



The Palgrave Handbook of EU-Latin American Relations

Edited by

José Antonio Sanahuja · Roberto Domínguez

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Editors

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FOREWORD

Since I became the European Union's High Representative for Foreign and Security Policy and Vice-president of the European Commission in 2019, an important part of my mission has been to strengthen what we have called "the other transatlantic relationship," the one that links the European Union with Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC). This region has traditionally been a foreign policy priority for some EU Member States, such as Spain, France, Germany, Italy, and Portugal, which have stronger historical, cultural, and socioeconomic ties. But my goal has been to make the LAC region a priority for the European Union (EU) as a whole by raising awareness of its strategic importance for the EU, something that has not always been seen so clearly from Brussels and other European capitals.

Together, the EU and the LAC region represent almost a third of the votes in the United Nations General Assembly. The stock of foreign direct investment (FDI) of the EU-27 in LAC is higher than the EU's combined total investment in China, India, Japan, and Russia (the latter even before the imposition of sanctions motivated by its illegal invasion of Ukraine). The Union and its Member States are the main source of development cooperation in the region. There are intense bi-regional people-to-people contacts, facilitated by a common historical and socio-cultural substrate: nearly six million nationals from both regions work and live on the other side of the Atlantic. The Union has negotiated political, cooperation, and trade agreements with 27 of the 33 countries, making LAC the region with the closest institutional links to the EU. However, despite these compelling facts, bi-regional relations have been well below their full potential, enduring a long period of stagnation. This did not go unnoticed: our diplomatic missions were sending reports that spoke of a growing sense of neglect. At the same time, other international actors have been moving forward. The United States has maintained a steady engagement. And Chinese Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) increased tenfold between 2008 and 2018. With its strong demand for raw materials, by the

end of that period China had overtaken the EU as a trading partner, having taken first place in many countries.

There are several causes for this stagnation, which originated in both regions. Political fragmentation in Latin America and the Caribbean made high-level bi-regional political dialogue more difficult. In particular, it interrupted the political dialogue between heads of state and government. The successful EU-CELAC Summit (Brussels, 17–18 July 2023) was preceded by eight years of “benign neglect” and very few high-level visits since the last summit in 2015. The EU has been and continues to be the region’s leading development partner and a major provider of humanitarian assistance. However, there was a need for both sides to propose more advanced models of cooperation for a region with more complex agendas of development in transition and with its own South-South cooperation policies.

These reasons alone should have been more than enough to give new impetus to EU-LAC relations. However, since 2019, even more pressing factors have arisen: the COVID-19 pandemic and its effects; Russia’s aggression against Ukraine; geopolitical tensions and the growing questioning of the international order and its rules; China’s greater weight and ascendancy; as well as the need to accelerate the ecological and digital transitions and promote new, more sustainable and inclusive development models. Because of all these facts, the relevance of Latin America and the Caribbean for the EU, and vice versa, is even greater today. Indeed, in a world pivoting toward Asia, the Russian war against Ukraine and the growing importance of the economic security agenda have underscored the centrality of the Atlantic—not only North America but also Latin America and the Caribbean.

I had the honor of leading the resumption of the EU-LAC high-level bi-regional political dialogue. First, in 2020, with ministerial meetings in July and December 2020, we discussed cooperation to address the devastating effects of the COVID-19 pandemic and the need to reinforce our green partnerships and digital alliances. Then, in October 2022, we held a CELAC-EU Ministerial in Buenos Aires.

The LAC region was the most affected in the world by the pandemic: with only 8% of the global population, it accounted for one-third of the officially recorded deaths. COVID-19 also brought the worst economic recession in a century and an alarming increase in poverty and inequality. It was not just a highly lethal virus: almost a decade of economic stagnation and deep social divides, some of which also present in Europe, compounded the impact of the pandemic: large informal sectors, poverty, insecurity, overcrowded cities, isolated rural communities, inadequate sanitation, and limited medical care, with health systems often overburdened and unaffordable.

