

Bi-regional Relations



EU-LAC Foundation

The New Multilateralism in the Age of COVID-19 from the perspective of European Union-Latin America and Caribbean relations

I EU-LAC Essay Contest on the Bi-Regional Partnership

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PRESENTACIÓN

Adrián Bonilla | Director Ejecutivo de la Fundación EU-LAC

The EU-LAC Foundation is pleased to present the publication **"I Essay Competition on the Bi-regional Partnership: The new multilateralism in the era of COVID-19 from the perspective of the European Union - Latin America and the Caribbean relations"**.

This publication is the product of a call for papers launched by the Foundation in August 2020, whose objective is directly related to the Foundation's mandate to "contribute to the strengthening of the bi-regional partnership process between the European Union and Latin America and the Caribbean, through the participation of civil society and other social actors". In this case, the contribution came from young researchers who responded to the call by submitting excellent academic papers that not only increase the visibility of the bi-regional partnership, but also promote mutual knowledge.

The theme selected for the first edition of the competition was framed in the context of the health and economic crisis triggered by COVID-19 and its impact on international relations, specifically in its multilateral dimension.

The competition awarded prizes to the three best essays* and an honourable mention to four others. The seven essays collected in this publication were evaluated by a jury formed by the EU-LAC Foundation and independent international experts whom we would like to thank: Dr. Merike Blofield, Director of the Institute for Latin American Studies, German Institute for Global and Regional Studies (GIGA) and Dr. Elsa Llenderozas, Director of the Political Science Department at the University of Buenos Aires.

The approaches of each of the essays offer important analysis and ideas for the current debate on this priority issue on the bi-regional agenda and will hopefully inspire more young people to participate in the upcoming competitions.

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* First place: Maria Victoria Alvarez: "Relations between the European Union and Latin America and the Caribbean in the context of the pandemic: between the past and the future". Second place: Ana Lucia Vidaurre Valdivia Rodrigo Burgoa Third place: "The new bi-regional integration of Latin America and the Caribbean in times of Covid-19". Third place: "Challenges and opportunities of the health crisis: the European Union - Latin America and the Caribbean bi-regional strategic partnership".

INTRODUCCIÓN

Ernesto Jeger | Coordinador de Programas Senior

The work presented here is the result of the First Essay Competition on the Bi-regional Partnership launched in August 2020 by the EU-LAC Foundation. This initiative, now recurrently incorporated into the Foundation's annual calendar of activities, has as its main purpose to receive essays on topics of relevance to the bi-regional partnership, especially academic papers by young researchers aimed at increasing the visibility of this partnership and promoting mutual knowledge.

For the 2020 edition, the theme chosen was **The New Multilateralism in the era of COVID-19 from the perspective of EU-Latin America and the Caribbean relations.**

The choice of topic was timely and in line with the current bi-regional agenda. In recent decades, multilateralism has gained prominence and imposed new rules for relations between countries, which has created opportunities for the revision of studies on international regimes and organisations, covering issues related to the relationship between international aspects and the degree of commitment to multilateral rules, as well as proposals for more democratic and transparent decision-making processes.

Likewise, the bi-regional partnership between Latin America, the Caribbean and the European Union, established more than 20 years ago, is based on a commitment to fundamental rights, sustainable development and a strong rules-based international system. Although the outcome of this partnership has advanced in different areas, several studies and analyses show that the bi-regional relationship is below its potential in practical terms.

Moreover, it should be noted that the current situation of the Covid-19 pandemic has imposed new challenges to rethink the role of international institutions and new forms of global governance. This broad debate offers us, through the Essay Competition initiative, the opportunity to re-examine the advantages and potential of the EU-LAC bi-regional strategic partnership, from a perspective of shared values, problems and solutions.

Multilateral and intergovernmental organisations are one of the main pillars of modern Global Governance and the two regions undertake commitments and play a relevant role in global fora through their participation in a variety of international bodies.

