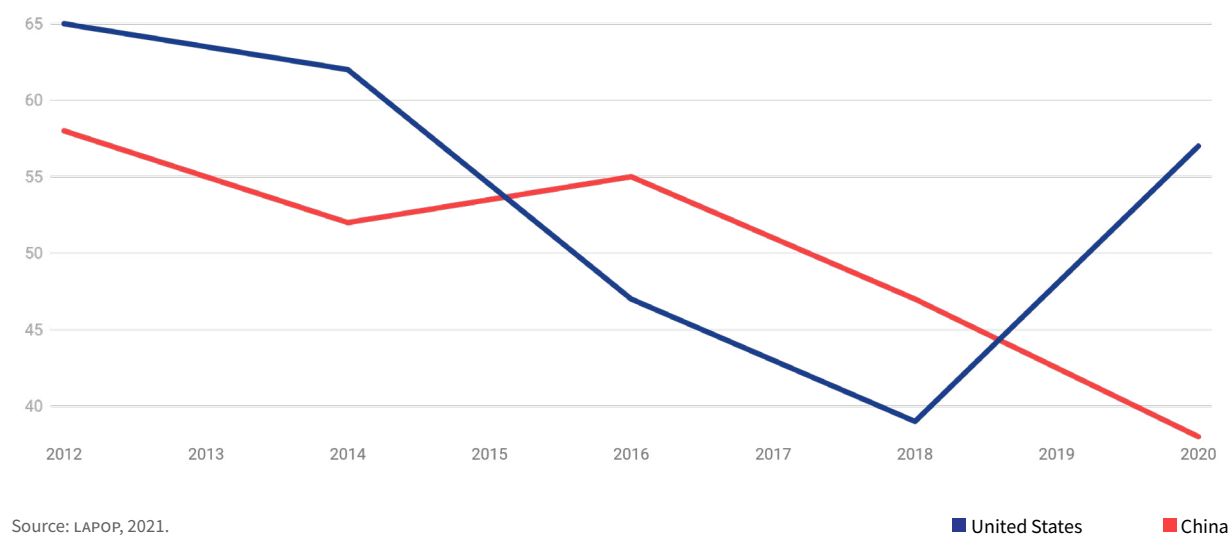
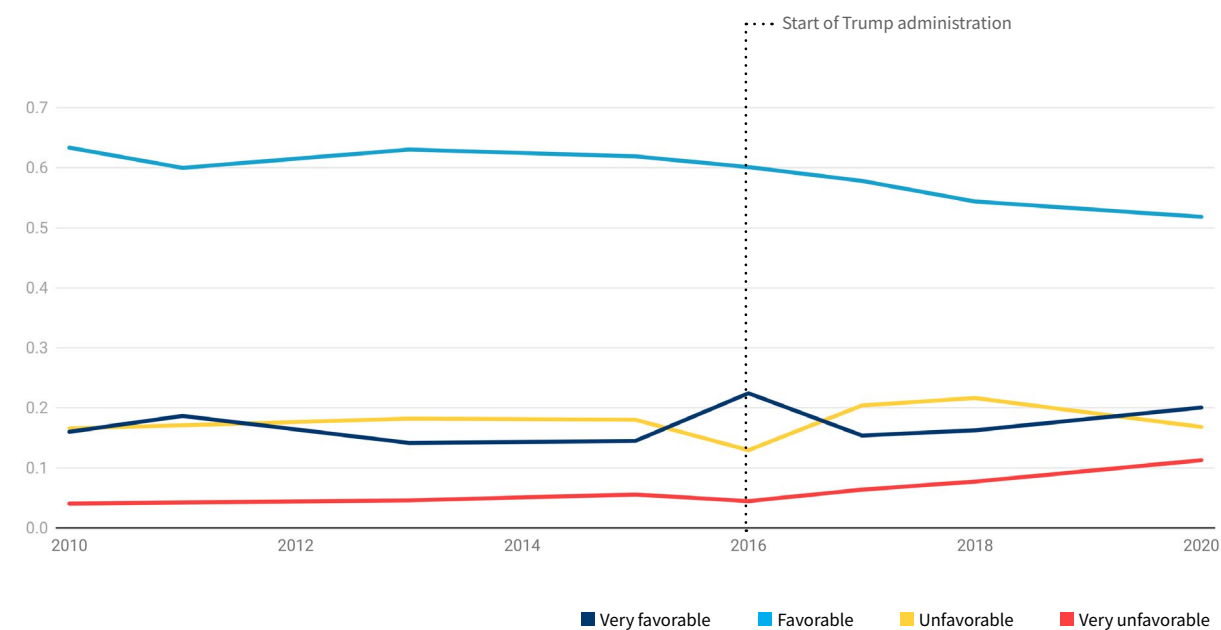


Figure 2.12 Attitudes toward the United States over time



where Trumpism triggered as many detractors as supporters. AmericasBarometer data used by Carreras, Visconti, and Acácio,¹⁰ in five Latin American countries, shows a significant drop in trust in Washington. This phenomenon was not exclusive to this region; the Pew Research Centre reported a widespread trend in the deterioration of the U.S. image during the Trump years.¹¹ However, this trend began to reverse following Biden's electoral victory in 2020, and corresponded with the congratulatory messages from various Latin American leaders who cheered Washington's return to multilateralism, its democratic triumph, and the prospect of the Biden administration creating better links to the region.¹²

10 Miguel Carreras, Giancarlo Visconti, and Igor Acácio, "The Trump Election and Attitudes toward the United States in Latin America Get access Arrow," *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 85 (4), Winter 2021, pp. 1092–1102.

11 Richard Wike, Janell Fetterolf, and Mara Mordecai, "U.S. Image Plummets Internationally as Most Say Country Has Handled Coronavirus Badly," Pew Research Center, September 15, 2020, <https://www.pewresearch.org/global/2020/09/15/us-image-plummets-internationally-as-most-say-country-has-handled-coronavirus-badly/>.

12 Benjamin Gedan includes these statements in "In Latin America, U.S. Popularity Is Already Bouncing Back," *Foreign Policy*, February 19, 2021, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2021/02/19/latin-america-united-states-diplomacy-regional-cooperation/>.

Reflections on the common ground to channel inter-American dialogue

This chapter presents findings that indicate a high and relatively stable level of common social attitudes among Latin American and Caribbean nations and the United States, bringing them closer together despite China's growing importance in the region over recent decades. Geographical proximity, shared histories, and common issues are closely linked to the absence of significant animosity within the continent, despite certain asymmetries. Attitudes towards the United States are influenced by increased information, understanding, and personal connections between Latin Americans and the United States. However, data also reveals that unilateral policies, arrogance, impositions, and diplomatic coercion by the region's most powerful country can have an impact on its relations with other nations.

Understanding the views of Latin American and Caribbean societies on the United States and China is hugely important to steer the dialogue between our societies in the current inter-American spaces, and to accurately identify the factors and narratives that could threaten it. This exercise not only offers us a panorama of social attitudes, but also a guide to move forward with a constructive dialogue that might help identify collective solutions to the region's current needs.

China reflects significant consensus and disagreement areas in relation to this dialogue: despite its centrality to global geopolitics, nations across the continent lack a standardized view on this emerging superpower. The U.S. population and government see China as a growing threat to its global hegemonic interests. The situation in LAC is different. China has become a key economic partner for most countries in the region, which do not see sufficient benefits or reasons to completely align with one or the other, but instead seek to make the most of what each one offers. Despite their closer trade relationships with China, Latin American and Caribbean nations have not drastically altered their views on the country, which remain less favorable compared to their opinions on the United States. Nor do they seem to be seeking to emulate the Chinese model. In other words, there is no zero-sum relationship in opinions on the United States and on China; while opinions towards the United States are mainly structured around ideology, there is no single key dimension to explain attitudes towards China.

What are the foundations of this common ground? A very particular and intense relationship exists between LAC and the United States in terms of trade, tourism, migration, and remittances that cannot be overlooked when studying perceptions and feelings toward the United States. This dynamic creates a transnational network of Latinos with cultural, social, and economic links with a potential impact on public opinion. In 2021, for example, Latin Americans living in the U.S. (today roughly 62 million)¹³ sent almost \$13.5 billion in remittances

There is no zero-sum relationship in opinions on the United States and on China.

13 Nicholas Jones et al., "Census Illuminates Racial and Ethnic Composition of the Country," August 12, 2021, United States Census Bureau, <https://www.census.gov/library/stories/2021/08/improved-race-ethnicity-measures-reveal-united-states-population-much-more-multiracial.html#:~:text=The%20Hispanic%20or%20Latino%20population,origin%20grew%204.3%25%20since%202010>.

to their countries of origin¹⁴ In Central American countries, as in the case of El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, and Nicaragua, remittances account on average for almost 20% of gross domestic product (GDP).

Latin Americans continue to choose the United States as their preferred country of residence, even above European nations. They also regard the US. as a preferred model for development, albeit with European alternatives closely behind. Nevertheless, regarding leadership, they recognize the European Union as a more engaged actor in fighting climate change and poverty, as well as in promoting peace and human rights.

In short, public opinion in LAC toward the United States appears less influenced by geopolitics and more by respondents' personal predispositions, such as ideology, information, and social attitudes. This does not prevent respondents from being sensitive to events (Trump's policies, for example) or processes (loss of leadership), but even this awareness is mitigated by Latin Americans' broadly positive attitudes toward the United States.

If these observations are correct, then the United States and LAC still have stable and positive foundations upon which to build transnational links, make progress on public diplomacy programs, and develop cooperation programs in different areas such as education, science, and technology. In this sense, there are four main implications for U.S. foreign policy in the Americas.

The **first** relates to possible U.S. responses to Latin American and Caribbean views on China. The most promising way forward is to engage in economic diplomacy with a focus on the environment, energy, and technology transfer. Latin America and the Caribbean need vast resources for an ongoing program of climate change adaptation and mitigation, an area in which the United States is potentially a key partner and seeking leadership. The U.S. diversification strategy offers opportunities for nations in the region, potentially leading to associations to lead the necessary energy transition; these same LAC countries could also become reliable providers of critical minerals and other natural resources needed for this transition.

The **second** relates to the need to prioritize social issues in the Americas and integrate them into its agenda. This requires redefining narratives and prioritizing crucial issues such as promoting democracy, combating corruption, strengthening the rule of law, addressing migration, and enhancing security. In a region like LAC, where democracy's legitimacy has been undermined, the United States must articulate a narrative that firmly connects the pathway to development and social inclusion with democratic development and the promotion and defense of human rights. Prioritizing social issues can also help manage migration by avoiding strategies that rely on tighter controls and increased securitization.

The **third** is linked to the United States' potential leadership in the Latin American gaze. Despite the United States being perceived as a model of development and an economic and military powerhouse in the region, Washington still struggles to be at the forefront of other areas such as development, social inclusion, and environmental justice. Unlike other strategic regions for the United States, the main issues facing LAC are not geopolitical

The United States and LAC still have stable and positive foundations upon which to build transnational links, make progress on public diplomacy programs, and develop cooperation programs.

14 Manuel Orozco and Matthew Martin, "Family Remittances in 2021. Is Double-Digit Growth the New Normal?", *The Dialogue*, March 2022, <https://www.thedialogue.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/Family-Remittances-in-2021-1.pdf>.

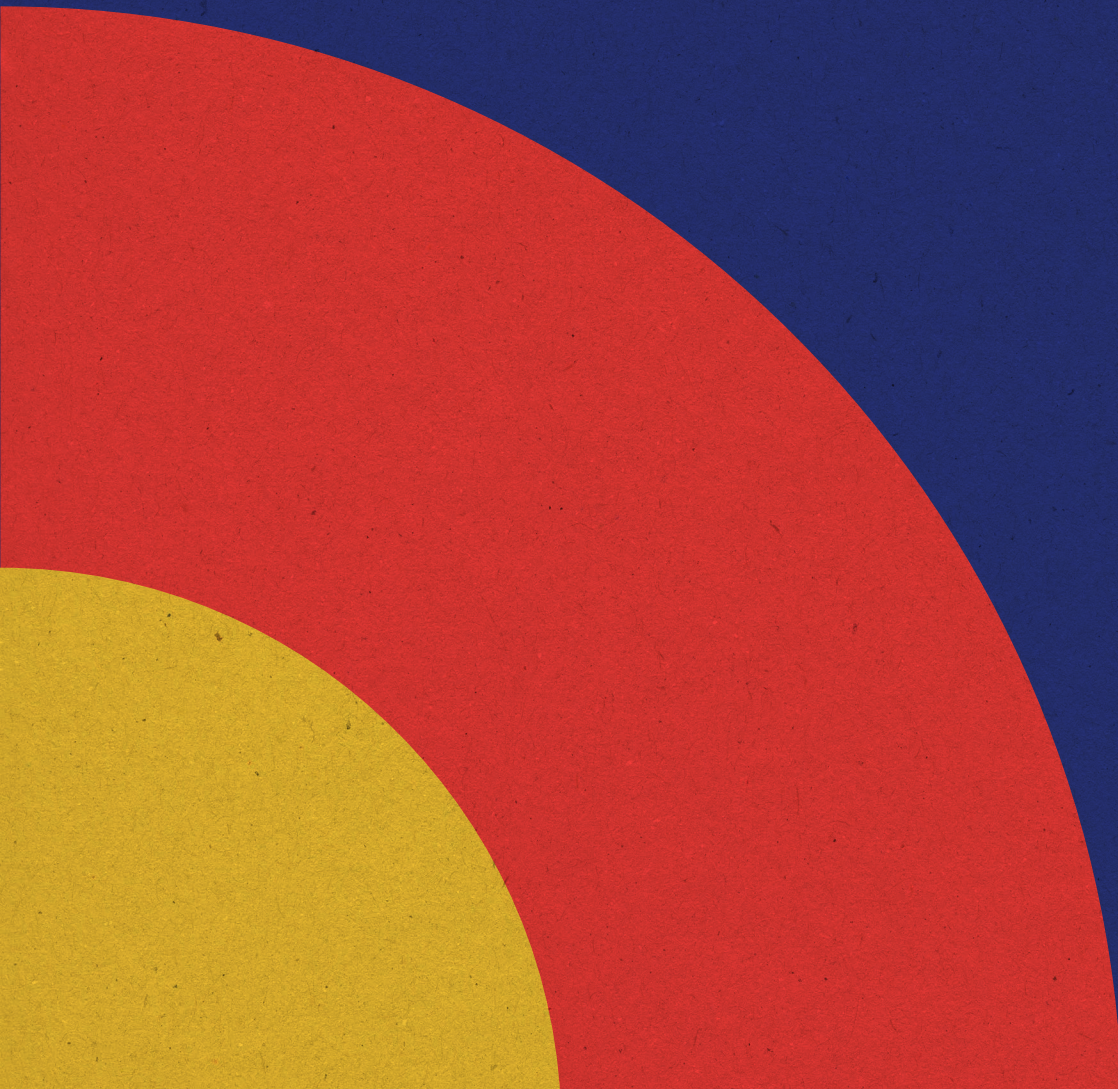
conflicts, nuclear proliferation, or fundamentalist radicalism. Instead, they stem from a lack of sustained economic growth, slow progress on social issues including environmental welfare, chronic inequalities, and significant development asymmetries between countries. Therefore, the best way for the United States to strengthen its positive image is by positioning itself as a crucial regional partner in the address of these pressing concerns.

The **fourth** implication acknowledges the link between Latin American opinions on the US and China and the work of economic, social, and political actors in those countries. Paradiplomacy is on the rise in the Latin America-Beijing-Washington triangle, understood as transnational links and practices between subnational state and nonstate actors. The United States has traditionally accompanied its official diplomacy with active paradiplomacy. On the other hand, China, which originally focused its relationship with Latin America on a State-to-State level, has increasingly deployed a more pragmatic diplomacy based on grassroots initiatives. Hence the strategic competition between the United States and China is reflected in the domestic sphere of Latin American and Caribbean countries in line with the social, political, civil, cultural, and regional connections developed by Washington and Beijing.

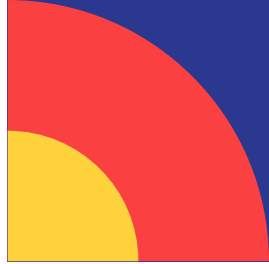
As the Sino-U.S. rivalry escalates, strengthening inter-American dialogue requires the United States to avoid repeating the Cold War narrative which would force the countries in the Americas to choose between one bloc or the other. Washington must understand that countries in the region will continue to explore economic, political, diplomatic, and technological diversification, both to avoid irrelevance and to protect their own national interests. Two hundred years after the Monroe Doctrine's anniversary, the time has come for the Americas to state in unison that this narrative no longer holds water for inter-American relations.

PART TWO

Three Priorities for the Strategic Agenda







Inequalities: searching for solutions to the post pandemic social regression

Stasis is not stability

Inequalities constitute an endemic problem in the Americas. Apart from a handful of exceptions in most countries on the continent, including the United States, economic and social inequalities—racial, gender, access to public assets, and so on—now present one of the most formidable obstacles to creating democratic, prosperous, and egalitarian societies. If we do not begin to act now, the gaps will only widen.

The progress made by Latin America and the Caribbean in tackling inequalities through specially designed public policies has been halted by adverse economic headwinds since 2015. The COVID-19 pandemic that hit the continent in 2020 undermined much of the progress and reversed most countries' gains against inequality, causing some indicators to revert to levels recorded decades ago.

LAC is often talked about as one of the world's most unequal regions. The data is undisputable. The World Inequality Report 2022 shows that the richest 10% of the population owns 75% of the region's entire wealth, whereas the poorest 50% barely owns 2%. The same source reveals that this is linked to the fact that the richest 10% of Latin Americans account for 55% of the national income, compared to 36% in Europe, and slightly above the global average of 52%. Similarly, the share of the wealth captured by Latin American multimillionaires increased by 14% between 2019 and 2021.¹

In some cases dating back to colonial times, in many countries this historical legacy is combined with governments' lack of measures to revert this situation. In other words, inequalities in wealth, income, and job opportunities stem from structural inequalities worsened by public policy decisions that weaken state welfare institutions, many that are still in their infancy. To echo Piketty,² inequality is arguably not a natural state of affairs but the result of political choices.

This situation has triggered increasing inequalities in education systems and in access to health systems. Broad sectors of society lack basic services for integral development and growth, situations that often perpetuate and accumulate in people's adult lives. Most societies continue to suffer from gender inequalities, unequal treatment of indigenous and Afro-descendant communities, and unequal opportunities for political participation. Together this combines to create obstacles for social mobility. The United States is not immune to this reality: despite being less extreme than in other countries on the continent, income inequality has grown steadily since

1 L. Chancel, T. Piketty, E. Saez, G. Zucman, et al., *World Inequality Report 2022*, World Inequality Lab, 2022, https://wir2022.wid.world/www-site/uploads/2022/03/0098-21_WIL_RIM_RAPPORT_A4.pdf.