The LAC agenda also has an important political chapter. Violence has not yet ceased in Colombia, which is making great efforts to achieve peace, including with the support of the European Union. Much of Europe’s attention to Latin America and the Caribbean has focused on the most acute political crises, such as Venezuela, Nicaragua, and Haiti. In the latter, the

effects of organized crime against a backdrop of widespread poverty have once again led to an acute governance crisis. In Nicaragua, we have witnessed serious violations of human rights and the rule of law, and a rapid rise of the most blatant authoritarianism. And Venezuela remains an open wound: more than seven million Venezuelans have sought refuge abroad, particularly in the South American neighborhood. It is the biggest humanitarian crisis in the region since the Central American wars of the 1980s and one of the least supported by the international community. The EU has worked with other partners to promote dialogue and a Venezuelan-led peaceful and democratic solution to the crisis, including through inclusive, transparent, and credible elections. With Cuba, we have continued to work closely in the framework of the EU-Cuba Political Dialogue and Cooperation Agreement, following a clear policy of critical but constructive engagement. During my visit to Cuba in May 2023, I underlined the EU's readiness to continue developing relations on this basis, and I encouraged the Cuban authorities to uphold human rights and pursue reforms, notably in the economic field. These are now more necessary than ever. At the same time, in the framework of the United Nations General Assembly, the EU and its Member States continue to reiterate the necessity of ending the economic, commercial, and financial embargo imposed by the United States against Cuba, given its adverse effects on the Cuban people.

It is also important to note that challenges to democracy are not limited to Latin American countries where political pluralism is already limited or absent. On the social and political level, distrust and disaffection among broad sectors of society have been growing throughout the region, already before the pandemic. In recent decades, social progress has stagnated, frustrating the expectations of well-being and social advancement generated by the previous cycle of economic growth based on commodities. In a scenario with high levels of poverty and strong inequalities—of income, gender, and ethnicity—it has not been possible to establish a social contract in which the majority feel they are treated fairly and equally. There are other causes of the current disaffection, such as violence and insecurity. LAC is the world's region with more violence linked to organized crime. With states unable to guarantee citizen security, high levels of impunity, and corruption, trust in institutions is weakened. Furthermore, as a region where citizens heavily rely on social media for political engagement, Latin American and the Caribbean countries are especially vulnerable to false information, disinformation, and misinformation campaigns, which are being increasingly used by Russia and other actors to interfere, fuel polarizations, and ultimately undermine democratic societies. For all these reasons, the LAC region presents a paradoxical reality in this area: after Europe, it is the second most democratic region in the world, but also the one that shows the greatest levels of deterioration in the health of its democracies. According to *Latinobarómetro* surveys, citizen support for Democratic governments has fallen to historic lows in the region.

As a result, we are dealing with a period of prolonged political uncertainty, which has led to multiple political challenges and recurring social protests. This scenario has also favored the irruption of illiberal and authoritarian leaders and forces that, again, we also see in Europe. This is a shared concern: both regions are part of a global cycle of democratic regression that has not ceased to worry us in the European Union. I cannot fail to recall some of the most critical moments I have confronted in my mandate as EU High Representative: the threats posed to the democratic transitions in Brazil and Guatemala. With President Lula of Brazil, I had the opportunity to discuss the common threat posed by antidemocratic forces following the assault on the Three Powers Square in Brasilia. In Guatemala, we witnessed the delaying tactics of antidemocratic forces within the State apparatus itself, and, together with other representatives of the international community, supported the pro-democracy efforts of the opposition and society, helping to ensure that the transfer of power could take place in accordance with the constitutional and the legal system of Guatemala. Our engagement with Guatemala over the past year serves as a case study of what is possible, when the EU's foreign policy tools are used in a mutually reinforcing way. The EU Electoral Observation Mission played a decisive role in this regard, and we imposed sanctions on five individuals responsible for undermining democracy and the rule of law in the country.