As a concrete example, it is worth mentioning that the countries of Latin America, the Caribbean and the European Union have been the driving forces behind the adoption of important international agreements such as the Paris Agreement on Climate Change and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. With their leadership and good practices, they can exert a positive global influence in this decade that is expected to be ambitious for the achievement of the Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Since the declaration of the 2018 Brussels ministerial meeting, both regions have committed to "jointly address current international circumstances and new global challenges, and to further strengthen multilateralism".**

This commitment was reiterated at the informal foreign ministers' meeting in December 2020. At this meeting, hosted by German Foreign Minister Heiko Maas for the rotating Presidency of the Council of the EU and chaired by EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and Vice-President of the European Commission (HR/VP) Josep Borrell Fontelles, the 48 foreign ministers of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC) and the European Union present there underlined that "strengthened and effective multilateral cooperation is not an option but a necessity for a more equal, more resilient and more sustainable world".***

Specifically, Ministers expressed their intention to prioritise joint efforts for the modernisation of the United Nations, the strengthening of the World Trade Organisation (WTO) and support for initiatives to address COVID-19, such as the COVAX mechanism for the procurement and equitable distribution of vaccines. Ministers also referred to ongoing initiatives in support of a rules-based multilateral order, such as the Partnership for Multilateralism, launched in 2019 by Germany and France.

The construction of an effective and transparent multilateralism is a concern that is emerging strongly in a context of changes in international politics and the progressive deterioration of the multilateral architecture which, although they have been taking place for some time, have converged with greater intensity and acquired a new importance since the pandemic crisis.

At the same time, this is a great opportunity for the two regions to work more closely together to address the major challenges they share and to defend their objectives in the international arena with the geopolitical weight they deserve.

In this regard, since 2020 the EU-LAC Foundation has held a series of events with representatives of governments, international organisations and civil society to discuss the importance of the multilateral system in the fight against the pandemic and new global challenges such as climate change. The first essay competition adds to these efforts.

This publication brings together the seven essays (the three winners and four honourable mentions), selected by a committee formed by the EU-LAC Foundation and independent international experts. It is worth noting that all the essays are authored or co-authored by women and that citizens from five countries in both regions are represented.

The collection of essays collected in this book presents a solid and well-founded theoretical basis and innovative ideas. The common thread running through these essays is the shared vision of young researchers on the challenges of revitalising and modernising bi-regional relations, as well as the commitment to multilateralism as a way not only to renew these ties, but also to rebuild a better post-Covid-19 world.

Enjoy reading it!

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** <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/36181/declaration-en.pdf>

*** <https://www.auswaertiges-amt.de/en/newsroom/news/eu-lac-communique/2426940>

1. RELATIONS BETWEEN THE EUROPEAN UNION AND LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN IN THE CONTEXT OF THE PANDEMIC: BETWEEN THE PAST AND THE FUTURE

María Victoria Alvarez¹

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The European Union (EU) and Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) are of mutual relevance in their external links. The Covid-19 pandemic is now adding an unexpected element to these inter-regional links that could become a factor bringing them closer and renewing ties. Making the most of this situation fundamentally depends on international cooperation and effective multilateralism. It is essential for the EU to turn to LAC and cooperate with it on equal terms, reaching beyond the asymmetries in the relationship.

This essay proposes analysing some of the options open to the EU and LAC to renew inter-regional links at a time of severe socio-economic, environmental and health crisis. After examining the pressures and benefits of the current international context, the economic/trade agenda and bi-regional institutional links, the paper includes some suggestions for how both regions can avoid being held back by the errors of the past and manage to use the pandemic situation to favour new prospects in the future.

INTRODUCTION

The political, economic and cultural links between Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) and Europe go back to the fifteenth century and the beginning of Spanish colonisation. Much more recently, in the mid-twentieth century, the birth of the European integration process gave these links a new dimension. These relations became institutionalised in the 1980s and there is now a considerable heritage of sub-regional and bilateral agreements and many instances of dialogue and cooperation.

But international reality is subject to constant and very rapid change. Whereas the first years of the twenty-first century saw the decline of the European Union (EU) and the rise of LAC, and along with this the possibility of a balanced association between “equals” (Gardini and Ayuso 2014, 19), recently conditions have become unfavourable for “a closer relationship with an EU immersed in an existential crisis” facing “a Latin America that is less triumphalist and caught up in the cyclical evolution of the prices of raw materials” (Ayuso and Gratius 2016, 251).

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1. Professor at the Faculty of Political Science and International Relations of the National University of Rosario (UNR).

The Covid-19 pandemic has now added an unexpected element to inter-regional links which could become a divisive factor, but which could also be a factor for closer and renewed links. The coronavirus crisis has demonstrated the inter-dependence of LAC and the EU. The first cases in LAC did not come from Wuhan, but from Italy and Spain.