2 T. Piketty, *Capital e ideología*, Mexico City, Grano de Sal, 2020.

Figure 3.1 Income inequality by region, 2021

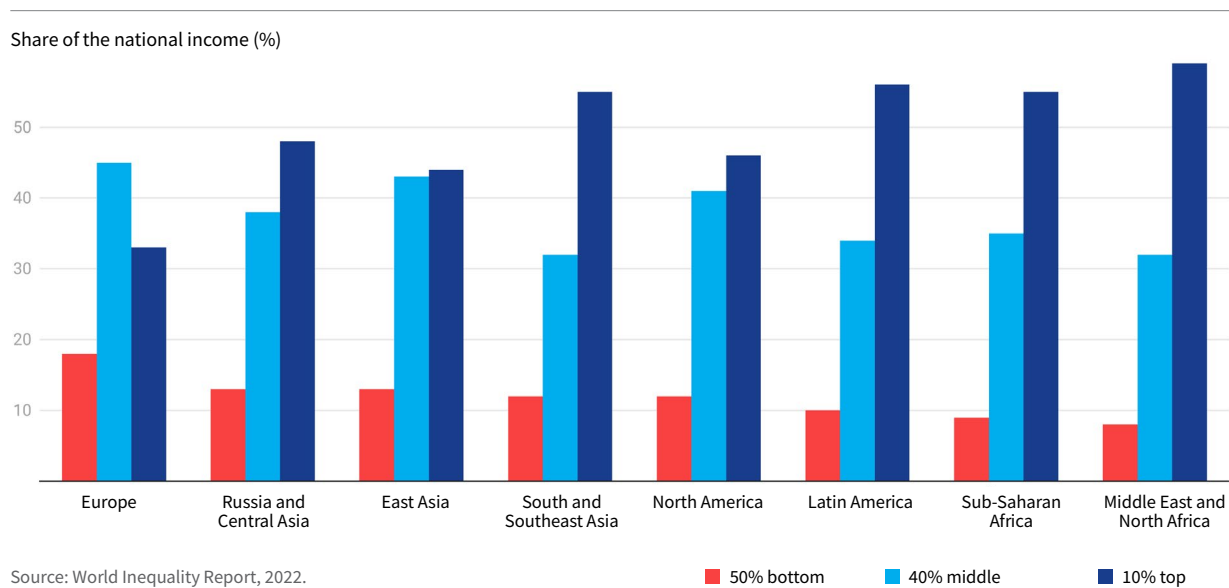


Figure 3.2 Concentration of wealth in the world by region

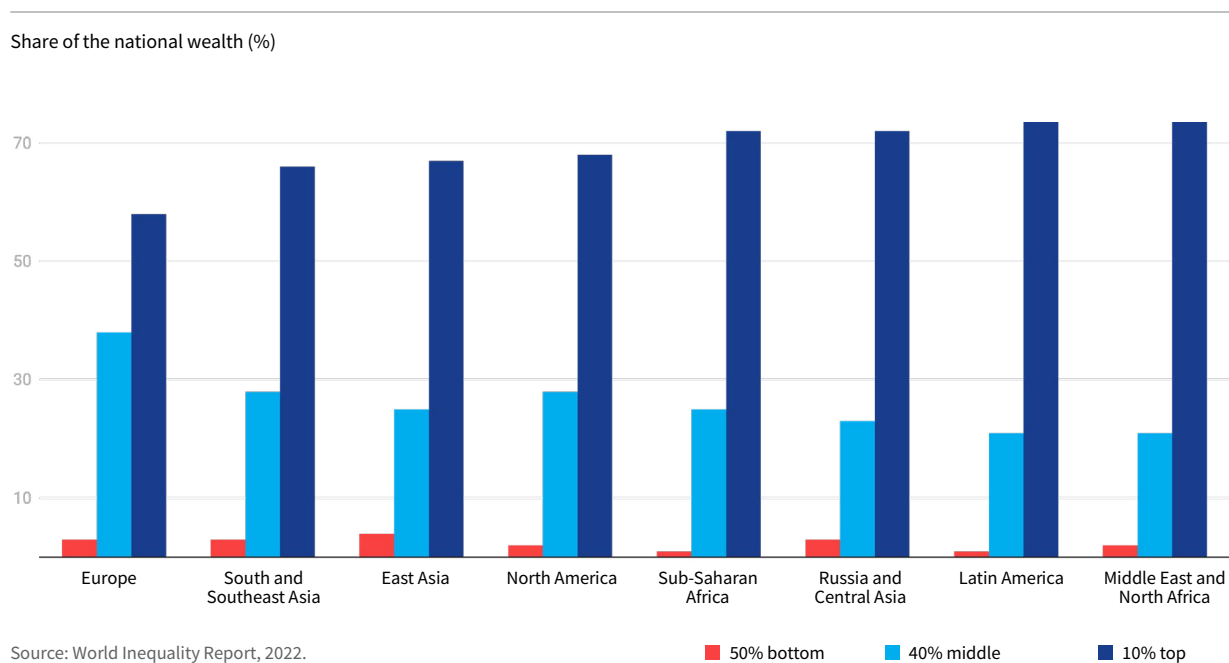
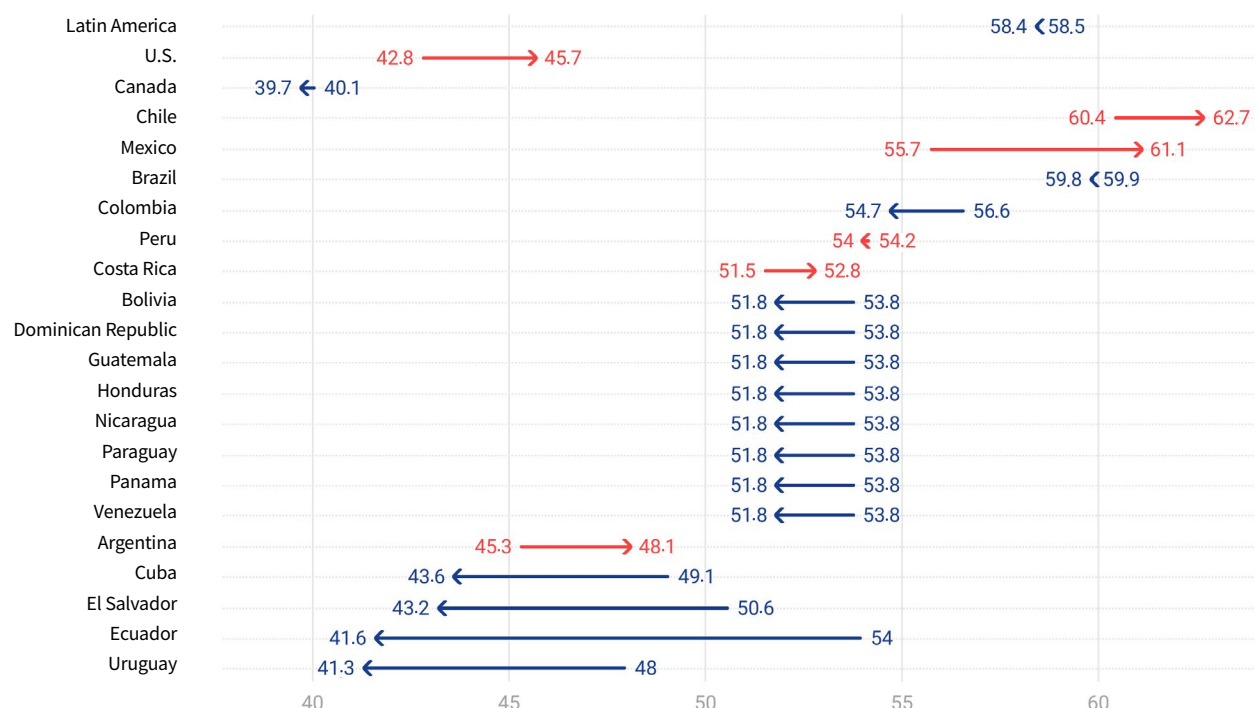


Figure 3.3 Income inequality between 2000 and 2020

(Share in national income of the richest 10%, pre-tax)



Source: compiled by author using World Inequality Lab database.

the 1980s. A Pew Research study shows that before the pandemic, the share of income in middle-income sectors fell from 62 to 43% from 1970 to 2018, whereas in high-income sectors this share increased from 29 to 48% in the same period, with the wealthiest 5% of the population accounting for the greatest increase. The gap is even greater when wealth is considered. The United States also has the highest level of inequality of all the G7 economies.³

In the case of Latin America and the Caribbean, the first decades of the 21st century brought a sense of optimism that the historic legacy of inequality could be reverted.⁴ The combination of steady economic growth, fundamentally a consequence of greater demand for raw materials that stimulated job markets, and governments' more aggressive redistributive policies, managed to close the income gap, particularly in countries in the south of the continent (see Figure 3.3).⁵ In Brazil, for example, attention was often drawn to figures showing that millions of people had escaped poverty and were swelling the middle-class population.

3 J. Horowitz, R. Igielnik, and R. Kochhar, "Most Americans Say There Is Too Much Economic Inequality in the U.S., but Fewer Than Half Call It a Top Priority," Pew Research Center, 2020, <https://www.pewresearch.org/social-trends/2020/01/09/most-americans-say-there-is-too-much-economic-inequality-in-the-u-s-but-fewer-than-half-call-it-a-top-priority/>

4 F. Ferreira, J. Messina, J. Rigolini, L. López Calva, M. Lugo, and R. Vakis, *Economic Mobility and the Rise of the Latin American Middle Class*, Washington, World Bank, <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/server/api/core/bitstreams/45f7c3c0-7fcf-5193-befd-26244012afa3/content>.

5 C. Garay, *Social Policy Expansion in Latin America*, Cambridge, University Press, 2014.

Most social indicators also showed substantial improvements which, to a segment of the political class and to public opinion itself, appear irreversible and indicative of a new phase in the region.

However, although this combination showed virtuous temporary effects, over time it became clear that this supposed social reconfiguration was built on weak foundations. The slowdown in global trade since the mid-2010s not only had a negative impact on the growth of economies in the region, with inevitable job losses, decreasing salaries, and precarious work, but it also had an impact on government budgets and placed a cap on the continuation of expanding social spending.

Prevailing social policies of previous years were mainly based on several (conditional and unconditioned) cash transfer programs that despite generating positive short- and medium-term benefits by increasing families' income, led to the abandonment or de-prioritization of efforts to produce public infrastructure for social protection and/or to promote rights-based universal access systems. At the same time, the fact that governments avoided pushing through far-reaching and comprehensive fiscal reforms to increase the tax revenue from the wealthiest and give greater sustainability to public revenue meant that a window of opportunity created by the boom years was lost.

The reversals in social progress became evident around 2015 and significantly accelerated as a result of the pandemic that shook the world in late 2019. A two-way connection existed between the health emergency and inequalities: on the one hand, economic, labor, and even health effects had a stronger and more negative impact on the most vulnerable sectors; on the other, the emergency deepened inequalities and reverted most of the progress achieved in previous years. At the same time, it became clear that most advances had not translated into safety nets that could be activated in a situation such as a global pandemic.

In some countries, health systems' historic deficits became clear given the inability to provide healthcare to everyone affected by the virus; and hospitals were quickly overwhelmed—even in the United States, which at some point became the center of the global health crisis. The COVID-19 pandemic had caused, by May 2022, 2.7 million deaths in the region of the Americas which, with 13.1% of the world's population, accounted for 43.6% of the total loss of human life around the globe. The continent as a whole therefore bore a greater cost in terms of the loss of human life than any other region in the planet. Meanwhile, more young adults and middle-aged people died in Latin America and the Caribbean than in developed nations.⁶ Both this mortality rate and the impact of COVID-19 correlated to socioeconomic levels, race and ethnicity, and socio-spatial segregation.⁷ This trend was also found in the United States where, according to the COVID Tracking Project, African-Americans, Latino, and indigenous people suffered the highest death rates.⁸ Indicators published by OXFAM show that inequalities kill and make the world less safe for everyone, especially the most vulnerable.⁹

Discontinuity of medical treatments and healthcare controls caused a deterioration in health indicators and a deepening of inequalities among the population due to a disregard of other diseases that required treatment. In particular, there was a worrying disruption to health services for patients suffering chronic diseases and cancer, as well as mental health services, for which there was increased demand due to the pandemic. As a further sign

6 J. P. Chauvin, A. Fowler, N. L. Herrera, *The Younger Age Profile of COVID-19 Deaths in Developing Countries*, 2020, Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), 2020, <http://dx.doi.org/10.18235/0002879>

7 A. Canales, "La desigualdad social frente al covid-19 en el Área Metropolitana de Santiago (Chile)," *Notas de Población*, 111, 2020, pp. 13–42; Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), *Social Panorama of Latin America 2020*, Santiago de Chile, ECLAC, 2021; H. Hernández Bringas, "COVID-19 en México: un perfil sociodemográfico," *Notas de Población*, 111, 2020, pp. 105–132, <http://hdl.handle.net/11362/46557> (in Spanish).

8 Detailed information can be consulted at The COVID Tracking Project, "The covid Racial Data Tracker," <https://covidtracking.com/race>

9 Oxfam, *Inequality Kills*, Oxford, Oxfam, 2022, <https://oxfamilibrary.openrepository.com/bitstream/handle/10546/621341/bp-inequality-kills-170122-en.pdf>

of this health regression, in the case of children, WHO and UNICEF data on Latin America and the Caribbean showed that the coverage of childhood vaccines decreased by between 5 and 7 percentage points during 2020 compared to 2019,¹⁰ introducing the risk of reoccurrence of diseases that had already been brought under control.

The health crisis sparked a particularly strong financial crisis in the region, the most significant in a century. In 2020, LAC was the region to suffer the most drastic decrease in GDP (6.8% versus the global average of 3.2%), and it also saw the greatest loss of jobs (9% versus 3.5%);¹¹ the job market collapsed, poverty and inequality increased, and middle-income sectors became poorer. Wealth accumulation increased to an obscene extent. The vicious circle of recession with inequality returned with a vengeance. The same tendency was observed in the United States, where the recession triggered by the pandemic had the hardest impact on the low-wage sector of the service industry, women, and the most disadvantaged groups.¹²

According to ILO,¹³ in 2020 the Latin American and the Caribbean job markets regressed at least ten years. The shrinking of the economy caused a sudden wave of job losses, as well as temporary layoffs, often unpaid, and reductions in working hours, something that was particularly pronounced in the region. The unemployment rate reached 10.6%.¹⁴

The scale of job losses was massive, though not all inhabitants of Latin American and Caribbean nations were equally affected. The highest rates were recorded in activities that involved the most intense physical contact and that were subject to the most restrictions, such as retail activities, tourism, hotels and restaurants, domestic and personal services. The informal sector felt the impact most strongly, given the predominance of jobs requiring direct contact, combined with its greater instability and the impossibility of teleworking for such work.¹⁵ This is where disadvantages accumulated: the historically most disadvantaged, the least educated, women, the indigenous, and Afro-descendants were hit hardest by the crisis due to their predominant employment in the informal sector and in jobs involving direct contact.

The economic recovery of Latin America and the Caribbean in 2021, expressed in GDP growth of 6.6%, was accompanied by a strong rise in employment. However, whereas by late 2021 most countries in the region had recovered their pre-crisis GDP, this was not the case for labor indicators.¹⁶ Meanwhile, social indicators were at worse levels than ten years previously.¹⁷ Poverty and inequality increased significantly, and the middle-income sectors shrank. Some 207 million people in LAC face income poverty, equivalent to 32.4% of the population. Of this figure, 87 million (13.8% of the population) suffer extreme poverty. The food crisis is extremely acute: in 2021,

Indicators published by OXFAM show that inequalities kill and make the world less safe for everyone, especially the most vulnerable.

10 W. Savedoff, P. Bernal, M. Distrutti, L. Goyeneche, and C. Bernal, “Going Beyond Normal Challenges for Health and Healthcare in Latin America and the Caribbean Exposed by COVID-19”, IDB technical note, 2471, 2022, <https://publications.iadb.org/en/going-beyond-normal-challenges-health-and-healthcare-latin-america-and-caribbean-exposed-covid-19>.

11 ECLAC, *Social Panorama of Latin America 2020*.

12 J. Piacentini, H. Frazis, P. B. Meyer, M. Schultz, and L. Sveikauskas, “The Impact of COVID-19 on Labor Markets and Inequality,” Working Paper 551, U.S. Department of Labor, U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2022, <https://www.bls.gov/osmr/research-papers/2022/pdf/ec220060.pdf>

13 International Labor Organization (ILO), 2020 *Labour Overview of Latin America and the Caribbean*, Lima, ILO / ILO Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean, 2020.

14 Ibid.

15 Ibid.

16 Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), International Labor Organization (ILO), *Employment Situation in Latin America and the Caribbean. Real wages during the pandemic: Trends and challenges*, no. 26 (LC/TS.2022/71), Santiago, 2022.

17 ECLAC, *Social Panorama of Latin America 2020*.

the number of malnourished people reached 56.5 million, or 8.6% of the region's population. In 2021, Latin America and the Caribbean had 7.4% of the world's population suffering from hunger.¹⁸

This reveals that, despite the possibility of a return to steady growth, currently a doubtful forecast, this economic expansion would take place in a context of sharper inequalities than those of the first decade of the 21st century. In other words, it is somewhat unrealistic to think that, as a region, we could return to the prepandemic reality, let alone that the path of growth could be an effective solution in itself.

The COVID-19 pandemic also wrought the most damage in the history of the education sector in the region, preventing more than 170 million students from across Latin America and the Caribbean from continuing their regular education.¹⁹ Reports by UNICEF and other organizations show that those most affected by interrupted education are those who face poverty, migrants, refugees, the mentally and physically disabled, and girls. Previous inequalities also affected access to online education. Perhaps unlike in any other sphere, pre-existing inequalities in terms of internet connection, access to technology and the development of the necessary technical skills, became evident in the education sector. After some initial readjustments, some students continued their online classes and learning, while others completely lost their connection to their educational settings. The socioeconomic profile of students and schools largely marked this distinction: in private institutions, three quarters of children and teenagers had online lessons, as opposed to only half in public institutions.²⁰

In a few countries previous policies for distributing computer equipment helped mitigate the impact, but others had to implement ad-hoc solutions. Data on the number of children and teenagers who abandoned their studies during this health emergency shows the seriousness of the education crisis. The learning loss due to the lack of school attendance is estimated to be the equivalent of up to a year's worth of schooling.²¹ To this we can add the delay and negative impacts on learning, even among those who managed to remain within the system.²² According to a recent report by the World Bank, UNICEF, and UNESCO: "Expected and real learning losses are very high, and more severe for earlier grades, younger children, and children from lower socioeconomic backgrounds. Average primary education scores in reading and math would fall to levels of more than 10 years ago, in a context where improvements were already very slow. About 4 in 5 sixth graders may not be able to adequately understand and interpret a text of moderate length."²³ According to the report, this will reduce the future income of these students.

The pandemic also exposed severe gender inequalities in our continent. Proportionally, women lost their jobs more than anyone else because the lockdowns forced them to undertake caregiving roles; they also suffered directly from the increased intrafamilial domestic violence registered in most countries.

18 Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), World Health Organization (WHO), World Food Programme (WFP), and the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF), *The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World 2022: Repurposing food and agricultural policies to make healthy diets more affordable*, Rome, FAO, 2022, <https://www.fao.org/documents/card/es/c/cc0639en>

19 World Bank, *Acting Now to Protect the Human Capital of Our Children: The Costs of and Response to covid-19 Pandemic's Impact on the Education Sector in Latin America and the Caribbean*, Washington, World Bank, 2021.

20 United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund, (UNICEF), *Education on hold. COVID-19: A generation of children in Latin America and the Caribbean are missing out on schooling*, Panama, UNICEF, 2020, <https://www.unicef.org/lac/en/education-on-hold>.

21 S. García Jaramillo, *COVID-19 and primary and secondary education: the impact of the crisis and public policy implications for Latin America and the Caribbean*, Policy Documents Series no. 20, UNDP, 2020, <https://www.unicef.org/lac/media/16856/file/CD19-PDS-Number20-UNICEF-Educacion-EN.pdf>.

22 I. Acevedo, I. Flores, M. Székely, and P. Zoido, *¿Qué ha sucedido con la educación en América Latina durante la pandemia?*, IDB technical notes, 2447, 2022.

23 World Bank, *Two Years After: Saving a Generation*, World Bank, UNICEF, UNESCO, 2022, p. 17, <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/server/api/core/bitstreams/dcacc3d0-62cc-58fb-a5ae-3cc1325360fe/content>.

Obviously, gender gaps are nothing new and represent one of the largest pending issues in the region. As is the case with other problems, gender gaps are multidimensional and exist under different conditions and on various scales. A connection can be found between the gender gap and the “sexual contract”²⁴ which tacitly, and preceding the social contract, relegates women to domestic duties and reproduction, while men occupy the public realm and undertake productive activities. Thus, reproduction has been defined as something feminine and without any attached social or economic value, despite the development of human societies being unthinkable without their presence.²⁵

Equality is the opposite of gender inequality in that it closes the gaps and creates societies with substantive equality. In a broad sense, this implies granting full enjoyment of the same rights and guarantees, which implies—but is not limited to—making progress on normative issues.

The pandemic also exposed severe gender inequalities in our continent.

Gaps are immediately apparent in women’s share of the labor market. Despite progress in recent decades, ECLAC forecasts a slowdown over the following decades for 2050, and even a dwindling participation of women in employment. Estimates for the mid-21st century indicate that their share will remain at the same levels of the early 2000s. This is worrying but unsurprising, for two reasons. First, as mentioned above, the COVID-19 pandemic and extended lockdowns mainly affected the service sector, as well as retail activity and food services, which are predominantly places of work for women. Second, women’s caregiving burden is disproportionately high and costly in terms of their share in the labor market.²⁶

Gender gaps in the informal labor market conceal an important variance between women. An important distinction exists between women living in cities compared to those in rural areas, and women’s labor participation increases with education level. For example, in Mexico, women in urban areas study, on average, 3.6 years longer than their rural counterparts; in Peru, this gap is more than 5 years.²⁷ This has an impact on their subsequent incorporation into the labor market. Women’s marital status is also significant. Single women’s labor participation is higher than women who are married or have a partner. This undoubtedly reflects on the intersectionality of inequalities.