The global scenario of overlapping crises defines shared challenges that call for a more horizontal relationship, based on the different responsibilities and capacities and the asymmetries between the two regions. A relationship that leaves behind the condescending look of the past and the vertical North-South logic that still nestles in Europe's self-perception and in its relations with the region. We wanted to have a more deliberative and open approach toward our Latin American and Caribbean partners, based on our privileged links with this region, looking for a more inclusive and horizontal approach to global governance and multilateralism. We need to adapt and deepen our relations and we cannot rely on our traditional ties alone. This was already true before Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine, but it is even more true today when the quality of our relations with the so-called Global South has become crucial for our future and the future of a rules-based world order.

I am pleased to preface this book, which, from this deliberative and horizontal attitude, has brought together the analyses and reflections of an outstanding group of specialists from both regions. We need the broadest possible conversation to address, in a reasoned and evidence-based manner, the problems, realities, and potential of our bi-regional relations, and how their governance can be improved. These pages are an important contribution to the knowledge and academic study of those relations, and I am convinced that they will be of great use to scholars, policymakers, and practitioners.

In that spirit, as High Representative, I have invested much energy in deepening and upgrading our ties with LAC to strengthen this "other transatlantic relationship." I have traveled to Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Cuba,

Guatemala, the Dominican Republic, Panama, Peru, and Uruguay, to promote closer relations and a stronger partnership. In October 2022 in Buenos Aires, I co-led with my Argentinian counterpart the first CELAC-EU ministerial meeting in four years. Together, we decided to give a new impetus to our bi-regional relations and to hold a new EU-CELAC Summit, the first since 2015, which finally took place in Brussels in July 2023, coinciding with the Spanish rotating Presidency of the Council of the EU.

While preparing for that Summit, the Commission and I, as High Representative, adopted a Joint Communication to the European Parliament and the Council, setting out a New Agenda for Relations between the EU and Latin America and the Caribbean. This document aims to open a new era of cooperation in a rapidly changing global context. To achieve this goal, we need renewed political commitment at all levels: from the two regions, from individual countries, with the sub-regions and in multilateral fora. We also need a more structured relationship, with regular summits and a permanent coordination mechanism between the EU and CELAC to ensure continuity and follow-up. Regular high-level political dialogue is indeed key to focus, agree on priorities and joint actions, and address differences when they arise.

This Summit, where agreements were reached and differences were highlighted, was an opportunity to resume dialogue, build trust, and show a common will to move forward. Rather than being “natural partners,” to become “partners of choice.” Being “partners of choice” depends above all on political will: the will to work together to address shared challenges and global challenges, and to strengthen the rules-based order, with the ultimate goal of promoting peace, security, and democracy.

We believe that the bi-regional partnership can jointly enhance the autonomy, influence, and resilience of both regions in a world that is uncertain and increasingly disputed in geopolitical terms, but still in need of governance, rules, and certainty. This is now imperative in the face of systemic risks, such as being caught in the crisis of globalization, a geopolitical competition between the United States and China, and the need to address conflicts with systemic effects, such as the war in Ukraine or in Gaza. For both regions, responding to these challenges does not imply a defensive retreat, but rather constructing an open link between reliable partners, widening their margins for maneuver, and strengthening global governance.

With these objectives, our economic and development links take on renewed relevance: both regions can be partners for sustainable development, strengthening our autonomy, resilience, cohesion, and social inclusion through a social, ecological, and digital “triple transition.” These transitions must serve us in both regions to renew the social contract. They must be just transitions, otherwise they will be met with resistance that can be capitalized on by rising authoritarian and illiberal forces. On the EU side, paying more attention to the region also makes a lot of sense at a time when we are trying to diversify our value chains and reduce excessive dependencies, working with reliable partners. Latin America and the Caribbean are key partners in the fight against climate

change and represent a global powerhouse in terms of biodiversity, renewable energy, and strategic raw materials for the green transition. Latin America is home to the Amazon rainforest, which represents half of the planet's biodiversity and only accounts for about 8% of global greenhouse gas emissions. Supporting this region in a green, digital, sustainable, and inclusive recovery is in our mutual interest. The EU and the LAC region understand that partnerships based on extractivism schemes generate little added value. And the LAC countries want to make the best out of these digital and green transitions to industrialize further and add value to its exports.