It is difficult to find any topic in the field of relations between regions that has been more written about than the links between the EU and LAC. These links have been the subject of intense study from various angles. Deep-rooted approaches such as comparative regionalism (Börzel and Risse 2009, A. Malamud 2010, Nolte and Weiffen 2020) and inter-regionalism (Gardini 2018, Gardini and A. Malamud 2016, Hänggi, Roloff and Rüländ 2006, Sanahuja 2007) have been developed at the same time as other approaches, such as that of global governance (Ayuso, Gratius and Serbin 2018, Kanner 2005, Ruano 2018) or external politics (Ayuso 1996, Gratius and Sanahuja 2010, Roy 2013)². This essay tends towards the approach focussing on inter-regionalism, one of the most frequently used in the specialist literature. Broadly speaking, inter-regionalism refers to “a situation or process in which two (or more) regions interact between each other” (Söderbaum and Van Langenhove 2005, 257).

For the purposes of this paper, we opted to start from a combination of premises. The liberal institutionalist theoretical perspective of inter-regionalism emphasises the efforts of States to cooperate with the aim of managing, as far as possible, the complex interdependency at global and inter-regional level (Hänggi 2000). The liberal institutionalist view can be combined with the realist approach of inter-regionalism, focussed on the dynamics of rivalries and attempts to achieve balance in a context dominated by various different players (Hänggi 2000). Both views are complementary as a starting point for analysing LAC-EU relations in the current context.

Faced with a pandemic such as Covid-19, which by its very nature implies a phenomenon that transcends borders, all States without exception become vulnerable, although some have greater resources than others to face the crisis. The critical situation itself forces the players to readjust and causes agendas and priorities to be reformulated. The pandemic could therefore bring a new significance to matters that had been thought settled in bi-regional links and could readjust positions towards other international political presences in an increasingly bipolar world. The question this essay seeks to address revolves around the challenges and opportunities created by the current critical situation for European, Latin American and Caribbean relations in a global context characterised by the urgency of the pandemic. The essay is organised in the following way: in the first section we look at the pressures exerted upon the EU and LAC by the current international scenario and, of course, the advantages it also affords. In the second section, we identify aspects relevant to the trade and economic bi-regional agenda, while in the third we set out some features of the bi-regional links at institutional level, highlighting the role of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC). The paper includes some suggestions for how both regions can avoid being held back by the errors of the past and manage to use the pandemic situation to favour new prospects in the future.

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2. The bibliographical references in this paragraph serve to illustrate the vast literature on this topic, without in any way claiming to be exhaustive.

THE GLOBAL STRATEGIC CONTEXT

The global context can be described as one of increasing bipolarity. The pull exerted by the two poles of power, the United States in the Atlantic and China in the Pacific, explains most of the prevailing dynamics of the international scene. This is against the background of globalization in crisis, clearly evident from the global financial crisis of 2008-2009 and whose governance is now experiencing great fragility.

Inter-regionalism may exert major balancing functions (Rüland 2001). In this sense we could think of Euro-Latin American inter-regionalism as allowing “counterbalances” to be established in relation to the United States and China. With the premiership of Trump, the times when the EU adopted the strategy of ‘bandwagoning’ and alliance with the United States have been left far behind. The complexity of the present time sees the EU at a crossroads, having in a sense ‘lost’ a natural ally in the USA with Trump’s mandate, and unable to lean towards the Pacific axis headed by China, a ‘systemic rival’ on the international stage (European Commission 2019a, 1). These vicissitudes could become a great incentive for the European countries to renew their links with LAC, links that lack the levels of divisiveness found in those with other regions (Gratius 2015).

On the Latin American side, the same applies, in the sense that the region also finds itself ‘pulled’ by both poles of world power, although with differences between sub-regions and countries. There is a shared agenda with the European countries that could generate a soft balancing strategy in the face of the traditional hegemonic power in LAC and players with the urge to dominate such as China. In fact, the EU is not only an alternative to the USA but also to China, which is a competitor to the EU in the Latin American market. Proximity to the EU is advantageous as it gives LAC an option faced with the benevolent hegemony of the USA, on the one hand, and the economic dependence of China on the other.

Because it shares values, traditions and interests without any hegemonic aspirations, the EU is an important partner of the region and a counterbalance to other external partners. Moreover, bearing in mind that both the USA and China have had great difficulties managing and overcoming the health, economic and social crisis caused by the pandemic, it would be logical to see reinforcing mutual cooperation, beyond the forms and instruments required by this reinvigorated cooperation, as an optimal option for the EU and LAC.