This links to another reality: women are disproportionately burdened with unpaid domestic and caregiving work. This has a bearing on their personal autonomy, their participation in the (formal and informal) labor market, and in the public realm. The caregiving structure implies a particularly heavy burden that affects women with lower incomes, who on average spend 45 hours per week on unpaid work. On the contrary, women in households with higher incomes spend an average of 33 hours. This entrenches even further a vicious circle between care, poverty, inequality, and precariousness.²⁸

Society as a whole suffers as a result: a report by UN Women and ECLAC revealed that the economic contribution of caregiving represents between 15.9% and 25.3% of GDP of countries in the region. Moreover, the

24 C. Pateman, *The Sexual Contract*, Oxford, Polity Press, 1988.

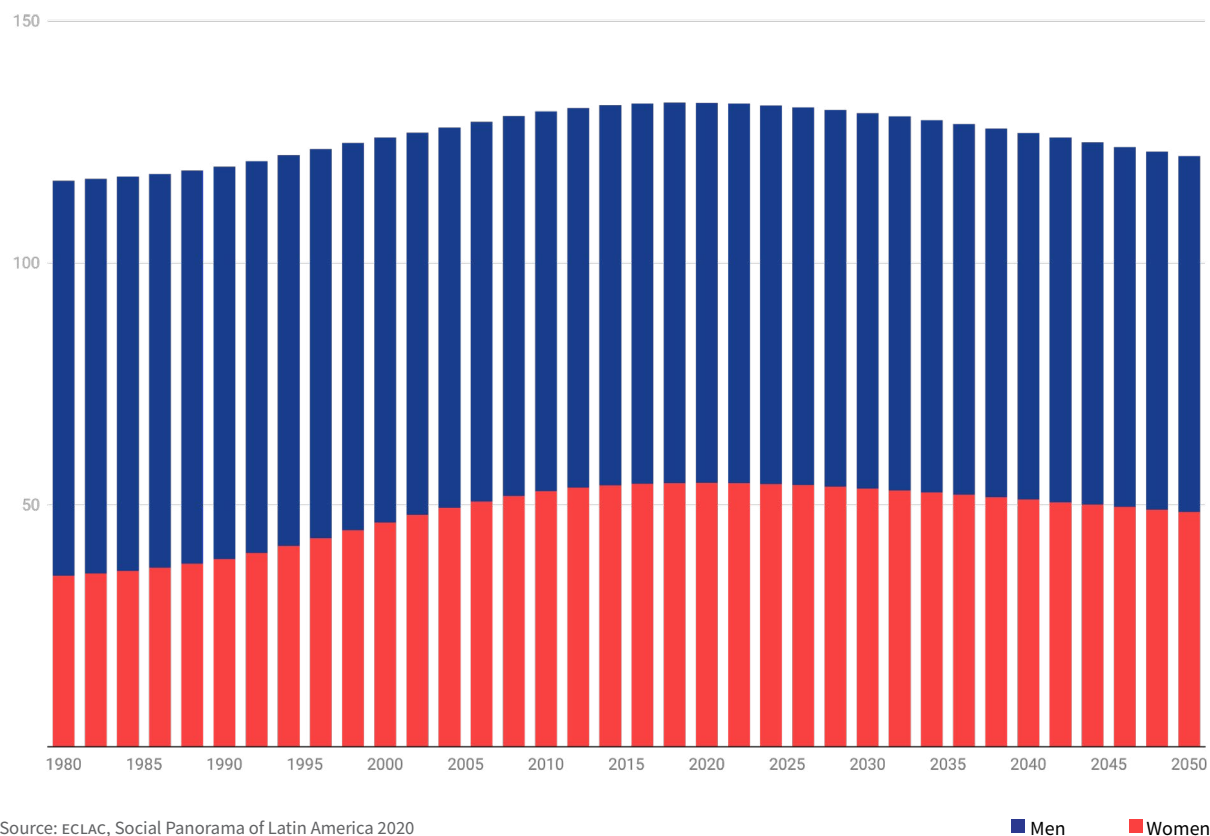
25 I. Arriagada (ed.), “Familias y políticas públicas en América Latina: una historia de desencuentros,” Santiago de Chile, ECLAC, 2007, https://repositorio.cepal.org/bitstream/handle/11362/2504/S0700488_es.pdf.

26 World Bank, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), “Uneven Recovery in Latin America and the Caribbean: Are Women Being Left Behind?”, World Bank, UNDP, 2022, <https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/099355107072225031/pdf/P17583902df7680140be5c0c87e2aab7396.pdf>

27 Mariana Marchionni, Pablo Gluzmann, Joaquín Serrano, and Monserrat Bustelo, “Participación laboral femenina ¿qué explica las brechas entre países?”, Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) Washington and Centro de Estudios Distributivos, Laborales y Sociales (CEDLAS) Argentina, 2019, <http://dx.doi.org/10.18235/0001512>.

28 UN Women/ECLAC, *Towards the construction of comprehensive care systems in Latin America and the Caribbean* (LC/TS.2022/26), Santiago de Chile, 2022, pp. 13–15.

Figure 3.4 Rate of participation in economic activities, by gender, in LAC, 1980–2050



implementation of policies that promote women’s access to more productive employment would increase per capita GDP by between 15% and 25%.²⁹ Even women who participate in the labor market in most cases also take responsibility for caregiving and household duties, implying that they work a “double shift.” When this labor is delegated to paid domestic personnel, the work is normally done by women employed on an informal basis. In turn the gap widened further following the closure of schools, nurseries, and other caregiving infrastructure, and the overwhelming demand on the healthcare system as a result of the pandemic.

Domestic work’s feminization creates higher barriers for women to enter the formal paid labor market and causes them to be increasingly excluded from various spheres of public life. Similarly, in order to reconcile their caregiving responsibilities and income generation, women are now more likely to be engaged in part-time employment and informal economic activities.³⁰ In short, understanding the reproduction of gender gaps requires an intersectional perspective.

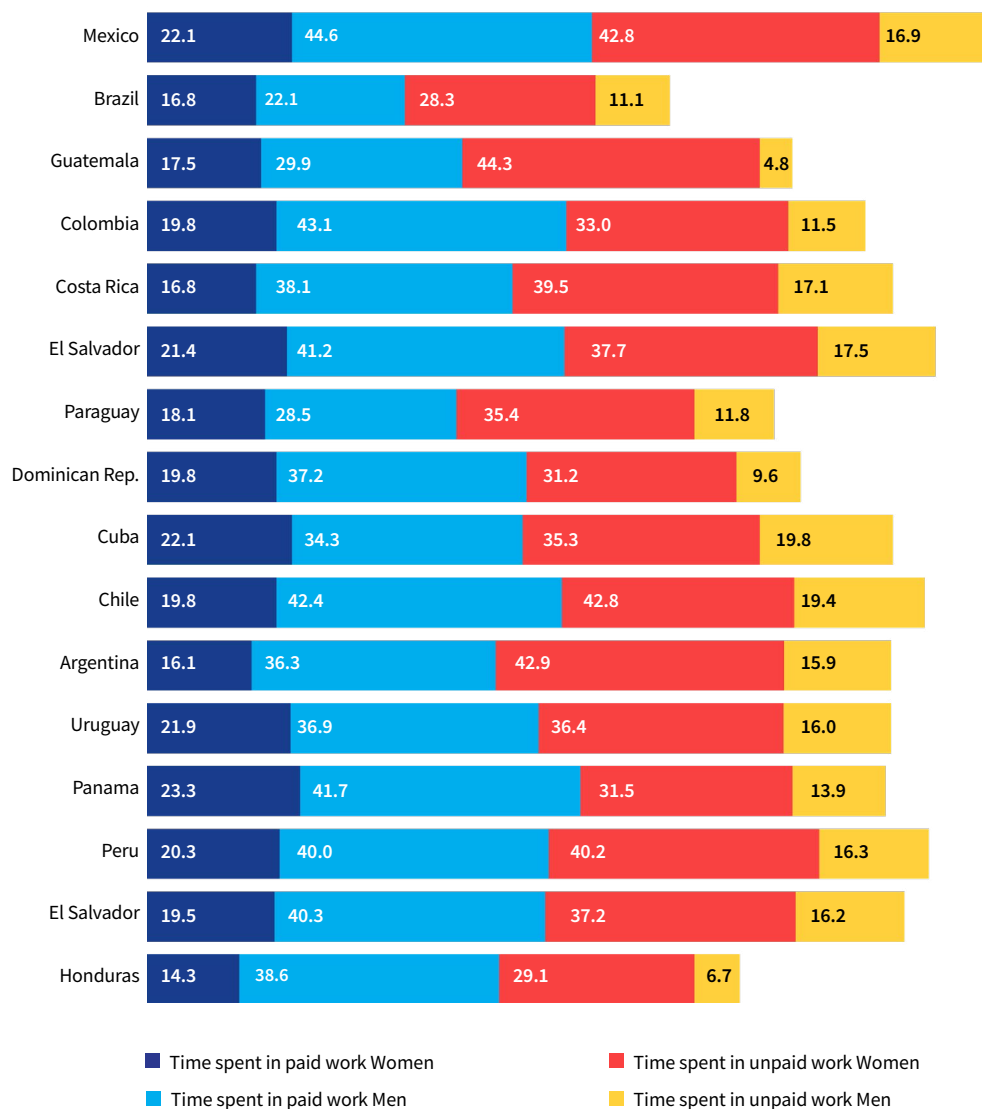
This phenomenon cannot be separated from the fundamental issue of violence that affects many aspects of women’s lives and has a multiplying effect. Violence in public spaces, in the workplace, and within homes, has been a constant aspect of some women’s lives in the region for many years. Lockdown measures to mitigate the

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Ibid.

Figure 3.5 Average time spent on paid and unpaid work in LAC countries

Population aged 15 and over



Source: United Nations, ECLAC, Gender Equality Observatory for Latin America and the Caribbean

COVID-19 pandemic only worsened the situation and increased domestic gender-based violence.³¹ In some cases, this sometimes even led to an increase in the number of homicides. The ECLAC Gender Equality Observatory³² reports that Honduras recorded the highest rates of feminicides in 2020 (4.7 per 100,000 women), followed by Dominican Republic (2.4) and El Salvador (2.1). Argentina and Mexico maintained the same rates as in 2019, while three countries (Ecuador, Costa Rica, and Panama) saw an increase from the year before.³³ But violence does not only affect women in the domestic sphere. Drug trafficking, organized crime, irregular migration, and people trafficking have greater and differentiated effects in terms of gender: women are particularly vulnerable given all these factors.

Finally, the gender gap is visible in spaces of representation and decision-making within social, community, economic, political, business, labor, religious, and military spheres, among others. In the history of women's political rights, the right to choose was not automatically transformed into the right to be elected or into significant representation, unlike in the case of men. To illustrate this point, we could use a very conservative yardstick: Latin American women reaching 25% of seats in the Lower Chamber (or single chamber in single-chamber systems). It took a minimum of 27 years and an average of 63 years between achieving their suffrage and reaching this level of representation in Congress. Many countries have still not even attained this proportion. Despite some progress in the region, it will take LAC countries 67 years at the current rate to attain full gender parity.³⁴

31 International Rescue Committee (IRC), "IRC data shows an increase in reports of gender-based violence across Latin America," press release, New York, 2020, <https://www.rescue.org/press-release/irc-data-shows-increase-reports-gender-based-violence-across-latin-america>

32 United Nations, Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), Gender Equality Observatory for Latin America and the Caribbean, <https://oig.cepal.org/en>.

33 The data can be accessed at United Nations, Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), "Femicide or Feminicide," Gender Equality Observatory for Latin America and the Caribbean, <https://oig.cepal.org/en/indicators/femicide-or-feminicide>.

34 World Economic Forum, *Global Gender Gap Report 2022*, 2022, <https://www.weforum.org/reports/global-gender-gap-report-2022/>



Final thoughts and recommendations for the agenda

Social issues are a core, crosscutting aspect for every country in the Americas, but so far they have not been properly prioritized in the inter-American cooperation agenda, as we have seen above. Regional dialogue addresses social problems in diffuse and fragmented ways; countries have focused more on stimulating growth and jobs, and fighting poverty, than on reducing inequalities. As shown in Part One, at the last Summit of the Americas where the slogan was “Building a Sustainable, Resilient, and Equitable Future,” work and discussions did not even translate into mandates that showed the commitment to reducing inequalities. Our conclusion is that a failure to tackle this issue risks jeopardizing all the progress made in other areas.

A social agenda committed to closing inequality gaps should be the core focus and the compass that orients and gives strategic meaning to dialogue and collective action in the Americas.

A social agenda committed to closing inequality gaps should be the core focus and the compass that orients and gives strategic meaning to dialogue and collective action in the Americas. It is time to develop policies consented at an intergovernmental level and between societies in order to reduce entrenched socioeconomic inequalities, eradicate poverty, expand rights for everyone, and provide universal access to basic services. Inequalities inhibit participation. When survival is the only possibility, thinking and acting collectively becomes very complicated. Closing these gaps leads to freedom and solidarity.

Unlike in the past, future political commitments to equitable social development should not exclude anyone nor be restricted by economic and geopolitical pressures or ideological alignments. To be credible, the budgetary resources assigned to this area need to be proportionate to the size of the problems. Given that economic growth does not imply the automatic distribution of wealth, we should promote specific and well-aimed public policies. Tackling inequalities as part of the public debate is the first step in this direction.

To build a medium- and long-term social agenda involving governments, private sectors, civil society, and academia, we recommend:

- 1 Empowering sectors of the population that have been left behind must be a priority in order to tackle the challenge of inequalities.** Reducing inequalities also implies narrowing the gap between formal and substantive equality. One method would be to equip social actors, and particularly the most vulnerable ones, with the legal instruments and tools for social and community advocacy in order to exercise their rights fully. States are responsible for establishing and guaranteeing these mechanisms.
- 2 Promoting fiscal reforms, one of the greatest pending challenges for the region.** This is an essential prerequisite for building an inclusive welfare state and improving wealth redistribution. Although you cannot achieve successful tax reforms through regional processes, you can create a roadmap and place the issue on the agenda.

3

Taking steps toward more progressive tax burdens. Civil society and academia could push for important matters at international forums (G20, WTO, SOA, IDB, ECLAC), such as taxing multibillionaires (wealth taxes) or the issue of tax havens, and create coordinated proposals.

4

Working to close territorial gaps between the world's more dynamic regions and those that are poorer through redistribution mechanisms and rules. More substantial investments will provide opportunities for those areas lagging furthest behind.

5

Implementing a minimum basic income and more universally accessible public assets. Maintaining systems of conditional and unconditional cash transfers is a vital means of creating a minimum basic income. In parallel, States must also increase investment in universally accessible public assets. The pandemic made it clear that we need public (state and nonstate) assets, funded by innovative connections between public, private, social, and community associations. The emergency created by the COVID pandemic also taught us that national governments can do much more than what they say they can do and have done up until now.

6

Prioritizing gender-equality policies on caregiving issues. Formulating and applying state policies that promote shared responsibility; sharing out household duties equally between men and women. One way of achieving this objective could be establishing national caregiving systems. Setting up integral systems, particularly but not exclusively for childcare, makes it possible to tackle inequalities in the children's development and to preserve dependent people's autonomy, while allowing women to spend time on other things, reducing gender gaps in other aspects of their lives. Estimates suggest that the implementation of childcare systems could have very positive impacts, not only for women within the labor market and in education, but also for boosting per capita GDP.

7

Working to promote equality and equal representation in every sphere. Integration mandates for parity in political positions and the promotion of parity in the private sphere are necessary to help dismantle structural barriers perpetuating gender gaps. Women's descriptive representation is promoted through specific institutions such as gender and parity quotas to encourage women's appointments for public positions and, in some cases, to ensure the creation of representative and equitable decision-making bodies.

8

Implementing regional agreements to eradicate all types of violence against women, to reduce gender gaps. Regional regulations strongly affect this crosscutting aspect and require states to regulate and legislate "to prevent, punish, and eradicate political and administrative abuse of women who achieve their decision-making positions through elections and appointments, both at a national and local level, as well as in parties and political movements"; they also call for the adoption of "measures that help eliminate all forms of violence and its manifestations against women, especially the murder of women,

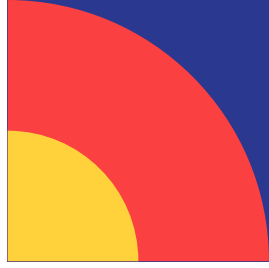
femicide, and feminicide”;³⁵ and make it necessary to establish “complaints procedures and to define penalties for those who commit sexual harassment and other forms of abuse in the workplace.”³⁶

9

Adopting new and comprehensive strategies, inclusive and crosscutting policies, and a solid inter-American institutional framework that does not currently exist. We still lack a robust, consensual, and impartial inter-American cooperation model for equality, inclusion, and humanitarian assistance aligned with the 2030 Agenda. It requires development and funding. Development banks and institutions for development cooperation in the region have made technical progress but their funding ability has weakened and lacks flexibility. We need to multilateralize cooperation programs, broaden their funding base and, above all, strongly support coordination between the IDB, the Development Bank of Latin America, ECLAC, and the multiplicity of subregional and extraregional mechanisms, in order to strike a better balance between donor and recipient countries.

35 Quito Consensus. Tenth Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean, Quito, Ecuador, August 6–9, 2007, DSC/1, https://repositorio.cepal.org/bitstream/handle/11362/41345/Quito_Consensus_en.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y

36 Brasilia Consensus, Eleventh Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean, Brazil, July 13–16, 2010, https://repositorio.cepal.org/bitstream/handle/11362/16555/1/S2010802_en.pdf.



Migration and asylum: (co)creating a regional and humane approach

The outlook today

Migration is a historical phenomenon in the Americas which has become increasingly diverse, complex, and interconnected in the 21st century. In 2020, one out of every four international migrants¹ in the world were in the American continent, with North America as the primary destination in the subregion, with a total of 59 million migrants. The United States was in first place, South America in second, with 11 million living abroad. Argentina is home to the largest foreign-born population among Latin American countries.² In regard to LAC, the past two decades have been one of the most dynamic periods of human mobility and intraregional migration,³ creating a new direction in migration patterns throughout the region. From 2005 to 2020, Latin America and the Caribbean led the largest surge in international migration globally. The migrant population doubled from 7 to 15 million, although it only accounted for 5.6% of the world's total. In addition, during the second decade of this century, the number of immigrants grew by 66%, while the number of emigrants only increased by 26%.⁴ This transformation has changed LAC's traditional migrant profile as a region of origin into one of transit, destination, and return.

The Latin American and Caribbean region's dynamic migration patterns is reflected in the appearance of new flows, alongside the continuation of other long-standing movements. This new outlook is marked by a variation in directions and a multiplicity of destinations, with the more traditional South-North corridors coexisting with stronger intraregional South-South flows and with new motivations ranging from voluntary migration to situations where people have been forced to migrate for one of several reasons. A tradition of diverse subregional dynamics with differentiated migration systems continues to exist, essentially between neighboring countries,

1 The United Nations defines the “international migrant” as anyone who changes their country of habitual residence, as distinguished from “short-term migrants” (who have changed their country of usual residence for periods of at least three months, but less than one year) and “long-term migrants” (who have done so for at least one year). See International Organization for Migration (IOM), *World Migration Report 2022*, 2022, p. 23, <https://publications.iom.int/books/world-migration-report-2022>, p. 23

2 Idem.

3 Intraregional migration is particularly high in South America, where almost four out of five South American migrants residing in another country in the subregion. Marcela Cerruti, *5 salient facts about intra-regional migration in South America. Immigration and emigration statistics*, IOM Migration Data Portal, April 13, 2020, <https://www.migrationdataportal.org/blog/5-salient-facts-about-intra-regional-migration-south-america>.

4 United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), “Harnessing the potential of migration,” blog by Jairo Acuña - Alfaro and David Khoudour, January 31, 2020, <https://www.undp.org/blog/harnessing-potential-migration>.

Figure 4.1 Resident migrants by region of residence



Source: International Organization for Migration (IOM), World Migration Report 2022.

and in some border areas that have become magnets for migrants. Latin America and the Caribbean have created various subregional spaces that promote mobility and provide facilities to assist migrants from member countries, such as Mercosur, the Andean Community (AC) and the Caribbean Community (CARICOM). For example, in Argentina 84% of non-national residents come from member or associate countries of Mercosur.⁵

The Venezuelan migration emergency has triggered significant changes in the region. This is the largest human displacement in the recent history of Latin America and the Caribbean, and one of the greatest in the world, alongside the Syrian and Ukrainian exoduses.⁶ However, the Venezuelan situation is the only example where millions of people have been displaced and become refugees in a non-war context. Estimates from the Inter-Agency Coordination Platform for Venezuelan Refugees and Migrants (R4V) show that in less than a decade Venezuelan emigration has reached 7.1 million people in 2022,⁷ representing around a fifth of the total population of a country that was once one of the most prosperous on the continent. To grasp the scale of this migration trend, it's worth noting that it took Mexico, historically a sending country, over a century to have approximately 10% of its population living abroad. Furthermore, Venezuela's migration pattern has rapidly changed from being a destination for migrants to becoming a significant source of emigration, as evidenced by its negative net migration rate.

The fact that 20% of Venezuela's population has emigrated so rapidly and that four out of five Venezuelan migrants have traveled to other LAC countries is a striking statistic and poses a challenge for public policy and regional cooperation. This is a multidestination and intraregional displacement which, unlike other flows in the continent, does not have the United States as the primary destination; 84% of Venezuelan refugees, migrants, and asylum seekers are in Latin American countries. Outside the region, the countries to receive most Venezuelans are the United States (8%) and Spain (6%). As a result, many Latin American and Caribbean

5 Natalia Debandi, Julieta Nicolao, and Ana Paula Penchaszadeh (coords.), *Anuario estadístico migratorio de la Argentina 2020*, Buenos Aires, CONICET, 2021.