With these goals in mind, at the Brussels EU-LAC Summit we announced the EU Global Gateway regional investment program. The objective is to bring together the EU, its Member States, and their financial and development institutions to mobilize the private sector to leverage investments with a transformational impact. We will need to ensure that these investments act as levers for development processes in each country. They should bring technology and higher labor and environmental standards and be complemented by advanced cooperation for improving institutions and public policies and social services, as a European-unique approach to investments.

We both understand that our close partnership goes beyond trade. We have developed a network of bilateral and regional agreements including political, cooperation, and trade elements, which play a clear geopolitical role, reinforcing each-others' autonomy and resilience, supporting the necessary digital, green, and socioeconomic transitions, and creating common spaces for dialogue, based on shared rules. Through our agreements, we establish stable relations, between reliable partners, for our mutual benefit. We will continue working to ensure we use the benefits of our agreements to their full potential and, where necessary, modernize them to continue upgrading our association and reflect the most advanced and progressive developments. Two recent examples are the modernized EU-Chile agreement and modernization of the EU-Mexico, which should be concluded soon as well.

In that sense, the EU-Mercosur Association Agreement, which we have been negotiating for 25 years, can be a game changer. Negotiations were on track, and we reached the "agreement in principle" in June 2019. However, after the initial euphoria, EU-Mercosur relations were stalled again a few weeks later, amid strong controversy over environment, deforestation, and the fight against climate change that intersected with traditional protectionist interests. It is clear that neither Mercosur nor the EU that launched the negotiations in the early 2000s are the same. The environmental concerns raised by European citizens are as legitimate as Mercosur's claims regarding its development strategies and industrial policy. We must address these concerns. Once concluded, the EU-Mercosur deal will be the biggest association agreement ever reached by the EU and could be an important driver of development on both sides of the Atlantic. At the same time, the political and economic costs of a failure would be substantial. After 20 years of negotiations, this has become a question of Europe's credibility in the LAC region. Without this agreement,

we would have less capacity to address our environmental and development agenda. It should be possible to reinforce the agreement, even more, with an additional climate and environmental instrument. But one thing is clear: as EU, we would be better-off with a strengthened agreement than without it. And from my discussions with Mercosur leaders, I gather a similar perception on their side.

As my term of office draws to a close, I am pleased to see that the EU has restored dialogue and cooperation with the LAC region, defined a roadmap, and decided to move forward in our relations. But we cannot be complacent. We should become even more proactive in working together with the LAC region at the multilateral level, and we need to continue moving forward on those specific issues where we now know our cooperation can become most fruitful. As EU, we have a renewed and unique window of opportunity, which we cannot afford to miss. Relations with Latin America and the Caribbean are particularly close to my heart. But above all, from reason, as this volume illustrates, I am fully convinced that a reinforced EU-LAC relation will be of mutual benefit if we can raise it to the level it deserves.

Brussels, Belgium
June 2024

Josep Borrell

Josep Borrell has been the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy (2019–2024). He served as President of the European Parliament (2004–2007) and as Minister of Foreign Affairs, European Union, and Cooperation in the Government of Spain (2018–2019). He was Jean Monnet Chair of European Integration at Complutense University of Madrid (2013–2016).

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ABBREVIATIONS

ACP	African, Caribbean, and Pacific States
AfCFTA	African Continental Free Trade Area
AIIB	Asian Investment Infrastructure Bank
ALADI	Latin American Integration Association (in Spanish)
ALBA-TPC	Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of Our America/People's Trade Treaty
AMLO	Andrés Manuel López Obrador
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nation
ASEF	Asia-Europe Foundation
ASEM	Asia-Europe Meeting
BRICS	Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa
CABEI	Central American for Economic Integration
CACM	Central American Common Market
CAF	Development Bank of Latin America and the Caribbean
CAFTA-DR	Dominican Republic-Central America FTA
CAN	Andean Community of Nations
CARD	Coordinated Annual Review on Defense
CARICOM	Caribbean Community
CARIFORUM	Caribbean Forum of African, Caribbean, and Pacific States
CARIFTA	Caribbean Free Trade Area
CARSI	Central America Regional Security Initiative
CBAM	Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism
CDC	Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
CELAC	Community of Latin American and Caribbean States
CELARE	Latin American Centre for Relations with Europe
CEPAL	Economic Commission for Latin America (in Spanish)
CFSP	Common Foreign and Security Policy
CIDCA	China International Development Cooperation Agency
CPTPP	Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership
CRIP	Caribbean Regional Indicative Program
CSSC	Chinese South-South Cooperation