6 According to the most recent data from the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR), at June 30, 2022, the exodus of refugees and people in need of international protection in Syria reached 6.8 million, after a decade of civil war, while the Venezuelan population in the same situation was estimated at 5.6 million. In the case of Ukraine, in the first months since the Russian invasion, the number of refugees reached 5.4 million and, according to estimates from the Operational Data Portal (ODP), this figure was set to reach just over 8 million by the end of 2022. United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR), *Mid-Year Trends 2022*, 2022, <https://www.unhcr.org/statistics/unhcrstats/635a578f4/mid-year-trends-2022.html>; Operational Data Portal (ODP), Ukraine Refugee Situation, February 7, 2023, <https://data.unhcr.org/en/situations/ukraine>.

7 R4V Inter-Agency Coordination Platform for Venezuelan Refugees and Migrants, 2022, <https://www.r4v.info/es/refugiadosymigrantes> (accessed December 12, 2022).

Table 4.1 Venezuelan refugees and migrants in LAC and around the world, 2022

Destination country	Millions of people
Colombia	2,477,588
Peru	1,490,673
Ecuador	502,210
Chile	444,420
Brazil	388,120
Argentina	171,050
Panama	146,360
Dominican Republic	115,280
Mexico	87,150
Trinidad and Tobago	35,310
LAC total	5,986,946
United States	545,234
Spain	438,380
Canada	22,375
Other	138,500
World total	7,131,435

Source: R4V Inter-Agency Coordination Platform for Venezuelan Refugees and Migrants, *Venezuelan Refugees and Migrants*, figures at December 12, 2022.

countries are in the relatively new position of being net recipients of migration. For example, Colombia, Chile, Ecuador, and Peru were not used to receiving large migration flows in short periods and have been forced to adapt and find solutions.

The Venezuelan situation clearly reveals regional migration shifts. These changes have altered countries' traditional migration roles and profiles for various reasons, creating new routes and corridors where mixed flows of migrants are circulating, turning many nations into places of transit, asylum, and destination. This pattern of inter-regionality can partly be explained by the increasing fortification of borders in the Global North, which prevents people from reaching more remote destinations. Another contributing factor can be found in the significant barriers to emigrating from Venezuela due to limited resources and bureaucratic difficulties to obtain identity documents.

Central Americans—especially from Honduras, El Salvador, and Guatemala—have a longer history of migrating to the United States, and migrant flows have increased since the second decade of this century. In 2020, a combination of violence, political persecution, poverty, the effects of climate change, and natural disasters

forced one million nationals from these countries to abandon their homes. According to data from the U.S. Customs and Border Protection⁸ from 2019 to 2022, an annual average of 550,000 people from the three Central American countries with the highest number of migrants (El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras) arrived at the U.S. southern border each year; 2021 was the peak year with just over 700,000 arrivals, while 2020 saw this number dip to around 106,000 due to COVID-related travel restrictions that left many migrants stranded during their journey. A combination of factors feeds into this migration flow, such as economic and political instability, structural violence⁹ caused by the presence of organized crime, petty crime, gangs and mafias, impunity, state corruption, and environmental disasters.

Since 2018, caravans have become a new way of migrating and transiting, with unprecedented regionally shared consequences and challenges. In contrast to traditional “in the shadows” migration, these flows are more visible and represent lower costs for migrants who can avoid smugglers; migrants now organize through social networks and mobile apps. These new flows started with the easing of restrictions announced by the newly

elected Mexican government in 2018. The Trump administration exerted pressure to reverse this approach in 2019, bringing stricter border control that increased the dangers to migrants’ lives during transit while failing to achieve the objective of stopping the flows.¹⁰

The diversity of migration flows and directions is also accompanied by the diversity of reasons to migrate.

In 2022, a record 2.5 million encounters (a term that includes both apprehensions and expulsions) took place on the border between the United States and Mexico, a year-on-year increase of 37% compared to 2021, and 77% higher than 2019, according to CBP data.¹¹

As Ruis Soto points out,¹² the composition of migration flows from Central America and Mexico to the United States has diversified significantly from the traditional countries of origin, due to the increasing number of people of other nationalities using this corridor. Equally important is the growing number of migrant families, women, and children, whose needs and difficulties are different to those of male migrants.

The dynamics of human flows in Central America and the Caribbean have therefore become more complex and transcend subregional borders. Recent increases have been observed in migration flows through Panama from various LAC countries, including Venezuela, Haiti, Cuba, Ecuador, Chile, and Brazil, as well as from Asia and Africa. These migrants mainly travel by foot to the north of the continent. The Darien Gap between Colombia and Panama is the most dangerous leg of the journey,¹³ and in 2022 a record number of irregular border crossings were registered (248,284), twice as many as in 2021.¹⁴

8 Data from the U.S. Customs and Border Protection agency (CBP). See U.S. Government, Customs and Border Protection (CBP), “Southwest Land Border Encounters,” <https://www.cbp.gov/document/stats/southwest-land-border-encounters>

9 The crime rates and violence in several Central American and Caribbean countries are among the highest in the world. United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), *Global Study on Homicide 2019*, Vienna, 2019, <https://www.unodc.org/documents/data-and-analysis/gsh/Booklet1.pdf>.

10 Luciana Gandini, “Caravanas migrantes: de respuestas institucionales diferenciadas a la reorientación de la política migratoria,” *REMHU: Revista Interdisciplinar da Mobilidade Humana*, 28, 2020, pp. 51–69.

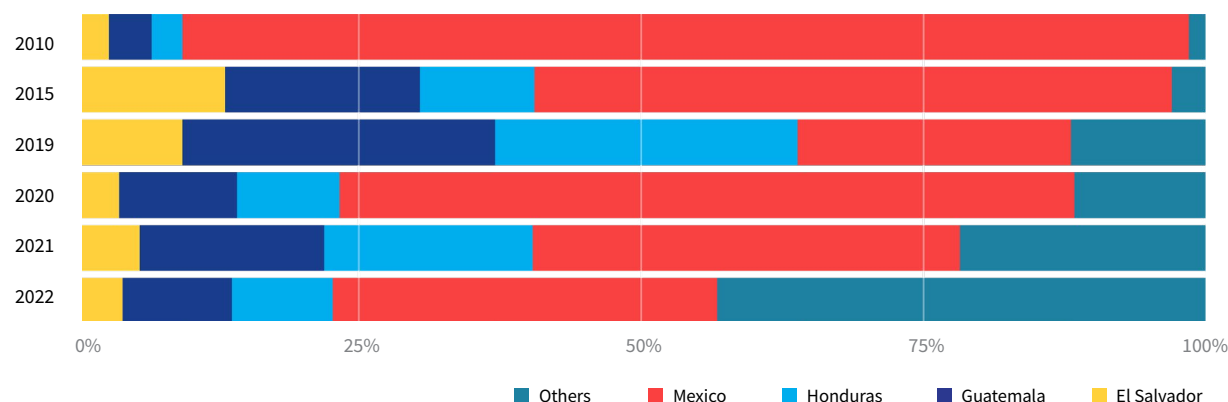
11 CBP, “Southwest Land Border Encounters.”

12 G. Ariel Ruiz Soto, “Record-Breaking Migrant Encounters at the U.S.-Mexico Border Overlook the Bigger Story,” Commentary Migration Policy Institute (MPI), October 2022, <https://www.migrationpolicy.org/news/2022-record-migrant-encounters-us-mexico-border>

13 International Organization for Migration (IOM), “Number of Migrants Who Embarked on the Dangerous Darien Gap Route Nearly Doubled in 2022,” Global News, January 17, 2023, <https://www.iom.int/news/number-migrants-who-embarked-dangerous-darien-gap-route-nearly-doubled-2022>

14 Senafront (Panama’s National Border Service), Sistema Nacional de Fronteras de Panamá, 2022, <http://www.senafront.gob.pa>

Figure 4.2 Detentions of migrants on the U.S.-Mexico border by country of origin, 2010–2022



Source: U.S. Government. U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP), "Southwest Land Border Encounters"

One of the most remarkable flows of forced migration in the continent in terms of multidirectionality and vulnerability, comes from the poorest country in the Americas, Haiti, which is engulfed in a political and economic crisis and devastated by violence, exacerbated by epidemics and natural disasters. The Haitian exodus, less visible but with a longer history than its Venezuelan counterpart, reached 1.8 million people in 2022,¹⁵ meaning that a fifth of the Haitian population now lives outside the country. Given the barriers being erected to stem migration flows, Haitians have been diversifying their migration routes throughout the Caribbean, Central and South America, heading for the United States; they have a particularly strong presence in Dominican Republic, Brazil, Chile, and Mexico, and generally live in precarious circumstances.

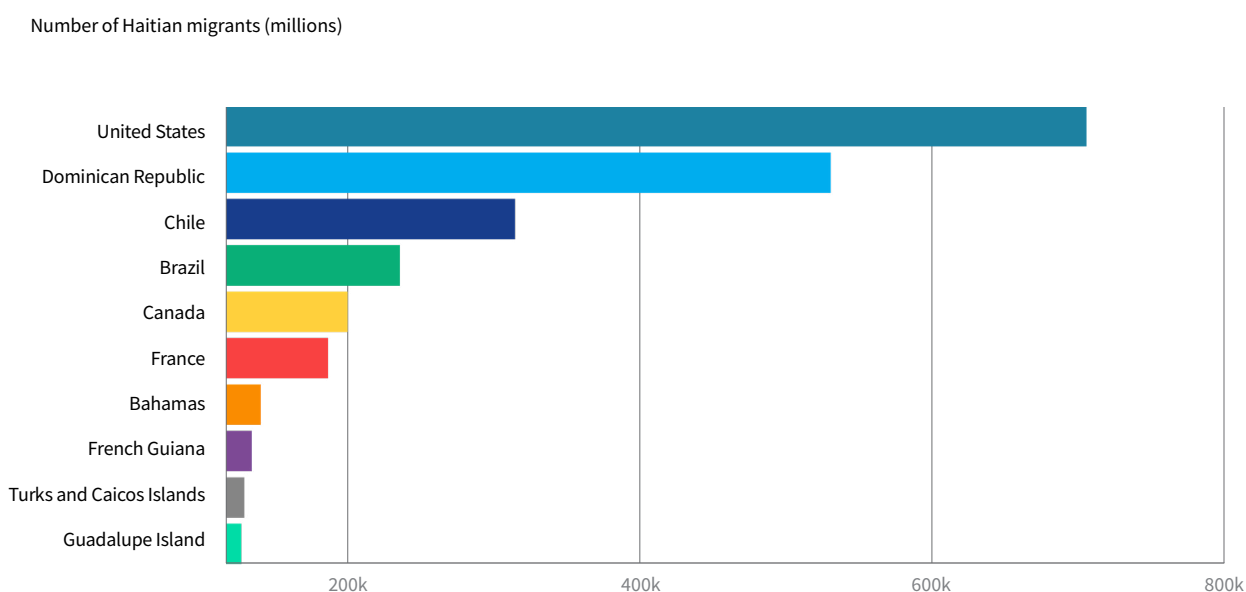
The diversity of migration flows and directions is also accompanied by the diversity of reasons to migrate. To make migration more complex, regional movements currently encompass what is known as mixed flows, which combine groups of people traveling along the same routes but with varied sociodemographic profiles, legal status, and motivations for migrating. Many of these are found at the intersection between a voluntary or desired migration and an involuntary or forced one which often requires international protection. Migrating families are often mixed, since they consist of members with a range of legal statuses, who leave the country at different moments and find themselves in various places, with all the implicated costs of family separation.

A particularly worrying trend in Latin America and the Caribbean is the region's alignment with the global pattern of a sustained rise in forced migration, comprising refugees, asylum-seekers, returnees, internally displaced, and people facing comparable conditions to those of refugees, yet without the formal recognition of such status. The UNHCR estimated that global forced displacement had reached a total of 89.3 million in late 2021, compared to 38.5 million just a decade ago,¹⁶ representing an increase of 130%. This represents a six-fold increase compared to the overall global international migration figure (27%), which escalated from 221 to 281 million people

¹⁵ IOM, *World Migration Report 2022*.

¹⁶ United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR), *Global Trends: Forced Displacement in 2021, 2022*, <https://www.unhcr.org/62a9d1494/global-trends-report-2021>

Figure 4.3 Main countries of residence of Haitian migrants



Source: Source: Ariel Ruiz Soto, “Record-Breaking Migrant Encounters at the U.S.-Mexico Border Overlook the Bigger Story,” Commentary Migration Policy Institute (mpi), October 2022.

within the same period.¹⁷ Currently, one out of four displaced people in need of protection live in the Americas,¹⁸ reaching a total of 18.4 million displaced.

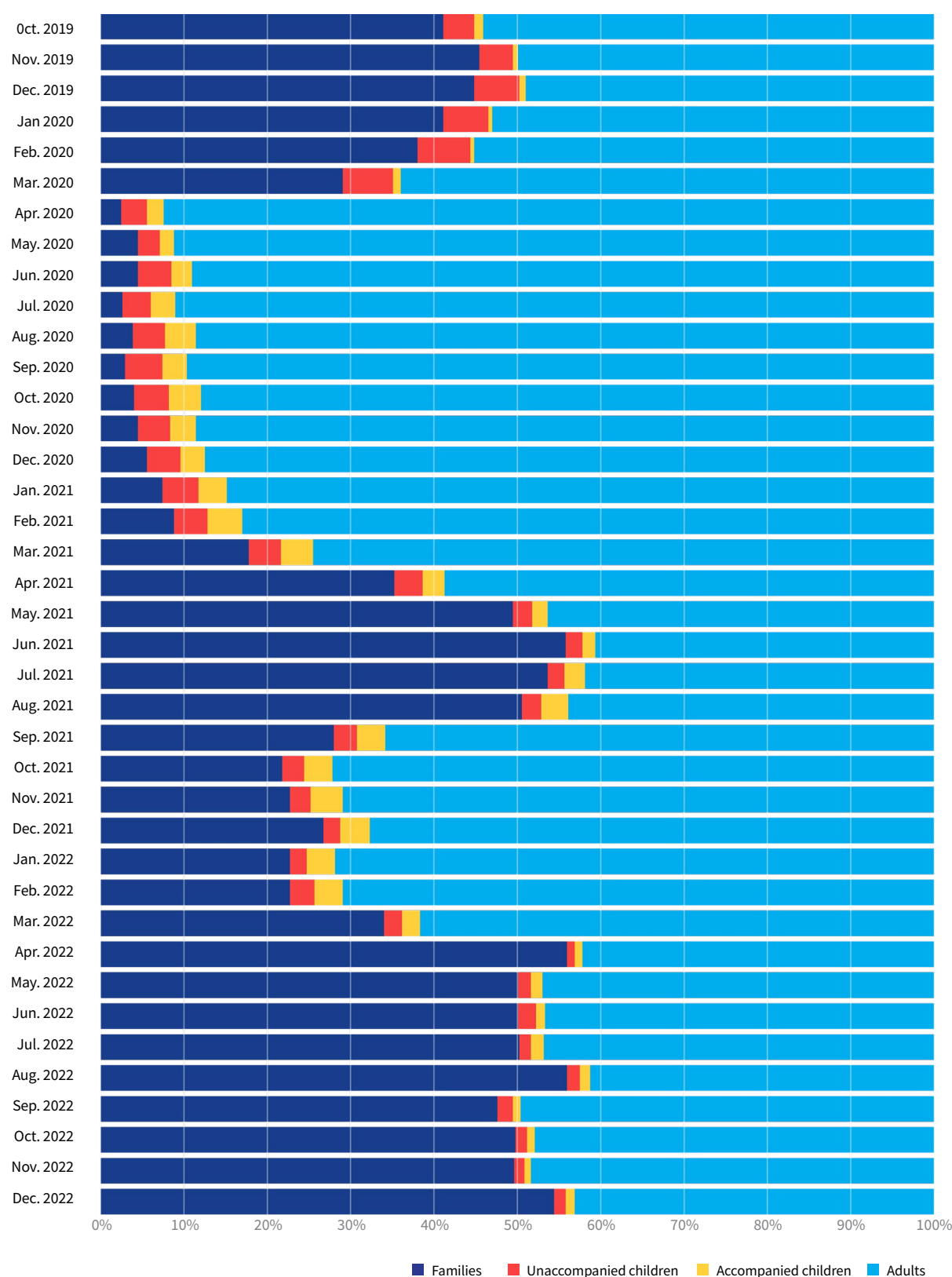
The IOM has called the covid-19 pandemic the “great disruptor,” with paradoxical effects. On the one hand, it has generated new migration patterns by increasing the number of forced displacements and, on the other, the imposition of greater restrictions and controls has undermined progress previously achieved through migrant status regularization, access to basic services and general integration. The unprecedented border restrictions and mitigation measures introduced with the pandemic have triggered a dynamic of mobility that includes initial migration, forced returns, and recurring mobility—three contradictory yet inter-related processes that represent a challenge due to the associated complexities. The pandemic had a wide range of effects on migration, from the loss of jobs in the informal sector (upon which most refugees and migrants depend), the dependence on remittances as a social and family buffer, the shutting down of access to health services, new health requirements making it harder to enter countries (such as Title 42 in the United States),¹⁹ delays in refugee and regularization

¹⁷ IOM, *World Migration Report 2022*.

¹⁸ United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR), *Global Trends: Forced Displacement in 2020, 2021*, <https://www.unhcr.org/statistics/unhcrstats/60b638e37/global-trends-forced-displacement-2020.html>

¹⁹ Title 42 of the U.S. Code, a regulation dating back to 1944, allows health authorities to refuse the entry of people and goods into the country “to prevent the spread of communicable diseases.” At the start of the covid-19 pandemic, the Trump administration unveiled it as a frontier policy authorizing the Customs and Border Protection agency (CBP) to immediately expel undocumented migrants, without even granting them the right to request asylum, a right enshrined in the Refugee Act of 1980 (Section 1158 of Title 8 of the U.S. Code). See “42 U.S. Code § 265 - Suspension of entries and imports from designated places to prevent spread of communicable diseases,” Cornell Law School, <https://www.law.cornell.edu/uscode/text/42/265>

Figure 4.4 Detentions of migrants on the U.S.-Mexico border, 2019-2022



Source: WOLA, Advocacy for Human Rights in the Americas, May 23, 2022,

processes, and even the forced returns under precarious circumstances. According to estimates, the pandemic led to a loss of jobs for as many as 80% of refugees in the region in 2020.²⁰ Undoubtedly, the health crisis also flagged up the need to find lasting solutions to the enduring problems of forced and irregular migration, for the wellbeing of the communities of origin, transit, destination, and return.

Violence as a crosscutting concern and inequalities as a driving force

The intrinsic irregularity and coerciveness of forced migration flows leads to extreme vulnerability to violence, exploitation, abuse, and discrimination for migrants, their families, and their communities of origin.²¹ The structural risk factors facing these migrants are reproduced at varying levels of intensity at each stage of their journey, until they become fully integrated into their place of destination. These risks cause physical, material, and psychological damages that put them at a disadvantage across generations; this situation also affects their return migration, whether voluntary or involuntary (deportation). Many enter into spirals of increasing danger for long periods, during which they lack access to public services and cannot exercise their rights in their countries of origin, transit, and destination.

In this cycle of vulnerability and prolonged irregularity, gender and sexual orientation are a crucial variable affecting the severity and type of risk that migrants face: women, girls, and boys are usually victims of trafficking, sexual exploitation, and domestic violence, whereas men are more at risk of criminal violence and arbitrary arrests. LGBT people face all the dangers listed above. Other factors such as ethnicity, social class, religion, nationality, socioeconomic profile, and education level combine to exacerbate the risks for certain types of migrants who could well be called “the most vulnerable of the vulnerable.” This is the case, for example, of indigenous women and girls.

The relationship between inequalities and migration is complex and the debate on the issue remains ongoing, insofar as migration goes hand-in-hand with benefits as well as costs for the communities of origin and destination.²² However, facts suggest that migration ends up being an expression of inequality, almost like a machine in which inequalities are reproduced and perpetuated. Prevailing regulatory systems and migration policies have a significant role to play in this regard due to their regressive and discriminatory effects. The doors are open for those with capital, higher incomes, education, and connections, whereas they remain closed for those migrating in an emergency or seeking to survive, who are often criminalized as a result. The refugee systems and clauses of family reunification should be reconsidered and extended throughout the continent to mitigate discriminatory practices against migrants.

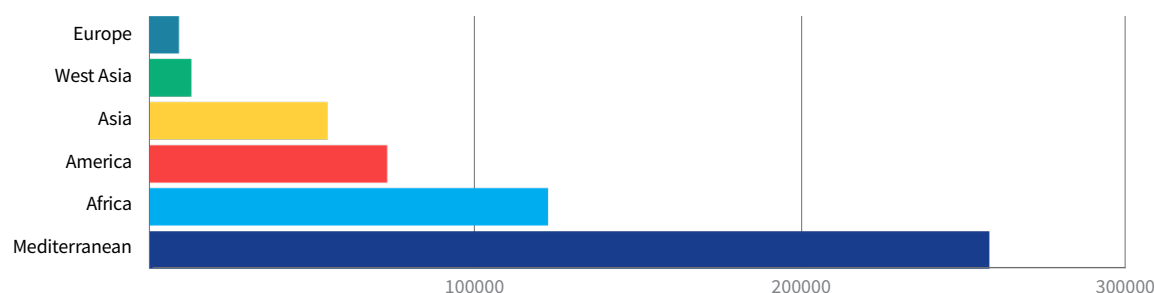
Discriminatory regulations are also connected to social attitudes of rejection and discrimination toward migrants based on their ethnicity, country of origin, social class, or migration and gender status. Even in countries that recognize the effect of immigration in their roots (such as Argentina, Chile, and the United States) or that have a long history of emigration (such as Ecuador, Mexico, and Peru), anti-immigrant and xenophobic discourses have emerged strongly among both the general public and the political elites. These attitudes are interwoven with classism, racism, and misogyny. In today’s climate of rising nationalism, migration is often used as a political banner exacerbating xenophobic sentiment and disinformation.

20 UNHCR, op. cit.

21 International Organization for Migrations (IOM), *IOM Handbook on Protection and Assistance to Migrants Vulnerable to Violence, Exploitation and Abuse*, Geneva, 2021, <https://publications.iom.int/books/iom-handbook-migrants-vulnerable-violence-exploitation-and-abuse>

22 Gabriela Pinillos, Claudia Masferrer, and Natalia Oropeza, “Desigualdades, migración y fronteras: propuesta de acercamiento multidimensional,” *Notas sobre migración y desigualdades* (Seminario Migración, desigualdad y políticas públicas), no. 3, 2019, <https://migdep.colmex.mx/publicaciones/desigualdad-migracion-fronteras.pdf>.

Figure 4.5 Deaths and disappearances during migration, 2014–2023



Source: IOM, "Missing Migrants in the Caribbean Reached a Record High in 2022," 2022.

The result of all the above is a context of systemic violence that accompanies migrants. Some figures reveal the nature of the problem. In the Americas, IOM²³ has documented 6,900 migrant deaths since 2014, although many cases are undocumented. The vast majority (4,694) have taken place along routes and migration corridors toward the north and are particularly concentrated along the border between Mexico and the United States. But there are also danger zones such as the Caribbean. In 2022, the number of migrants who died while transiting the Caribbean reached a historic record.²⁴ Four of the ten countries in the world with the highest number of migrant deaths since 2014 are in the Americas: Guatemala, Haiti, Mexico, and Venezuela.

Many undocumented migrants are forced to use the services of criminal groups during their transit and eventual entry into the United States, exposing them to networks of abuse and harassment at the hands of government and nongovernmental actors. This situation leaves them with limited resources to defend themselves. People trafficking is a further concern. According to the IOM's *World Migration Report*,²⁵ the Americas have the largest number of victims of people trafficking for sexual exploitation in the world.

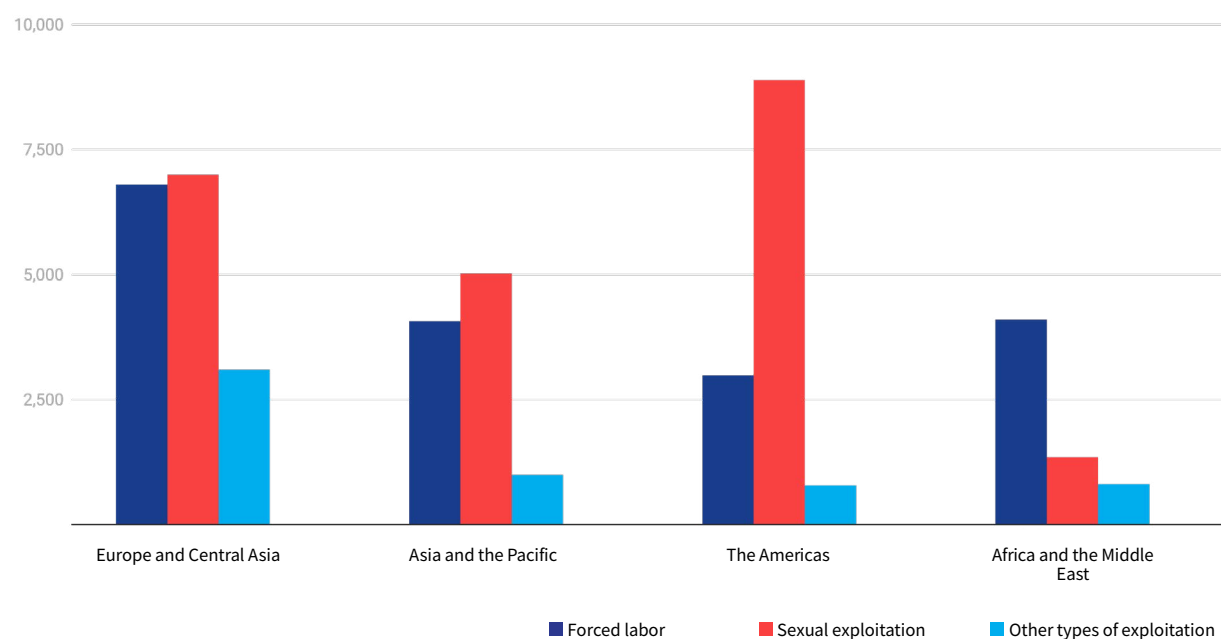
Furthermore, forced and irregular migration are susceptible to the effects and dynamics of illegal markets controlled by transnational organized crime networks. These illegal businesses trigger violence due to the control over many territories transited by migrants, who are often targeted by criminal groups. Drug cartels raise levels of corruption while also seriously undermining effective control over borders. In some territories where various kinds of transnational crime overlap with migrant flows, insecurity and violence is particularly dire for those who completely lack rights and legal protection. This intersection partly explains governments' tendency to define migration as a national security and border control issue, which drives the securitization of migration policies and, at times, involves the military in containment duties. This combination of factors results in the main victims being

23 International Organization for Migrations (IOM), *50,000 Lives Lost during Migration. Analysis of Missing Migrants Project, Data 2014-2022*, Berlin, 2022, <https://missingmigrants.iom.int/sites/g/files/tmzbd1601/files/publication/file/2022%2050k%20deaths.pdf>

24 International Organization for Migrations (IOM), "Missing Migrants in the Caribbean Reached a Record High in 2022," *Global News*, January 24, 2023, <https://www.iom.int/news/missing-migrants-caribbean-reached-record-high-2022>

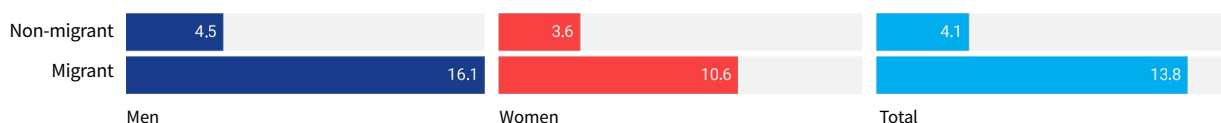
25 IOM, *World Migration Report 2022*.

Figure 4.6 Number of trafficking victims, by type of exploitation and region of detection, 2018



Source: UNODC, Global Report on Trafficking in Persons, 2020

Figure 4.7 Prevalence (per thousand workers) of adults in conditions of forced labor, by migration status and sex



Source: International Labor Organization (ILO), Walk Free, and International Organization for Migration, "Global Estimates of Modern Slavery: Forced Labor and Forced Marriage," Geneva, September 2022.

the migrants, who on the one hand are at the mercy of criminal groups engaged in human trafficking and on the other, are vulnerable to the violent and arbitrary actions of security forces who, in the name of the state, combat these groups. Acknowledging these connections between migration and transnational crime does not involve assuming that migration policy must be made contingent on the fight against drug trafficking. On the contrary, drug-trafficking must be taken off the migration agenda.

The intersection between migration, inequality, and violence is highly complex and requires more in-depth studies and research at a continental level in order to appraise the problem and design policies to tackle it. We

still need more and better databases and analysis, in which academia and civil society can play an important role. This also calls for an approach to migration policies in connection to policies on other issues.

Political and institutional responses: plenty of room for maneuver

Since LAC is now a migrant recipient region, a relatively new regulatory framework has been built, modified, and strengthened, oriented toward protecting migrants' human rights. The last decade has been very dynamic in creating migration institutionalization with the development of new institutions and regulatory approaches to manage human mobility.²⁶ However, given that progress has been heterogeneous and uneven, like patchwork quilts, today there is no single model of human migration governance in the region. The contrast of how each country understands the phenomenon is reflected in the differentiated location that migration occupies within internal public policies. An analysis of 28 countries in LAC reveals that, in most of them, interior ministries are in charge of coordinating migration (18 countries), followed by the foreign affairs ministries (6) and, less frequently, the justice ministries (4).²⁷

Whereas in the United States and Canada protection and asylum systems have been weakened in recent years and previous progress has begun to be reverted, migration governance in Latin America and the Caribbean is progressing at the normative level, particularly in response to the flow of Venezuelan population, with quick actions and generous and creative regularization measures. Ad hoc systems have regularized the immigration status of Venezuelans, such as Peru's Temporary Settlement Permit (PTP) and Colombia's Special Settlement Permit (PEP). These measures have been positive but their short-term focus and the rapidly evolving migration dynamics have required constant updating.

Migration governance in Latin America and the Caribbean has evolved in recent years, with more than 90 (extraordinary and ordinary) regularization processes between 2020 and 2021.²⁸ Regulatory progress in Latin America shows the region's potential contribution to the continental and global migration debate. Although this shows a broad acknowledgement of the need for governments to regularize migration, implementation has been slow and generally has come as a knee-jerk response to emergencies; results have therefore been disappointing. The lack of regular channels for migration to other countries remains a significant problem.

However, since 2019 and above all after the COVID-19 health crisis, we can identify four trends toward more restrictive measures designed to control migration. First, one of the most widespread and perhaps less evident trends is the development of cumbersome administrative bureaucracies that increase the requirements and documents necessary for visa, residency or permit procedures, contrary to the initial trends for flexibility in recipient and transit countries.

Regulatory progress in Latin America shows the region's potential contribution to the continental and global migration debate.

26 Diego Acosta and Jeremy Harris, *Migration Policy Regimes in Latin America and the Caribbean Immigration, Regional Free Movement, Refuge, and Nationality*, Series on the Governance of Human Mobility, Inter-American Development Bank, 2022, <https://publications.iadb.org/en/migration-policy-regimes-latin-america-and-caribbean-immigration-regional-free-movement-refuge-and>.

27 Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), First regional report on the implementation of the Montevideo Consensus on Population and Development (LC/CRPD.3/6), Santiago, 2019, <https://www.cepal.org/en/publications/44458-first-regional-report-implementation-montevideo-consensus-population-and>.

28 Acosta and Harris, *Migration Policy Regimes in Latin America and the Caribbean*.

The second trend has been the imposition of new visa requirements for certain nationalities, especially those that produce greater flows or cause more concern for the United States. Venezuela is a good example: from 2015 to 2022, 18 countries imposed a visa regime for Venezuelans, a move that has unfortunately rerouted flows from regular air travel to irregular and dangerous land routes across the Darien Gap. This case shows how measures seeking to control flows can have unforeseen consequences and be counterproductive.

Deportations and refused entries at border crossings have been increasing, particularly to the detriment of people with certain nationalities who are deported without due process or protection systems in their countries. Haitians are especially vulnerable given the high risks facing returnees.

As a final note, the militarization of border zones and migration controls present a fourth trend that has gained momentum with the pandemic, although it already existed in some countries such as Mexico and Uruguay. Colombia, Peru, and Chile, among other countries, have cited health control measures to justify this expanded role of the armed forces. Militarization can be understood as an increasing and direct participation of the armed forces in migration duties or the adoption of military strategies and practices within the civil services and migration police forces.

In border areas with a history of militarization, the risk of abuses against migrants tends to reuse and in some countries this has led to collective deportations and refused entries, violating people's right to access territories and seek asylum. This goes against the principle of non-refoulement of people needing international protection.

In the north of the continent, border externalization as a strategy to control irregular immigration, a measure being applied in Europe, is now spreading in the United States and Canada since 2004, after both countries signed the Safe Third Country Agreement (STCA).²⁹ This policy involves delegating the implementation of migration control measures to third countries that end up acting as “pre-border screening zones” to prevent the arrival of migrants and asylum-seekers as well as others needing international protection.³⁰ Since 2019, the externalization of border controls has been gradually but steadily expanded, especially along the border between Mexico and the United States under pressure from Washington. This has led to the signing of the so-called Migrant Protection Protocols (MPP),³¹ without Mexico having the protocols, facilities, or conditions to receive them. The same trend is also found further south, in Central American countries.

Alarming, the safeguards for refugees and asylum systems could be weakening not only in the United States and Canada but across the continent. Protection systems in Latin America and the Caribbean are based on different, multilevel legal systems and mechanisms, such as the 1951 Refugee Convention and its 1967 Protocol, as well as the 1984 Cartagena Declaration on Refugees, which proposes a broad definition of asylum seekers. However, Latin American and Caribbean countries often face a dilemma: Should they recognize these people as migrants or refugees? The answer depends on the country but, even with the broad definition of asylum seekers in the Cartagena Declaration incorporated into different national legislation, most governments do not apply it systematically. This has led to a weakening of protection mechanisms and to regressive practices that abandon human rights guarantees in the region, a situation also observed in the United States and Canada.

Worsening conditions for migrants and refugees in countries of destination has the undesired effect of increase in the number of undocumented residents, whose lack work permits and visas make them vulnerable;

29 This agreement establishes that asylum seekers must seek request protection in the first country they enter, in other words, Canada or the United States.

30 CEAR-Euskadi, *Desplazamientos forzados: los Derechos Humanos desde la perspectiva del Derecho de Asilo. Reivindicaciones y propuestas de cambio*, Bilbao, Comisión de Ayuda al Refugiado en Euskadi, 2010.

31 The Migrant Protection Protocols constitute a U.S. governmental regulation through which citizens and nations of countries apart from Mexico, who arrive in the United States by land from Mexico—whether or not they arrive through a port of entry—can be returned to Mexico in accordance with Section 235(b)(2)(C) of the Law of Immigration and Nationality.

they struggle to integrate into society and suffer labor exploitation. According to the Global Slavery Index 2018,³² more than 400,000 people in the United States live in conditions akin to slavery, many of them working in agriculture. One particularly worrying indicator of labor exploitation in this sector is that migrants account for nine out of ten agricultural workers in this situation. Without access to basic services such as healthcare, education, and housing, they are even more exposed to risks. Labor exploitation also exists in other sectors that attract migrant workers, such as construction and domestic work.³³

An analysis of recent trends highlights the need to find new balances to build upon the regulatory and de facto progress accomplished during the past decade; we also need to mitigate the costs associated with the increase in migration and border controls for health-related, bureaucratic or other reasons. Although specific emergencies and situations motivated much of this progress, such developments can still lay the groundwork for longer-term policies. The time has come to (co)build a continental migration governance system with a humanitarian approach, including in the case of controls.

An effective, humane solution to the migration phenomenon calls for commitments at a continental level and cannot be limited to bilateral agreements. Human mobility is backed by international and regional instruments and organizations, such as the International Organization for Migration, UNHCR, the migration clauses of Mercosur, the Andean Community, the Pacific Alliance, CELAC, and others. U.N. agencies also exist to respond to human displacements (Quito Process and the R4V Inter-Agency Coordination Platform for Venezuelan Refugees and Migrants, regional advisory mechanisms such as the South American Conference for Migration, thematic areas in OAS, IDB, and the World Bank), as well as in private-sector institutions and third-sector organizations. However, governments have chosen to take individual measures instead of building collective solutions through these regional forums.

The U.S lags behind in its adherence to multilateral instruments regarding migration, which undermines its credibility and legitimacy in its pursuit of continental leadership on this issue. The fact that it has not signed the main international instruments, such as the Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families, its indifference to complying with the recommendations of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR), and its absence from regional initiatives such as the Cartagena Declaration, shows a clear lack of commitment. However, the country has shifted its stance on this matter with the Biden government's executive order in 2021 and its endorsement of the Global Compact (adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 2019) by signing the Declaration of Los Angeles

32 Walk Free, *The Global Slavery Index 2018*, Walk Free Foundation, 2018, <https://www.globalslaveryindex.org/resources/downloads/>

33 Polaris, *The Latino Face of Human Trafficking and Exploitation in the United States*, Polaris Project, 2020, <https://polarisproject.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/EXECUTIVE-SUMMARY-The-Latino-Face-of-Human-Trafficking-and-Exploitation-in-the-United-States.pdf>

Table 4.2 Regional protection instruments for migrants and refugees*

Regional instruments	Member countries	Signature date
Convention on Diplomatic Asylum	22	February 20, 1954
American Convention on Human Rights	23	November 22, 1969
Convention on Territorial Asylum	29	March 28, 1975
Cartagena Declaration on Refugees	16	November 22, 1984
Additional Protocol to the American Convention on Human Rights in the Area of Economic, Social and Cultural Rights	19	November 17, 1988
San Jose Declaration on Refugees and Displaced Persons	35	December 22, 1994
Regional Conference on Migration (RCM)	11	February 20, 1996
Regional Programme on Migration in Mesoamerica and the Caribbean (PROMECA, for its initials in Spanish)	13	October 7, 1999
San Salvador Protocol	19	November 17, 1999
Revised treaty of Chaguaramas establishing the Caribbean Community (Caricom) including the single market	14	July 5, 2001
Residence agreement for nations of Mercosur member states, Bolivia and Chile	6	December 6, 2002
International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of their Families	18	July 1, 2003
South American Conference on Migration (Lima Process)	12	December 15, 2004
Central America-4 Border Control Agreement	4	June 20, 2006
Pacific Alliance Free Movement Agreement	4	February 20, 2017
Comprehensive Regional Protection and Solutions Framework (MIRPS, for its initials in Spanish)	12	September 27, 2017
Brazil Declaration and Plan of Action	13	December 5, 2018
Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration	29	December 19, 2018
Mexico Declaration on People in Movement and their International Protection in the Americas	26	December 10, 2020
Decision no. 878 Andean Migration Statute	4	May 12, 2021
Los Angeles Declaration on Migration and Protection	20	June 10, 2022

* Only includes numbers of countries in the Americas.

Source: compiled by author.

Challenges of the Los Angeles Declaration

The agreements reached at the Ninth Summit have their pros and cons. The Los Angeles Declaration on Migration and Protection, with signatories from 21 countries in the Americas, is based on an overarching narrative that promotes four core aspects of migration: promoting stability and assistance for communities of destination, origin, transit, and return; regular immigration pathways and international protection; humane migration management; and coordinated emergency response. It is based on the regulation that recognizes the principles and guidelines of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (GCM) of 2018, although several countries in the continent do not form part of this global instrument.

The Declaration undoubtedly represents progress in terms of its narrative and focus, by providing a global basis and approaching migration as a complex phenomenon that involves and affects everyone, and not just as a challenge for countries to face individually. Positively, the issue is being tackled from a continental perspective through shared responsibility. The tone of the dialogue was constructive and the final document's focus on protecting human rights also points to the need to address the root causes of migration through development cooperation programs. It remains to be seen how these principles alter the participating countries' individual and collective policies.

Nevertheless, the Declaration suffers from several contradictions and does not go beyond the GCM. Although the initiative emphasizes the protection of human rights, its focus on regulating and controlling migration fails to explicitly recognize the benefits and significant contributions that migrant flows bring. Additionally, it does not address the trend towards militarizing migration controls with their emphasis on securitization, which could be corrected by implementing alternative measures. A worrying example of this tendency is the governments' commitment to share information and biometric data. In many countries, this information is used to apply discriminatory controls, without safeguards for people's rights, regardless of their origin or migration status.

Even the principle of shared responsibility can be a double-edged sword, since it could be used to expand and externalize border controls without proportional reciprocity in the opening-up of legal channels or the contribution of resources to construct institutional capacities to meet the needs of migrants and refugees. The Declaration is highly ambiguous, with an emphasis on continued investments in border control measures and information exchange. The rhetoric of human rights protection risks being hijacked in order to legitimize securitization processes.

The process of preparing the Declaration was unorthodox and its adoption only involved the Heads of State. Furthermore, migration was not included in the official agenda of the Summit's work program. The United States, Costa Rica, and Panama were the driving force behind the negotiations for the Declaration following consultations held on Summit's sidelines. No forums were held specifically on migration; civil society and migrant organizations were not directly involved in prior discussions; no horizontal conversations were held. Consultations took place through governmental and intergovernmental circuits, without using public and open channels of communication, although specialized multilateral organizations did accompany the process to a certain degree. The Declaration's credibility and legitimacy has been eroded by the lack of transparency and non-participation of civil society, by the absence of key countries, such as Cuba and Venezuela, and by the non-attendance various Central American countries and of Mexico's Heads of State. This is significant since decision-making on migration requires a particularly strong focus on democratization and the participation of all affected countries.