CSME	Caribbean Single Market and Economy
DAC	Development Assistance Committee
DACA	Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals
DCI	Development Cooperation Instrument
DG-INTPA	Directorate General for International Partnerships
DPP	Disaster Preparedness Program
EC	European Community
ECAP	European Capabilities Action Plan
ECLAC	Economic Commission for Latin America
EDA	European Defense Agency
EDF	European Development Fund
EDF	European Defense Fund
EDIRPA	European Defense Industry Reinforcement through the Common Procurement Act
EEA	European Economic Area
EEAS	European External Action Service
EEC	European Economic Community
EFSD	European External Investment Program
EFSD+	European Fund for Sustainable Development Plus
EFTA	European Free Trade Area Association
EIB	European Investment Bank
ELN	National Liberation Army
EMCDDA	European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction
ENP	European Neighborhood Policy
EPA	Economic Partnership Agreement
EPC	European Political Cooperation
EPF	European Peace Facility
ESDP	European Security and Defense Policy
ESM	European Stability Mechanism
EU	European Union
EUMC	European Union Military Committee
EUROLAT	Euro-Latin American Parliamentary Assembly
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
FARC	Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia
FDI	Foreign Direct Investment
FSLN	Sandinista National Liberation Front
GATT	General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade
GIR	Global International Relations
GP	Guatemala Protocol
GSP	Generalized System of Preferences
GSP+	Generalized Scheme of Preferences Plus
HDI	Human Development Index
HR/VP	High Representative for the CFSP and Vice-President of the European Commission
ICG	International Contact Group
ICSP	Instrument for Stability and Peace
iFTA	Interim Free Trade Agreement
ILO	International Liberal Order
IMF	International Monetary Fund

IRELA	Institute of European Latin American Relations
JCPOA	Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action
LAC	Latin America and the Caribbean
LAFTA	Latin American Free Trade Area
MERCOSUR	Southern Common Market
MINAM	Ministry of the Environment of Peru
MINCETUR	Peruvian Minister of Foreign Trade and Tourism
MIP	Multiannual Indicative Program
MOFCOM	Ministry of Foreign Affairs of China and the Ministry of Commerce of China
MTA	Multiparty Trade Agreement
NAFTA	North American Free Trade Agreement
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NDB	New Development Bank
OAS	Organization of American States
OBREAL	Observatory of European-Latin American Relations
ODECA	Organization of Central American States
OECD	Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development
OECS	Organization of Eastern Caribbean States
OFAC	Office of Foreign Assets Controls
PA	Pacific Alliance
PAHO	Pan-American Health Organization
PARLACEN	Central American Parliament
PDCA	Political Dialogue and Cooperation Agreement
PRC	People's Republic of China
PRD	Party of the Democratic Revolution
RCEP	Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership
REPAS	Regional Economic Partnership Agreements
SDRs	Special Drawing Rights
SEA	Single European Act
SELA	Latin American Economic System (in Spanish)
SIA	Sustainability Impact Assessment
SICA	Central American Integration System
SSC	South-South Cooperation
TCOs	Transnational criminal organizations
TEIs	Team Europe Initiatives
TGIE	General Treaty of Economic Integration
TPS	Temporary Protected Status
UNASUR	Union of South American Nations
UNGA	United Nations Security Council
UNHCHR	UN High Commissioner for Human Rights
UNSC	United Nations Security Council
UP	Unitary Platform
USMCA	United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement
USSR	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
WB	World Bank
WTO	World Trade Organization

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