Furthermore, some omissions are especially troubling, such as the silence surrounding the issue of migrant detentions; the fact that migrants are often detained anywhere is ignored. Detention procedures are unregulated and go unmentioned, even though in most cases they constitute violations of the right to due process. Also missing was any discussion of the weakness of the continent's systems for asylum-seekers, and gender issues on migration only received a passing mention while other vulnerable groups were overlooked (girls, boys, senior

citizens, and the disabled). Migrants' right to defense and due process was completely left out of the discussion. People in transit and migrant caravans have the least access to justice and protection. The non-inclusion of these issues leads to truncated, incomplete, and largely unrepresentative migration policies, which, in the long term, fail to provide structural solutions to the challenges posed by the complex phenomenon.

Migrants' right to defense and due process was completely left out of the discussion.

The Declaration's concept of "humane border management" does not reflect how people suffering greater vulnerability are likely to migrate under irregular conditions. The approach to migration starts with putting more obstacles in the way of regular migration for those who need it the most or anchoring them to their communities of origin. In the Declaration, the proposal on irregular migration focuses primarily on returning or settling migrants in their localities of origin, without taking into account immediate commitments to strengthen asylum and refugee systems.

Practices such as family separation and the detention of children in former jails in the United States have been widely criticized by civil society and international organizations for contravening minimum human rights standards.³⁴ In 2021, IACHR identified a new attitude toward migration issues by the U.S. government since Biden's arrival in the White House, in contrast to the restrictive policies of previous periods that he had criticized.³⁵ This shift in tone could be the start of far-reaching changes in the concept of migration within the continent's main recipient country, but its potential sustainability is not yet clear given the many legal, legislative, and political obstacles facing comprehensive migration reforms. Moreover, any significant improvement for migrants' situation remains a distant horizon.

A major challenge is to honor and follow up on existing commitments. None of the four main pillars of the Declaration are binding; the principles are subject to different interpretations by the states and the design and application of the agreed policies are subject to political fluctuations and electoral cycles. Moreover, considerable resources are required to strengthen the planned cooperation schemes, which today must be developed in a context of budgetary restrictions.

The rights of migrants and refugees must be the result of accumulative policies and shared legal frameworks, not only the work of the government in turn. If the aim of making progress is genuine, then a collective body needs to follow up on the commitments of the Los Angeles Declaration, and prevent them from being implemented exclusively through bilateral negotiations. The region needs spaces for effective interlocution among nongovernmental actors working on this issue. Governments must also ensure the existence of mechanisms to monitor and follow up progress, with transparency and accountability.

The Los Angeles Declaration is already in effect. At the invitation of the United States, countries' representatives have taken part in meetings where working groups have convened with commitments for participation and leadership. It remains to be seen whether this new regional space may enable a transition from a multiplicity of pre-existing consultative forums to a constructive dynamic of shared responsibility, centered on migrants themselves.

34 Global Detention Project, "Newsletter: migrant detention, never in the best interest of children," 2018, <https://www.globaldetentionproject.org/immigration-detention-never-best-interests-children> y *Global Detention Project, Global Detention Project Annual Report*, 2020, <https://www.globaldetentionproject.org/global-detention-project-annual-report-2020>

35 Organization of American States (OAS), Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR), *Practical Guide to Improve International Protection and the Regularization of Legal Status in the Context of Large-Scale Mixed Migration Movements in the Americas*, 2022, https://www.oas.org/es/cidh/Publicaciones/2022/guiaPractica_ProteccionInternacional_MovilidadHumana_SPA.pdf (in Spanish)

Pending issues and lessons learned

LAC's new status as a receiving region for migration presents a major challenge today. It is no longer simply a question of immigrants and emigrants. Despite steps to solve this issue, governments in the region have yet to create and strengthen regular paths for migration. Labor migration is a starting point for regularization, through pilot programs that anticipate gradual increases. The idea is to design programs that contemplate the current status of origin and receiving countries, which must take into account the situation and evolution of labor markets and demographic trends (aging populations and demographic bonus), in order to consider complementarity.

One path is to design comprehensive migration policies that address not only matters related to entries, exits, residences and returns, but that also consider crosscutting issues of receiving countries' public policy, such as health, education, housing, social welfare, labor, and security. Moreover, harmonized regulations, protocols, guidelines, and operating rules are essential to ensure social inclusion.

A public policy without a budget is not a public policy but a list of good intentions and ideal humanitarian measures. Comprehensive and pragmatic policies are both essential, and instead of increasingly strict controls (securitization) the focus needs to be on regulations that prioritize safety. This requires coordinating the narrative (which is almost invariably more benign than the practice) with the implementation of the policies. No successful public policies exist without technical and financial backing. Assigning or increasing budgets for regularization and inclusion is vital, as opposed to militarized controls that, despite their high political and financial cost, have failed to deliver the promised results as a deterrent, let alone provided a means of protecting migrants' human rights.

Of course, border controls are necessary not only to combat transnational crime, including people trafficking and smuggling, but also to govern and protect people in transit. However, controlling is not synonymous with militarizing; nor does a human rights policy designed to protect migrants necessarily mean an open-door policy. Current conditions make it impossible to conceive generalized schemes of free circulation across the continent, beyond subregional spaces.

Strengthening the asylum system as an international protection tool must be a priority to tackle the steady (and sometimes sudden) increase of people in a situation of forced mobility. Hence the need for entry systems to accurately identify the target population in mixed-flow contexts—in other words, by using qualified personnel on air, sea, and land borders who can take informed and non-discriminatory decisions. Similarly, dialogue and collaboration among migration authorities and those in charge of asylum is vital.

This interinstitutional coordination must go hand-in-hand with a robust action plan to make the authorities and populations aware of the migration phenomenon. This involves channeling resources for personnel training, technology, and installations in order to distinguish economic migrants, potential refugees, and victims of people-trafficking. One way of relieving pressure from refugee systems is to offer regular means of entry for those who fall outside of this category. Those States still lacking complementary protection measures need to be encouraged to incorporate them.

Strengthening the asylum system as an international protection tool must be a priority

As a final note, countries in the Americas need to cancel the supposedly exceptional measures imposed—or strengthened—in the context of the covid-19 pandemic and which directly or indirectly prevent any guarantees for the right of asylum, such as pre-admissibility interviews, restricted access to the territory, suspended or prolonged administrative procedures, and refusals of entry at the border without due process. Interactions between the various regional spaces with direct and permanent channels of dialogue needs to be improved. Another useful approach would be to bring together successful bilateral experiences and expand them to a regional or sub-regional level.

Final thoughts and recommendations for the agenda

After consultations and research on migration, we have developed a non-exhaustive list of specific recommendations. This is a critical roadmap to collectively build a continental, medium-term strategic agenda over the next three years that may help reorient the region's migration policies, placing migrants at the center rather than on the periphery. We identify the following key actions in order to develop a program:

- 1 Address migration as a top priority from a comprehensive, crosscutting, gender-based perspective.** Migration is a human, social, and economic phenomenon that is increasingly complex, dynamic, and interconnected and that shows multiple aspects across the continent. The most pressing problem is the precariousness and lack of protection for migrants in transit. We must open up paths for regularization and granting refugee status, as well as inject far more resources to develop communities of origin. The first challenge for (co)building a new migration dialogue in the Americas is to question the prevailing narrative in which migration is seen as a problem or a crisis situation, when in fact it's a constant and challenging reality both for sending and receiving countries, and that exists because it is a promise for better opportunities.
- 2 Mitigate the extreme bilateralization of cooperation on migration, and instead encourage multi-lateral Latin American tools and spaces.** Continental, regional, and subregional instruments have not produced convergent policies or an organized and coherent collaboration at an intra-Latin American level. Predominantly sovereigntist approaches prevail, leaving few incentives for cooperation with nearby countries or in the same region, while strong internal pressures in the United States to contain migration end up imposing the migration agenda on Latin American and Caribbean countries. LAC nations should develop their own perspective on their interests and issues regarding migration. This would help break away from the inertia of a containment-focused approach, which at times has led to the "Americanization" of the agenda, the securitization of the phenomenon, and the militarization of migration policies.
- 3 Further acknowledgement of migrant and refugee international protection.** This is the only possible way to effectively tackle mass forced displacements that result from public insecurity, humanitarian crises, or climate-change related events. This can be achieved through Temporary Protection Permits or broader definitions of refugee status, as enshrined in the Cartagena Declaration. The relevant agreements adopted must be binding for all member countries. A first step in that direction would be to organize a continental summit on asylum and refugee issues, in order to take stock of the situation and begin to set up a regional system for protecting refugees as a shared responsibility.
- 4 Ensure compliance with minimum substantive and procedural guarantees for all persons in mobility situations, regardless of their administrative status.** States should not have absolute discretionary power over migrants' entry and settlement within their borders. When expelling migrants, governments

must adhere to international standards, including respect for due process and the principle of non-refoulement.³⁶ Policies such as denying entry at the border, indirect returns, and lengthy detentions must be reviewed and replaced by mechanisms that make it possible to identify the needs for international protection at an individual level.

5

Organize education campaigns and impose penalties as a deterrent to the discrimination and xenophobia migrants face across the continent. Steps must be taken to recognize migrants' economic and cultural contributions to their destination countries, as proposed in the Third Summit of the Americas (Quebec, 2001). Resume the Inter-American Convention on the Promotion and Protection of the Human Rights of Migrants and Their Families (2005), which mentions providing "suitable mechanisms for reporting and filing complaints made by migrants and civil society organizations regarding violence and alleged violations of human rights."³⁷ We need to develop plans at a national, regional, and continental level to improve media coverage of migration issues and to counteract the effects of infodemics. Awareness-raising campaigns are urgently needed for migrants to learn about their rights and about complaint and damage compensation mechanisms. This area is particularly well-suited for joint actions.

6

Establish wider channels of regular migration, regularization, and integration proportional to the increase in human mobility. Apart from those seeking international protection, many migrants voluntarily leave their places of origin in search of better living and working conditions and greater wellbeing for them and their families who, given the shortage of regular migration routes, resort to irregular channels.

7

Strengthen funding mechanisms for migration policies across the continent. The International Rescue Committee³⁸ refers to countries in the region that are severely dependent on the United States for funding responses to recent migration flows. Out of the \$1.09 billion invested in the Humanitarian Response Plan and the Regional Refugee and Migrant Response Plan, the United States has contributed 65.7% (\$7.3 billion). The Los Angeles Declaration contains a "pillar" of assistance for countries of origin and destination that was included at the request of Colombia and Panama, which probably increases the level of cooperation with the United States. However, this collaboration is likely to focus on the areas

36 Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR), Resolution 4/19 - Inter-American Principles on the Human Rights of all Migrants, Refugees, Stateless Persons and Victims of Human Trafficking, December 7, 2019, <https://www.oas.org/en/iachr/decisions/pdf/Resolution-4-19-en.pdf>

37 Organization of American States (OAS), Permanent Council's Working Group of the Committee on Juridical and Political Affairs, Inter-American Program for the Promotion and Protection of the Human Rights of Migrants, Including Migrant Workers and Their Families, AG/RES. 2141 (XXXV-O/05), June 7, 2005, https://www.oas.org/dil/esp/trabajadores_migratorios_programa_interamericano.htm (in Spanish)

38 International Rescue Committee (IRC), *A Fractured Response: Policy Recommendations to Strengthen Regional Collaboration on Migration in the Americas*, 2022, <https://www.rescue.org/sites/default/files/document/6810/afracturedresponsepolicyrecommendationstostrengthenregionalcollaborationonmigrationintheamericas.pdf>

of interest for the country providing the funds.³⁹ Expanding the number and type of donors beyond the region is required, especially ones that prioritize multilateral channels.

8

The Summits of the Americas provide the right setting for considering key migration governance issues at a continental level, since it is a unique forum where countries of origin, transit, and destination can assemble. Given the region's many different and coexisting multilateral migration-related institutions and spaces, the heads of state's meetings could help direct and align the work of various global, continental, regional, and subregional organizations working on this issue.

9

Promote and facilitate spaces of dialogue among nongovernmental actors from across the continent to participate in formulating, implementing, and following up on best migration practices. Contributions made by civil society organizations, academic and research institutions, and migrant organizations are an extremely valuable component in the processes of designing, formulating, and implementing migration policies, particularly with regard to diagnoses, narratives, and the dissemination of the issue in the continent's societies. Involving subnational and community actors is essential for a new migration governance structure and, above all, to consider ways to empower migrants.

10

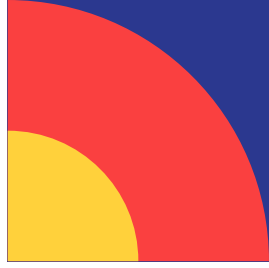
Improve migration agencies' management and bureaucracies in all regional and subregional spaces in the Americas as an urgent priority. In many countries in the region there are experiences and best practices that could be used to help entry, regularization, and integration processes, in order to set up temporary worker programs and provide more humane treatment for migrant populations, particularly those who are part of forced migrations. Improving migration management in the Americas is a pending assignment, as this is an area that, unlike others, that has everything it needs to improve its governance. A proper implementation of migration policies throughout the continent will require accompaniment, consultancy, training, and the sharing of best practice, which requires the development of databases with common standards.

11

The complexity and diversity of the migration phenomenon requires collective leadership that balances the predominance of perspectives based solely on States' sovereignty or unilateral approaches. Considering that this is an issue to be tackled collectively, it is important that efforts are jointly conducted by different countries simultaneously. These collective leaderships can be intergovernmental, between States with similar visions that have already implemented important multilateral initiatives in these issues, such as Canada and Mexico. But they can also be multilevel, subnational, and nongovernmental. Transnational coalitions of cities, communities, and diasporas that share common problems could be promoted to collaborate in the search for better living conditions for migrants and the environments where they live.

39 Leiza Brumat, "A migration pact for the Americas proposed by the U.S.?", *Latinoamérica21*, July 12, 2022, <https://latinoamerica21.com/en/a-migration-pact-for-the-americas-proposed-by-the-us/>





Climate change, the environment, and energy transition: one size does not fit all

CHRONIC INEQUALITIES IN THE AMERICAS will not be resolved without an economic recovery based on new development models that are socially inclusive, environmentally sustainable, low-carbon, and resilient to international volatility. Although the focus on the environment and energy transition is a converging and promising agenda at a continental level, it is undoubtedly such a complex, costly, and asymmetric process, with winners and losers along the way, that it requires an enormous willingness to negotiate among diverse stakeholders from the public, private, and social sectors. Long-term strategies are also required. In this transition, it is essential to have social and academic leadership organized in epistemic communities and communities of practice.

A consensus now appears to exist on these issues in most of the continent, which marks a propitious moment to push forward with inter-American cooperation that may enable a balanced agenda to move toward a sustainable future. However, a major challenge on environmental issues is to consider the gaps between countries, to modify production matrices, and to reorient development models. All this calls for different speeds and custom-made solutions, depending on the different national, local, cross border and transregional contexts.

Strategically relevant thematic areas also exist and require cooperation plans and programs, with medium- and long-term comprehensive approaches. Such is the case of energy use. A vision that encompasses the generation, distribution, and use of energy would benefit all the inhabitants of the Americas. This is also the case of climate-change programs, a shared challenge whose solutions must be structured, participative, and long term.

The Americas' outstanding environmental debts

Environmental challenges are central to our understanding of the continent's present and future; they are a priority for facing latent threats at the same time that they offer opportunities for making social, economic, and human progress.

In this agenda, climate change is a key theme, a priority in international environmental policy that has led to instruments such as the Rio Convention (1992), the Kyoto Protocol (1997), and the Paris Accords (2016).

The effects of climate change can be felt across the continent in different ways: hurricanes, droughts, heat-waves, melting glaciers, and flooding are all part of the new environmental panorama. As a result, many Latin American countries are extremely or highly vulnerable to the effects of climate change, particularly in the

Caribbean, Central America, and parts of the Andes.¹ This situation impacts both rural and urban life, causing difficulties for economic activities and affecting people's health and safety. Environmental displacements are a reality and directly affect marginalized sectors, exacerbating the inequality cycle.²

In parallel, the region's diminishing water resources over recent decades has sparked a supply crisis for consumers in large cities. Since the Americas is the world's most urbanized region, with over 80% of its inhabitants living in cities (according to World Bank data),³ the problems of air, soil, and water pollution, the lack of access to basic public services, obstacles to mobility, insecurity, and unpreparedness for extreme climate events all form part of the daily reality for most inhabitants. This affects Latin American cities as well as certain urban areas of the United States and Canada.

Caribbean and Central American countries have witnessed the increasing frequency and strength of hurricanes and storms, while droughts have become common place in various parts of South America and worsened in Central America along the Dry Corridor, posing a threat to local agriculture. Heatwaves and winter storms in North America's developed countries have become increasingly severe.

In many countries, the consolidation of an extractivist development model has exacerbated the situation.⁴ One of the most negative consequences has been increasing deforestation, a particular problem in countries such as Brazil,⁵ resulting in the lower capacity of absorbing the growing emissions, and accompanied by increasing violence linked to the murders of environmental activities, leaders of local communities, and members of indigenous groups.⁶ A fundamental part of the problem has been the incursion of organized and petty criminals, combined with local authorities' inability to respond. While the reduction of the Amazon rainforest is the most high-profile example of this trend, deforestation is a reality throughout the continent, with visible effects on a wide variety of countries such as Argentina and Haiti. As a general rule, however, the direct effects are felt more strongly in the most vulnerable populations living in the affected areas.

This deterioration cannot be understood in isolation from the fact that some governments, whether at a national or subnational level, have adopted a discourse that deems environmental protection to be a potential obstacle in the way of economic growth. This antienvironmentalist phenomenon does not distinguish between levels of development and can be observed in various countries in North America, Latin America, and the Caribbean.

As it has gained ground, the extractivist model has overlapped with the increasingly widespread adoption, both in LAC and in the United States and Canada, of new hydrocarbon and gas mining techniques, such as fracking, which requires an intensive use of water, as well as open-pit mining operations, which produce substantial

1 Maplecroft, *Climate Change Vulnerability Index*, 2017 and 2018, <https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/verisk%20index.pdf>.

2 D. Caro Tapia, "Victims of global warming have not heard of climate change," *Latinoamérica 21*, 2022, <https://latinoamerica21.com/en/victims-of-global-warming-have-not-heard-of-climate-change/>.

3 According to World Bank data, "Urban population" (% of total population), United Nations, World Urbanization Prospects, <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.URB.TOTL.IN.ZS>.

4 M. Svampa, *Las fronteras del neoextractivismo en América Latina: conflictos socioambientales, giro ecoterritorial y nuevas dependencias*, Guadalajara, Centro María Sibylla Merian de Estudios Latinoamericanos Avanzados (CALAS), 2019.

5 According to data from Brazil's National Institute for Space Research (INPE, for its initials in Portuguese), "Monitoramento do Desmatamento da Floresta Amazônica Brasileira por Satélite," <http://www.obt.inpe.br/OBT/assuntos/programas/amazonia/prodes> (in Portuguese).

6 M. Franchini, A. C. Mauad, and E. Viola, "From Lula to Bolsonaro: A Decade of Climate Governance Degradation in Brazil," *Análisis Político*, 33 (99), 2020, pp. 81–100, <https://doi.org/10.15446/anpol.v33n99.90969> (in Spanish). According to a 2022 report by Global Witness, of a total of 200 homicides of environmental activists in 2021, 153 took place in Latin American and Caribbean countries. Of the total, moreover, 50% were committed in Mexico, Brazil, and Colombia. See Ali Hines, "Decade of Defiance," *Global Witness*, 2022, <https://www.globalwitness.org/en/campaigns/environmental-activists/decade-defiance/>.

amounts of chemical waste. In both cases, such operations have caused widely confirmed damage for local populations.

Predominant agricultural and agroindustrial modes of production in the Americas also cause negative impacts on the environment and climate, adding to the social costs as well as to the displacement of traditional agricultural communities, migration pressures, health problems resulting from new consumer patterns and the extensive fertilizer use.

More continental cooperation is needed on environmental and climate issues. Countries in the Americas do not coordinate when negotiating at multilateral environmental forums; their tendency to operate solely on the basis of their individual interests has created a fragmented continent.⁷ In recent years, countries in the region have been divided between the Independent Alliance of Latin America and the Caribbean (AILAC, for its initials in Spanish), which lays bridges between the developing and developed worlds, and the Bolivarian Alliance for the Nations of Our America (ALBA, for its initials in Spanish), which advocates an end to capitalism as the solution to the climate crisis. Environmental and climate issues are also low on the agenda for various regional and subregional processes,⁸ with the partial exceptions of Caricom, the Pacific Alliance—with the Environment and Green Growth Technical Group (GTMACV, for its initials in Spanish)—and of the Latin American Integration System (SICA, for its initials in Spanish), with the creation of a Regional Environmental Observatory and the Green Development Fund.

Furthermore, this deterioration has been linked to very limited continental cooperation on environmental and climate issues.

Latin America and the Caribbean, United States, and Canada need to reach more agreements to contribute to global governance on environmental issues, as well as to build an agenda of proposals among governments, following consensus reached with social movements and international organizations on urgent climate issues in the Americas. This work should be based on the recognition of regulatory processes and practical advances already in place, and must assume that problems are shared. The challenge largely requires harmonizing pre-existing measures being applied at a national and subregional level.

LAC countries are not signatories to Annex 1 of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, which means that, until the Paris Accords, they did not have mitigation obligations. Furthermore, countries in the region began working on international environmental policies under the aegis of G-77+China, based on the core premise that developed countries are mainly responsible for sustainability.⁹ Many LAC countries' environmental and climate foreign policies remain rooted in this North-South narrative, although with increasing divergences between them.

Identifying more cooperative and unified discourses currently presents a major challenge; environmental governance has deteriorated significantly over the past decade in the region's largest economies—Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Mexico, and Venezuela. Within the framework of the Paris Accords, countries in the region have publicly announced their targets for mitigating and adapting to climate change, inviting comparisons of their commitment and convergence levels (or lack thereof) in their narratives on the issue.

7 G. Edwards and J. T. Roberts, *A Fragmented Continent: Latin America and the Global Politics of Climate Change*, Boston, MIT Press, 2015.

8 M. Franchini, "Climate Change Politics in Latin America and the Caribbean," in M. Franchini, *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Politics*, Oxford University Press, 2021, <https://doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780190228637.013.1691>.

9 Kathryn Hochstetler, "Latin America in Global Environmental Governance," in Jorge I. Domínguez and Ana Covarrubias (eds.), *Routledge Handbook of Latin America in the World*, New York, Routledge, 2015.

Similar difficulties are found in the United States and Canada, where certain environmental regulations were proactively relaxed for some years. Despite an apparent reversal in this tendency in recent years, certain legal decisions, for example the U.S. Supreme Court's ruling to limit the prerogatives of the country's Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), represent a step backward in this regard.¹⁰

The Americas: assets to (co)build sustainable models

Despite the aforementioned problems, the Americas as a region is in a position to constructively participate in drawing up an environmental agenda with a global impact for several reasons.

The Amazon rainforest is pivotal in the global carbon cycle and regional climate¹¹ as a reservoir of global carbon and with a powerful influence over temperature and precipitation patterns in South America. Preserving its integrity is essential for climate stability and the activities that depend on it, such as food production and tourism.

Similarly, Latin America and the Caribbean is the planet's most biodiverse region, with Brazil and Colombia being global reference points in this regard. However, Latin American biodiversity faces more threats than anywhere in the world,¹² particularly due to the conversion of land, deforestation and degradation of marine ecosystems. The challenges therefore consist of establishing biodiversity protection mechanisms that benefit both the environmental services they provides as well as their genetic diversity.

Furthermore, renewable energies have historically been an important component of the energy mix in Latin America and the Caribbean. In the region, these sources represented 28% of the total in 2015, compared to 18% at a global level. Insofar as renewable energies are crucial for the global transition toward low carbon emissions,

the region can be instrumental in this process due to the high potential of hydroelectric, solar, and wind energy. However, there are two main challenges. First, several countries on the continent have a significant or hegemonic presence of hydrocarbon industries—Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Canada, Colombia, Ecuador, United States, Mexico, and Venezuela—and its export (Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador, Mexico, and Venezuela). This erects economic and political barriers to energy transition, due to vested interests created by the fossil-fuel industry with its significant veto power. The second is the impact of climate variability—particularly precipitation patterns—on hydroelectric energy production, which is the main source of the electricity matrix in various economies of the region, such as Brazil, Colombia, Peru, and Uruguay.

Diversifying energy sources further through solid intra- or extra-regional supply networks is not only important for promoting decarbonization but will also increase the resilience of each country's energy systems to sudden shocks.

The Americas as a region is in a position to constructively participate in drawing up an environmental agenda with a global impact

10 J. Sutter, "Opinion: Supreme Court deals a massive blow to the planet," *CNN*, July 1, 2022, <https://edition.cnn.com/2022/06/30/opinions/scotus-epa-carbon-dioxide-climate-sutter>.

11 Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), *AR4 Climate Change 2007: Synthesis Report*, 2007, <https://www.ipcc.ch/report/ar4/syr/>; AR5 Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), *Climate Change 2014: Synthesis Report- Contribution of Working Groups I, II and III to the Fifth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change*, https://www.ipcc.ch/site/assets/uploads/2018/05/SYR_AR5_FINAL_full_wcover.pdf

12 R.E.A. Almond, M. Grooten, and T. Petersen (eds.), *Living Planet Report 2020 - Bending the Curve of Biodiversity Loss*, World Wildlife Fund (WWF), Gland, Switzerland, 2020.

The Americas are responsible for 21.6% of global emissions,¹³ though the LAC region produces only 8% of global greenhouse gases (GHG) emissions, with a significant proportion coming from Agriculture, Forestry and other Land Use (AFOLU), in contrast to the emissions profile in most of the world (except sub-Saharan Africa) where energy emissions are predominant. Although per capita emissions are slightly lower than the global mean, the economy's carbon intensity is around 25% higher than the world's average. The region's significant internal divergences represent a challenge; Brazil and Mexico on their own account for almost half of LAC's emissions. Per capita emissions also vary widely with some countries at very low levels, such as Costa Rica and Chile, and others much higher, as is the case of Paraguay and some Caribbean countries.

At a continental level, the United States is the only country to have seen a systematic drop in its emissions, ever since 2000. Neither Canada nor Brazil have achieved this decrease; levels in Mexico and Trinidad and Tobago have remained stable; and some countries, such as Chile or Colombia, have seen emissions rise. Venezuela is a special case because its decreasing emissions have resulted from the country's recent economic crisis rather than a deliberate and proactive effort in this direction.

Increasing deforestation rates is causing emissions from agriculture, forestry and other land use in most countries sharing the Amazon rainforest (Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, Guyana, Peru, Surinam, and Venezuela, albeit with varying impacts), in Paraguay, and in some Central American nations. Agriculture is one of the main emitters in other nations such as Argentina, Colombia, and Uruguay. Excessive fertilizer and pesticide use is part of the problem.

In terms of energy, Argentina and Mexico are among the largest emitters and need to make the most effort to decarbonize their energy mixes. Other countries such as Chile, Costa Rica, and Uruguay, by contrast, have already made progress in this area. Emissions from the waste sector have grown steadily over recent decades and despite contributing a relatively small proportion of total emissions, more consistent policies are needed for their mitigation.

Significant progress made by some nations can set an example for others in the region. For example, Chile has made good progress in the energy sector by generating almost 30% of its electricity through solar power in recent years.¹⁴ A series of new policy instruments enabled solar power projects—and, to a lesser extent, wind power installations—to compete on relatively equal terms with fossil-fuel power plants, in a strategy that has endured despite changes in government administrations. Other areas of progress include the electrification of public transport in Chile's capital, Santiago, and the launch of green bonds, designed to finance activities to tackle climate change and help the environment, which commits the Chilean treasury to paying higher interest rates to holders of the bonds if sustainability targets are not met. Finally, Chile's forestry sector has been an asset for its commitment to address climate change since the 1990s: the country's forested areas have expanded, particularly its commercial plantations, increasing their carbon-absorbing capacity.

Costa Rica has also developed the most solid environmental governance in Latin America and the Caribbean over the past three decades. The process began with forest protection toward the end of the 1980s, initially reverting the alarmingly high previous rate of deforestation intended to start recovering forest cover, a target achieved through ecotourism and payments for environmental services. Also, the country's electricity-generation mix uses almost entirely renewable energy sources. Alongside these measures, the country now has a domestic and foreign reputation as a green society, earning it a positive reputation around the world, attracting foreign investment and international cooperation.

13 Estimates from the Climate Watch database, *Historical GHG Emissions*, https://www.climatewatchdata.org/ghg-emissions?end_year=2019&start_year=1990

14 N. García Bernal, *Matriz Energética de Chile*, Biblioteca del Congreso Nacional de Chile, Asesoría Técnica Parlamentaria, September 2021, https://obtienearchivo.bcn.cl/obtienearchivo?id=repositorio/10221/32492/1/BCN_Matriz_energetica_electrica_en_Chile.pdf (in Spanish).

Table 5.1 Average annual growth rates of equivalent CO2 emissions by the main countries in the Western Hemisphere and China

	1991-2019	2000-2019	2010-2019
World total	2	2	2
China	5	6	3
United States	0	-0	-0
Canada	1	1	1
Argentina	1	1	1
Bolivia	2	3	3
Brazil	2	2	2
Chile	3	2	3
Colombia	1	2	2
Costa Rica	2	2	2
Ecuador	2	2	1
Mexico	2	1	0
Peru	3	3	2
Trinidad and Tobago	2	4	0
Venezuela	0	-1	-3

Source: Climate Watch, Historical GHG Emissions.

Uruguay has also increased its forest cover in recent years, particularly due to commercial plantations, although this South American country notably did not experience intense deforestation and that monoculture eucalyptus plantations depleted water resources. Energy transition has been the country's most impressive contribution to tackling climate change; in the past decade, Uruguay has almost completely replaced fossil fuels with renewable alternatives, especially wind power generators, building on the firm foundations of pre-existing hydroelectric energy.

The aforementioned cases show us an important connection between democracy and development models for environmental issues. Most progress on environmental issues has been achieved by the strongest and most enduring democracies.

Catalyzing sustainability through energy transition

Energy transition is key in mitigating climate change. The agreements reached on this issue at the Ninth Summit of the Americas explicitly referred to the commitments of the Paris Accords as a framework of understanding and cooperation between countries on the continent, that are centered on reducing GHGs and decarbonizing the world's economies by rolling out a diversified energy mix oriented toward clean and renewable energy sources, as well as mobility that is less dependent on internal combustion engines.

Currently, the energy mix in the Americas is highly but unequally diversified. If we take a continental perspective, the weight of hydroenergy and renewable energies is greater in South America than in North American nations (22% vs. 6%). The least diversified countries are Mexico, the United States, and Brazil; countries that consume vast quantities of energy, such as Canada and Brazil, have a large hydroelectric energy capacity thanks to their abundant rivers and lakes. However, it is interesting to note how Brazil—LAC's main energy consumer—obtains 19% of its primary energy from renewable resources, a higher proportion than the United States (8%) and Canada (4%). Meanwhile, the United States, the largest emitter on the continent and second largest in the world, still has a long way to go to reduce its dependency on hydrocarbons.

In terms of diversification, apart from accelerating the decarbonization of Latin American and Caribbean economies, proposals should be made to increase countries' capacity to respond and bounce back from external shocks (of any kind) that might alter their energy mix. This makes it necessary to have a diversified offer, since the target is also to reduce GHG emissions, especially in terms of electricity generation. The ideal objective is to strengthen this resilience with a higher proportion of renewables.

The main challenge currently facing the continent is the possible recarbonization of the nations' economies following the energy shock caused by Russia's invasion of Ukraine. This conflict has generated contradictory signs in the energy markets: on the one hand, the production of crude oil and gas has had to increase in order to mitigate the vulnerability of European countries to Russian supplies and, on the other, the situation has caused a more pressing need for renewable energies to become available more quickly, especially for those countries that are in a position to do so. The war has clearly consolidated the position of natural gas as the cleanest dispatchable fossil fuel for generating electricity. The United States is the country best positioned to navigate such choppy waters; it has the technological, geological, and economic capacity to maintain the growth rate of its oil and gas offer. The Biden administration has passed two important pieces of legislation—on infrastructure and reducing inflation—which has authorized the increase of resources to promote the use of electric vehicles and renewable energy sources in the current decade.

Brazil, Argentina, and Mexico also have considerable non-conventional (shale) gas potential. However, the large volumes of water and chemical products required to fracture the deposits for extraction poses an additional environmental threat. The United States and Canada began extracting this type of gas some time ago and could offer lessons on extraction methods that minimize negative impacts.

Another challenge is linked to the extraction of minerals such as cobalt, lithium, graphite, and rare metals, which have become important in the same way oil or gas were during the early phases of their development, and they will play a key role in the transition process. Table 5.3 shows how various countries in the Americas have large, proved reserves of these strategic resources for the future; Mexico and Bolivia are at the exploration and development phase and showing signs of significant though still unproved potential. This situation makes it necessary to move forward in promoting “sustainable and responsible principles” in the extraction and trading of key metals and minerals that are essential for the transition, as well as the integration of their supply chains at a continental level.

Most progress on environmental issues has been achieved by the strongest and most enduring democracies.

Table 5.2 Primary energy: consumption by type of fuel (%)

Proportion of total by country (exajoules) 2021

Country	Oil	Natural gas	Coal	Nuclear	Hydro	Renewables
Canada	29.92	30.78	3.44	5.96	25.74	4.15
Mexico	37.70	46.78	3.41	1.59	4.82	5.70
United States	38.00	32.01	11.37	7.96	2.61	8.05
North America	36.99	32.74	9.92	7.34	5.58	7.43
Argentina	35.72	48.18	1.91	2.85	5.38	5.95
Brazil	35.46	11.59	5.67	1.06	27.20	19.02
Chile	44.00	13.57	15.91	0.00	9.36	17.16
Colombia	36.45	23.63	6.90	0.00	29.31	3.71
Ecuador	64.58	2.60	0.26	0.00	31.61	0.95
Peru	43.00	24.08	3.85	0.00	25.08	3.99
Trinidad and Tobago	8.63	91.36	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.01
Venezuela	29.06	42.49	0.02	0.00	28.39	0.05
Others: South and Central America	59.71	8.37	5.56	0.00	18.23	8.13
South and Central America	39.76	20.66	5.13	0.81	21.85	11.79
China	19.41	8.65	54.66	2.34	7.77	7.18
World	30.95	24.42	26.90	4.25	6.76	6.71

Source: British Petroleum (BP), *Statistical Review of World Energy*, June 2022, <http://www.bp.com/statisticalreview>

Table 5.3 Reserves and production of critical materials, 2021 (%)*

	Cobalt		Lithium		Graphite		Rare metals	
	Production	Reserves	Production	Reserves	Production	Reserves	Production	Reserves
Argentina			5.6	10.9				
Brazil			1.4	0.5	7.8	19.2	0.2	17
Canada	2.9	3.2			0.6			
Chile			24.5	45.4				
United States			0.8	3.7			15.1	1.5
Mexico					0.1	0.8		

*Countries in the Americas with proved reserves.

Source: BP, 2022.

Although some countries' environmental activities have notably positive or negative impacts, as in the case of Brazil and the United States, the potential of best practice on environmental issues and energy transition is becoming one of the main challenges for countries on the continent, and this requires a joint effort and collective responses.

In recent years, the United States has put the issue back on its agenda by reaffirming its commitments to emissions reductions and, as mentioned above, has passed legislation to promote the use of renewable energies and electric mobility. This redefinition had direct effects on the rest of the region and prompted governments that had openly abandoned their climate agenda to moderate their positions.

The revitalization of this agenda also had an impact on discussions during the last Summit of the Americas, in which two of the five major agreements signed were joint declarations on energy issues: the first was on promoting the transition and strengthening the resilience to climate change, and the second on the social, political and land-use conditions necessary to ensure a green future.

The first proposed three main topics: the need to hasten energy transition in order to reduce emissions that are accelerating global warming, in line with the commitments undertaken by all countries in the Americas region in the Paris Accords; the need to reorient development bank credit toward promoting green energies and climate mining; the urgent need to restructure value chains at a continental level, based on the main engines to drive the new green economy (fuel cells, electric vehicles, microprocessors, and clean energy generation). The documents very explicitly invoked the commitments undertaken at the Paris Accords as a framework of understanding and cooperation among countries in the Americas, which are mainly based on reducing GHG emissions and decarbonizing the global economy by rolling out a more diversified energy mix oriented toward clean and renewable energies, and mobility less dependent on internal combustion.

Another of the agreements promotes “sustainable, resilient, and responsible principles” on the extraction and trading of metals and key minerals for the transition, as well as the integration of their supply chains at a continental level. Finally, an additional commitment was to increase energy efficiency, understood as an economy’s capacity to reduce production intensity. In this regard, both the United States and Latin American nations showed a clear tendency toward reducing their energy intensity, although the process has not been homogenous.

Data compiled by the Latin American Energy Organization (OLADE, for its initials in Spanish) shows that countries such as Colombia, Costa Rica, and Cuba have reduced their intensity levels more sharply than the regional average. Argentina and Brazil, on the other hand, have frozen their indicators, suggesting that there remains plenty of room for improvement through the modernization of their energy sectors and by articulating public policies seeking more efficient consumption. Mexico, in common with the two countries mentioned above, froze its intensity levels and only began to reduce them since the 2010s, undoubtedly the result of a deliberate public policy that has promoted savings and more efficient consumption. Therefore, much work needs to be done and this could become a major area of North-South cooperation based on technology transfer and modernization in energy generation and use.

Final thoughts and recommendations for the agenda

On the issues of climate change, environmental protection, and energy transition, the inter-American dialogue must be reoriented. Decarbonization requires adapting schedules and methods to the varying rhythms required by countries across the continent, depending on their development levels and sociocultural contexts. Tackling climate change will involve a long period of modifications of productive structures and social habits, taking time and going through phases that will undoubtedly require corrections along the way.

Promoting measures such as total decarbonization that do not factor in time constraints and are not accompanied by enough measures to ensure the region's development could lead to tensions and delays. Differentiating responsibilities is a core principle for bearing the asymmetric costs of climate change. Climate and environmental finance can become a bottleneck, hence the need to prioritize it.

Differentiating responsibilities is a core principle for bearing the asymmetric costs of climate change.

All countries in the Americas have agreed to reduce their GHGs and polluting emissions. Mitigation has so far been prioritized, and we must continue, accelerate, and extend this work if we are to respond to the climate emergency. However, the region's extreme vulnerability to the impacts of climate change makes it more urgent than ever to redouble efforts to expand and develop adaptation measures further. Specifically, these policies should focus on making more resilient ecosystems, production systems, and communities, requiring robust capacity and institutional systems. In parallel, cooperation systems must be strengthened to provide early warnings, emergency responses, and better reconstruction following natural disasters.

Moreover, social actors in Latin America share the same concerns about extractivism and are calling for environmental justice, including the protection of their countries' respective biodiversity. We must consider making comprehensive changes: first, production methods should be altered to limit their harmful effects on the environment; second, economic actors need to take responsibility for redressing the potential environmental harm caused by their activities on the ecosystem and on people's right to health; and finally, respect for biodiversity must be an overriding principle of economic activities, whether these are public, private, or community-based.

We have identified the following overarching areas of opportunity for a shared environmental agenda in the Americas on forest and woodland protection; agriculture, energy, and transport; the regional carbon economy, zero carbon; green financing; and follow-up and monitoring mechanisms.

I Prioritize jungle and woodland protection in the Americas, with an emphasis on Amazonian countries and Paraguay, where the pressure is greatest. This should include multilateral and bilateral financial aid, ecotourism, bioeconomy, the development of biotechnology, and the expansion of protected areas. Equally or even more urgent is the protection of vulnerable populations, including indigenous communities and environmental leaders.

2

Generate a large-scale, continent-wide pact to protect forests, in particular the Amazon rainforest, and the region's vulnerable communities. The initial focus must be on controlling deforestation, which implies combatting illicit activities and organized crime, generating economic alternatives for local populations, establishing a payment system for environmental services for people living in the forests and woodland, and protecting communities that are vulnerable to violence. We need to make the most of the potential window of opportunity opened by the convergence of governments that have prioritized the environment on their agendas, such as Lula da Silva, in Brazil; Gustavo Petro, in Colombia; Gabriel Boric, in Chile; and Joe Biden, in the United States.

3

Create a regulatory framework for large-scale forest carbon sequestration in tropical regions. Countries in Latin America and the Caribbean—and particularly in the Caribbean—have enormous potential for carbon sequestration,¹⁵ a potential magnet for foreign and domestic investments as well as for generating carbon credits, associated with a future creation of a global market. Regulated carbon markets should therefore be set up in as many countries as possible (see 8 below).

4

The Americas could become a continent of relatively clean energy, although the size and distribution of costs need to be taken into consideration. This should include a framework to reduce and eliminate fossil fuel subsidies. Connected to making progress in clean energies is potential green hydrogen production, which is already being explored in Canada and the United States and recently also in some Latin American countries such as Chile, Costa Rica, and Uruguay. Finally, electric mobility is another area of potential cooperation, both for private and public transport, which also requires the development of suitable infrastructure. In order to make the most of the region's enormous potential, strong support for the development of non-conventional renewable energies – solar and wind – must continue. Following up on the commitment of the Ninth SOA to cancel subsidies of fossil fuels is important as a means of reducing consumption distortions. This would encourage renewables to enter the energy mix, their costs having begun to fall in recent years.

5

Draw up a framework to accelerate energy transition and electric mobility that factors in contrasting development levels, and establishing a fund for the Americas. High-income countries (Canada and the United States) and medium-high income countries should fund infrastructure, a technology transfer framework, and the dissemination of best practice from around the region.

6

Promote low-carbon and sustainable agricultural markets and technologies, as a priority, given the agricultural and fishing industry's large impact on emission patterns in the region and on land and water use; in particular, the use of agrochemical products and fertilizers for production should be reduced.

¹⁵ “Carbon sequestration” is defined as the removal of CO₂ from the atmosphere and its storage in carbon sinks, such as organic soil matter.

7

Promote a framework for developing and rolling out virtuous agricultural practices and technologies, for the **generation of a low-carbon, continental agricultural market** and for the transfer of funds to finance these objectives. Moving toward better agricultural practices in food production and distribution is clearly necessary given the risks of food insecurity caused by climate change and geopolitical conflicts.

8

Make progress on creating a continental carbon market with a multilevel format. The idea of a global carbon market is one of the main instruments of the Paris Accords. This could be materialized following the progress made at the COP in Glasgow and Cairo, and should be jointly promoted at the COP in Abu Dhabi. Latin America and the Caribbean have the potential to generate carbon credits from the forestry and energy sectors. The creation of regulated carbon markets can be promoted in parallel and at different speeds at a national, subregional, regional, and continental level.

9

In the long term, cooperation among countries in the Americas should aim to become carbon zero in 2050. This effort requires work in all spheres of inter-American dialogue in developing a shared narrative on sustainability and responses to the climate crisis, accompanied by converging positions on international environmental negotiations. This narrative should be a keystone of regional cooperation as a crosscutting issue on economic, social, migration, human rights, and security agendas.

10

Prioritize green financing. International development banking—encompassing the World Bank (WB) and the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), and even subregional loan organizations such as the Development Bank of Latin America (CAF, for its initials in Spanish), the Central American Bank for Economic Integration (CABEI), and the Caribbean Development Bank (CDB)—must prioritize funds for green projects, whether for energy, climate mining,¹⁶ tourism, or agriculture. Private banking should be similarly committed.

11

Sustainable development funds must be more accessible. In theory, all LAC countries can potentially obtain loans from multilateral banking organizations, the IDB, and subregional banks to initiate or boost clean energy growth, but greater flexibility is needed for medium and medium-high income countries' eligibility. Moreover, the high volatility and uncertainty in all energy markets creates confusion to what extent loan funds will be punished for fossil fuel use. Private banking should be involved in this area.

16 Climate mining is a technological process that seeks to use solar energy to extract GHGs from the atmosphere, such as carbon dioxide, and store them safely and permanently. This is considered a potential strategy to mitigate climate change, since it reduces the amount of GHGs in the atmosphere.

12

Create a social observatory of climate mining. On the basis of the consensual “green economy” document at the Los Angeles Summit, with its primary focus on the social, environmental, and political impact of energy transition, a Social Observatory of Climate Mining could be created within the OAS or Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC, for its initials in Spanish) that could monitor abuses or infringements of environmental, labor, public healthcare, and human rights legislation resulting from a neoextractivist approach at a local, national, and international level. Illegal mining should be combatted from a regional perspective.

13

Promote scientific-technological cooperation between universities, research centers, public and private institutions as an important means of developing cutting edge projects on issues such as green hydrogen and tidal energy. Support the creation of an observatory to measure and follow up on the risks and vulnerabilities facing the Americas related to climate change. Drafting a continental risk map that identifies the most vulnerable regions and areas of possible cooperation to mitigate and reduce the costs of such risks would be useful.

14

More and better adaptation solutions are needed in response to severe weather in the Americas. Progress has been far too little and too slow. Following the recommendations issued by the United Nations Environment Program (UNEP), in order to close adaptation gaps as quickly as possible it is necessary to socialize the most effective and least expensive actions and practices, such as multilevel training and protocols for natural disasters, and national construction codes. One path to explore is to channel public and private international funds, particularly toward the most vulnerable Caribbean and Central American countries, in order to incubate innovative projects with cutting-edge social technology for adaptation.

15

Set up a continental working group that analyzes the war in Ukraine’s harmful effect on the environmental agenda. Concerns include the rising cost of energy, fuels, and minerals; the return to coal mining; investments in oil to mitigate current difficulties from a short- and medium-term perspective. The war in Ukraine and its continuation will have an impact on the Sustainable Development Goals, undermining the potential advanced toward countries’ commitments.

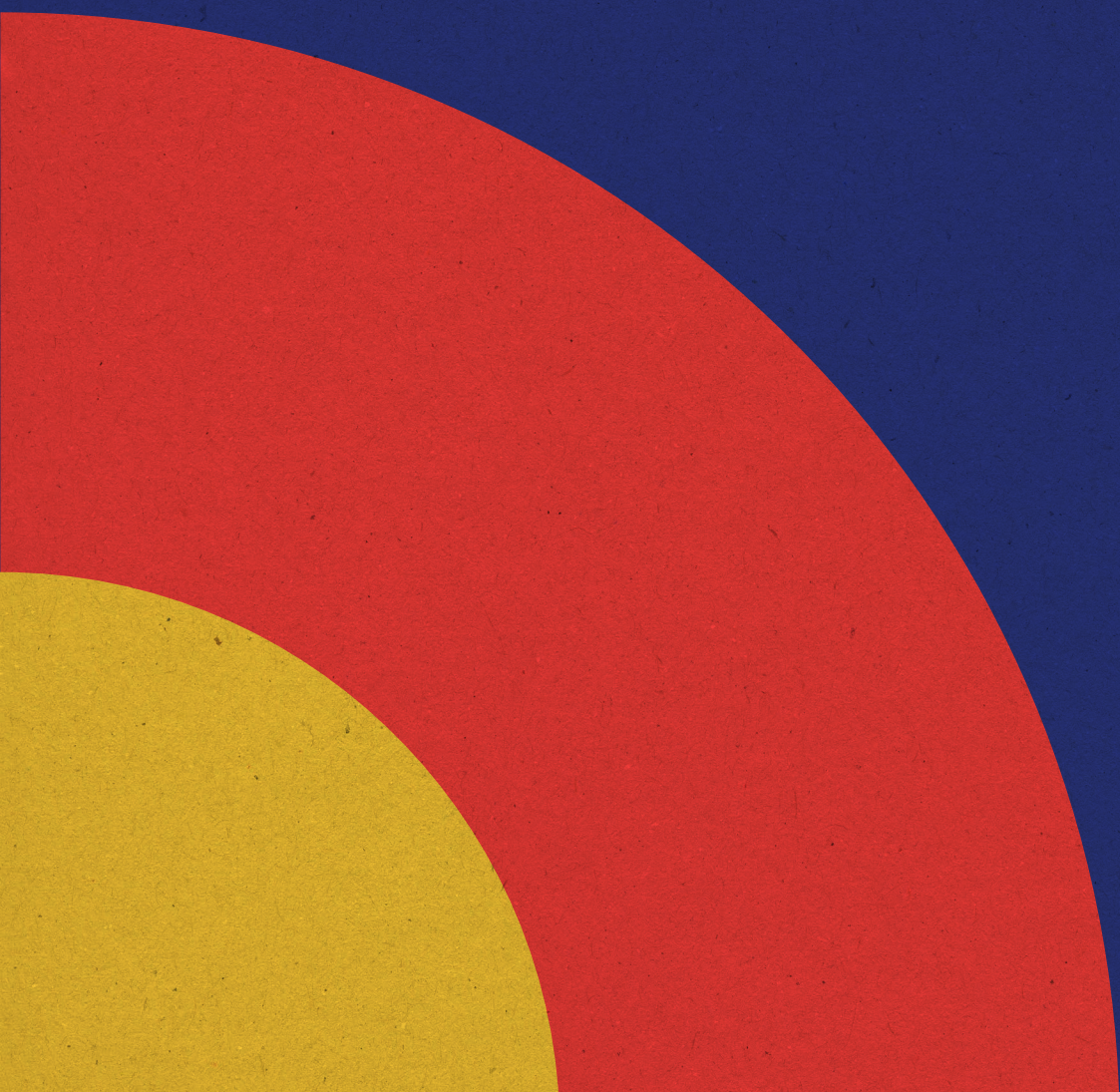
16

Staying alert to the possible collateral effects of the unilateral adoption of environmental policies in deepening protectionist trends that erode the possibility of consistent and consensual progress to mitigate the effects of climate change. This is a particular problem at times of unforeseen geopolitical tensions and financial crises, often prompting countries to take the “every-man-for-himself” response—a kind of “environmental Hobbesianism” in which countries protect their own industries even though they are polluting or inefficient in tackling potential economic crises or the increasing technological competition between powers.

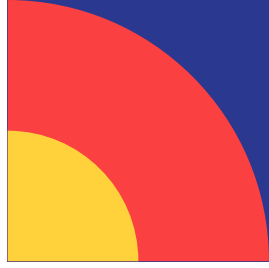


PART THREE

Roadmap







Decision-making and dialogue: a recalibration



The Summit of the Americas (soa) is an ideal and unique forum where Heads of State can engage in dialogue. Its continued existence shows its relevance. Despite wavering participation levels and some absences, it has always attracted the vast majority of those invited to attend. This mechanism enables bilateral meetings that otherwise would not take place. And most importantly, it opens up a space for top-level members of governments to share concerns and perspectives on problems that are common or affect a sizeable group of countries on the continent, which can be addressed more rapidly and effectively with high-level agreements and decisions. **The soa is a space that must be maintained and strengthened** if the objective is to mobilize the necessary political will and the awareness to build a shared agenda with a view to the future in a context that naturally tends toward fragmentation.




Dialogue and cooperation in the Americas, whether North-South or South-South, have failed to tackle shared problems for too long. Despite important institutional networks, a lack of conflicts between countries in the region, a predominantly cordial relationship between our societies, and daily interconnections through diasporas, in practice **governments are self-absorbed and domestic politics prevail when defining positions on foreign affairs, undermining efforts to build and follow up a shared agenda with a strategic vision.** The emphasis on domestic issues is not only the result of ideological considerations but often the consequence of crises, increasing divisions and internal tensions that national leaders need to be prioritize. Many countries on the continent, including the United States, currently have their “house in disarray,” preventing the emergence of regional leaderships capable of articulating a narrative and strategic consensus for the region.





Cooperation is fragmented and usually restricted to bilateral and subregional spheres. As Lowenthal points out, “Washington no longer implements a single ‘Latin American Policy’; it has different bilateral or subregional strategies.”¹ This has motivated many LAC countries to compete for benefits through a preferential deal with the senior partner. Joint actions are perceived as less advantageous and therefore bilateral relations take priority. Even the agreements and mandates deriving from the Summits end up being managed at a bilateral level. **This results in a relatively unattractive offer for the region in terms of trade, investment, infrastructure, technological development, development cooperation,**


1 Abraham Lowenthal, “De la hegemonía regional a las relaciones bilaterales complejas, Estados Unidos y América Latina a principios del siglo xxi,” *Nueva Sociedad*, no., 206, 2006, pp. 63–77.


healthcare assistance, migration coordination, collaboration in environmental protection, and energy transition.


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Although some issues and junctures exist where collaboration can bring significant benefits for participants, we should highlight that the lack of cooperation does not represent significant short-term costs for anyone. Today we face simultaneous crisis situations in which the **lack of cooperation not only leads to a loss of benefits but also represents increasing costs for societies in every country on the continent.** This critical situation offers a potential opportunity to move toward tackling such urgent problems as persisting inequalities, migration, and climate change, hence our focus on these three main themes.
- 

Specifically, so far in the 21st century, **summits—along with other inter-American spaces for dialogue—have been losing their ability to establish a thematic focus, generate reasonable common ground, and sharpen the focus on the demands of their respective civil societies.** In Los Angeles, the overwhelming sense was of a certain paralysis and disinterest, to the frustration of governmental and nongovernmental actors. This trend also affects most regional integration and coordination plans to varying extents. This is simply a reflection of LAC's increasing fragmentation, and the relative disinterest of Canada and the United States in the rest of the region.
- 

The erosion of democracies across the continent has deepened the debate on the criteria for full participation and membership in spaces of inter-American dialogue, without any sign of coordinated responses to support democratic governability. This entire discussion has ended up poisoning dialogue, not only at the Summit but also in other spaces of regional coordination. This discussion has so far been counterproductive: those who call for universal participation often fail to criticize violations of democratic principles and human rights, while those in support of making the invitation conditional on countries' obeying democratic principles forget that exclusion increases the isolation of non-participant countries and does nothing to counter this shift toward authoritarianism.
- 

Promoting a dialogue that includes diversity is the best way to strengthen democracy by focusing on the most pressing issues—that is, on combating inequalities and inclusion and representation deficits across the continent. **A consensus is required to define criteria that prevents the Summit's host country controlling admission based on their own politics and ideology.** By leaving this issue of inclusion unresolved, divisions will continue within the SOA and the OAS, leading to its paralysis and increasing irrelevance due to a lack of interest in participation.
- 

Raising the quality and credibility of democracies at every level—from the local to the continental—is a major challenge that cannot be met by taking a purely institutional approach. Forms of representation and political participation need to be improved and broadened by promoting democratic practices so that institutions can clearly reflect new citizen demands and subjectivities and enhance the quality and credibility of democracies in the region. **Populations are mobilized, dynamic, and have higher expectations, requiring more action and better results.**
- 

Mechanisms need to be reinforced in order to defend human rights through existing institutions. The Inter-American Commission on Human Rights and the Inter-American Commission Court of Human Rights play a key role in reverting the situation's downward spiral, but governments need to show greater commitment and provide more resources to operate properly. As a sign of credible commitment, the

United States could ratify the inter-American instruments on human rights issues and the rest of the countries could settle their arrears.



If priorities are not set, efforts will remain diffuse. To counteract loose agendas and extreme bilateralism, **countries in the region must seek to coordinate the work of institutions at an inter-American, Latin American, Caribbean, and subregional level.** One method would be to identify priority themes based on three criteria: first, they need to be issues of shared interest among all the countries on the continent, going beyond their differences in terms of development level and international influence; second, they should be challenges that require coordinated responses; and third, the problems must have a ripple effect on other areas. Inequalities, migrations, and climate and environmental crises undoubtedly meet these criteria.



Inequalities, migrations, and climate/environmental crises are the three key ideas prioritized in this document, precisely because they can trigger changes in other areas. These are issues that cannot be resolved in isolation and given their interconnectedness, addressing them individually is not enough to break the vicious circles that reproduce them. If we only focus on treating the symptoms, we will fail to tackle the roots of the problems.



After the pandemic, inequalities have returned to the center of public discussions, due to the economic and social regression triggered by the health crisis. Meanwhile, the effects of climate change continue to worsen and are directly affecting the lives of everyone on the continent. The combination of these factors has had a knock-on effect on migration processes with high humanitarian costs.



Violence is also a crosscutting issue with significant contagion effects on the three priority themes: inequalities, migration, and climate change. Violence has driven migration from many communities in the region, particularly in the Caribbean and Central America. This violence, which has reached chronic levels, not only has negative impacts on most LAC countries' economies but also threatens the physical safety and assets of broad swaths of the population, especially the most vulnerable.




We propose a multifaceted approach, focused on the intersections of these areas to reorient future continental cooperation. Given the scale of the problems, solutions need to be integral and based on a multilevel dialogue involving many actors from all countries in the continent.





The next three years are key for reconfiguring spaces of inter-American dialogue and articulating a collective, strategic agenda to counteract the inertia that leads to paralysis. Urgent action is needed. Several new heads of state have prioritized these issues, opening a window of opportunity to build a collective agenda around them.





Although governments are mainly responsible for this dialogue, **the solutions will be irrelevant if they fail to incorporate civil society and other actors in decision-making when discussing the agenda and designing possible solutions.** This does not exempt governments from their primary duty of addressing public problems, but commits them to opening new mechanisms of inclusion and participation for the involvement of a broad range of nongovernmental actors at a local, national, regional, and continental level. It is essential to improve connections between government actions and multilateral spaces with people's demands and needs, in order to make them legitimate, sustainable, and effective.


- 

The involvement of subnational governments, local authorities, and community actors is essential for the construction of the new, shared, inter-American agenda, as to ensure that the actions taken respond to the needs of the beneficiary communities. **Work is needed to guarantee the presence and participation of vulnerable groups currently left out of the conversation, such as indigenous people, campesinos, Afro-descendants, rural communities, migrants, and others.** In this context, it is essential to strengthen and expand networks of experts and activists.
- 

Now more than ever it is vital to strengthen connections between multilateral institutions that channel development resources at the inter-American, regional, and subregional level. Within the current context of economic difficulties, it must be a priority to give them greater technical and financial resources, as well as to improve the representation of developing and smaller nations in decision-making processes. The global economic crisis has gradually reduced budgets for development cooperation and humanitarian aid. This global trend is reducing available options and resources, increasing competition, and, in some cases, discouraging cooperation between potential recipients. Current international cooperation systems fail to make the desired impact and face a series of problems, such as the lack of articulation with programs at a local and national level, the discontinuity of government policies and, in some cases, the corruption and inefficiency of recipient governments.
- 

Cooperation and coordination mechanisms must take into account the heterogeneity of countries in the region in regard to their respective needs and installed capacities. Political dialogue to make progress on these mechanisms should be based on the principle of common but differentiated possibilities, and must recognize from the outset the asymmetries between countries and their specific situations. **The success of these mechanisms also depends on the technical capacity for designing and implementing programs.** Without a solid technical foundation or necessary operating capacities, it would be difficult to achieve the political objectives. Finally, **cooperation mechanisms in the Americas must create synergies with their global and extraregional counterparts.**
- 

On the basis of multisectoral and multilevel political dialogue, regional institutional architecture needs to be reviewed, updated, and reformed where needed, and reinforced where it is already working. In this context, we must rethink the role and format of the Summits of the Americas and their link to the current structure. **The Summits must be seen as a key element of the overall regional system rather than merely a three-year series of media-oriented meetings for the sake of protocol.** One of the greatest challenges is to articulate agendas and proposals with the other institutions, mechanisms, and spaces of dialogue that are in regular operation.
- 

One of the issues pending resolution to revitalize the Summits is **to strike an efficient balance between an accumulative agenda,** which follows up on prior agreements, and **a well-defined and focused agenda** based on a central theme, which guides additional, future efforts with specific actions.
- 

An essential and necessary step for an accumulative agenda is to modernize the operation of soa's current institutional architecture. Although the institutional design contemplates follow-up bodies such as the Summit Implementation Review Group (SIRG), Joint Summit Working Group (JSWG), and the Summit of the Americas Implementation and Follow-up System (SISCA, for its initials in Spanish), it is currently difficult to know the state of progress and commitments agreed at the different Summits with precision. **An open and accessible standardized system, database, and platform is required in order**

to evaluate, monitor, and carry out research. This would raise the reputational costs for governments that assume commitments “on paper” but fail to actually implement them. Also, there should be an institutional record for all actors in order to give continuation to States’ commitments regardless of their changing administrations or ruling coalitions.



Another avenue worth exploring is how the SOA and other spaces of inter-American dialogue can contribute to global governance. In recent decades we have witnessed a clear weakening of international leadership that has made it more complex than ever before to make global decisions. The loss of credibility of political actors and governments has undoubtedly worsened this situation, as has the increasing multipolarity both in the developed North and the Global South. **The transition to a multipolar world poses challenges and offers opportunities.** On the one hand, the rules are being challenged and undergoing reforms and, on the other, spaces are opening up to promote collective proposals on key issues for the region.



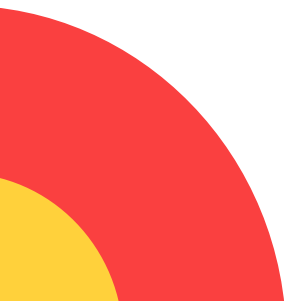
A global and regional governance based on a hegemonic order is not relevant today. Leadership no longer depends solely on economic and military strength but on the ability to form coalitions on thematic and regulatory issues, based on instruments of soft power such as persuasion, innovative ideas, network-building, interest intermediation, agenda definition, and communication. **Leadership in the Americas needs to be collaborative or collective; governments need to work together with academia, civil society, activists, the private sector, and other nongovernmental actors.** For example, Brazil, Colombia, and Chile could lead on the regional coordination on environmental issues; Mexico, Guatemala, and Honduras on migration; Argentina, Bolivia, Peru, and Ecuador on the regulation and governance of extracting unconventional gas and rare minerals such as lithium; Canada, the United States, and Uruguay on energy transition.



Despite the pessimism surrounding inter-American integration and cooperation, the current multiple crisis can generate incentives out of the necessity to find issues—healthcare, minority rights, migrant protection, humanitarian assistance—on which a minimum consensus exists at a continental scale. **In this way, coordinated actions can be built on a basic foundation of agreements.**



In conclusion, although the Summits are an irreplaceable forum for dialogue and possible coordination between the continent’s leaders, a detailed analysis reveals extensive areas of opportunity that can and should be explored. Our main recommendation is not to wait until the next Summit in order to address the challenges and opportunities identified in this report. **We need to act now, and we need to act together.**



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