Furthermore, in broader terms and in the long term, a reorganised bi-regional EU-LAC structure would help present alternative modes of governance at global level. A renewed agenda of motivations and interests between the EU and LAC – based on a plural vision – would constitute authoritative proof that other types of relationship and other ways of structuring a world order are possible. The European Commission itself expressed this desire when it stated, before the pandemic appeared, that “The EU-LAC partnership should occupy a more prominent place at global level and should improve the protection and administration of global public assets, including through joint positions in multilateral forums” (European Commission 2019b, 14).

THE ECONOMY AND TRADE: THE BI-REGIONAL AGENDA

Although EU-LAC links are favoured by a rich cultural, historic and political heritage and legacy, it is in the area of trade and the economy that the EU has managed – not without some obstacles to overcome – to achieve some resounding successes. Bearing in mind the conclusion of the negotiations for the trade agreement between the EU and the Southern Common Market (MERCOSUR) in the middle of 2019, the EU has signed partnership, free trade or political agreements with nearly all the Latin American and Caribbean States, except for Bolivia and Venezuela.

The European and Latin American economies are closely inter-connected. The EU is the third most important partner of LAC; total trade in goods increased from 185,500 million euros in 2008 to 225,400 million in 2018, and trade in services rose to almost 102,000 million euros in 2017 (European Commission 2019b). As for the stock of foreign direct investment (FDI) from the EU-27 into LAC, it rose to 758,000 million euros; more than the total FDI of the EU in China, India, Japan and Russia together (Borrell 2020). Moreover, the EU is the major provider of cooperation for development in LAC (European Commission 2019b).

Yet the growth of LAC continues to be dependent on external fluctuations and upheavals. Historically, the three principal variables that have boosted or held back growth in the region are: the price of raw materials, the international liquidity conditions and the buoyancy of international trade. All three have become increasingly adverse in recent times, and the Covid-19 pandemic has only subjected them to even greater pressure.

Growth in LAC had been slow long before the pandemic descended upon the region in March 2020. The arrival of coronavirus will cause a ten-year recession. According to calculations made by the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), LAC will have the same level of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per capita as in 2010. “It will be another wasted decade” says Daniel Titelman, Director of the Division de Economic Development of the organisation (Barría 2020).

According to estimates by ECLAC (2020a), international trade in LAC will fall sharply by 23% in 2020, more than was recorded in the financial crisis of 2009, as a consequence of the economic effects of the pandemic. The negative figures in the area of trade and the economy have obvious and painful implications: ECLAC projections show that the number of people living in poverty will increase by 45.4 million in 2020, bringing the total number of people living in poverty to 230.9 million in 2020, that is, 37.3% of the population of Latin America (ECLAC 2020b, 10). Within this group, the number of people living in extreme poverty will rise to 96.2 million in 2020, a figure equivalent to 15.5% of the total population (ECLAC 2020b, 11).

A context of greater inequality and more poverty – and extreme poverty – would eventually generate huge challenges to social cohesion and the democratic governability of LAC. It would likewise exert pressure to place development needs and assistance once more at the forefront of the main themes on the bi-regional agenda – these having been priority matters of the relationship for decades – and return to traditional rationales of international cooperation, just when the agenda of the partnership was becoming increasingly broad and attempting to respond to increasingly complex challenges.

If the countries of LAC are entering another “wasted decade”, this will not only result in harm to that region but also to Europeans themselves, who have powerful political interests in LAC, in addition to economic and commercial interests. We can therefore see a strong incentive, beyond the traditional invoking of shared values, for the EU to collaborate closely with the countries of Latin America in this pandemic crisis situation.

The regrettable reversal of LAC in terms of social inequality and poverty, to which we have already referred, could make a return to bilateral cooperation and other multilateral instruments desirable. In this context, the EU should reinforce the cooperative approach based on policies to boost its external policies. If the pandemic teaches us anything, it is that although national borders may return to protect citizens, the processes of globalization imply an increasing demand for satisfaction at a higher level than that of the States.

INSTITUTIONAL LINKS

Inter-regional relations became institutionalised in the 1980s and now have a large accumulated heritage of sub-regional and bilateral agreements. There are “a large number of organisations and channels for dialogue, agreement and cooperation, of varied scope and relevance, with the purpose of defining the bi-regional strategic partnership” (Sanahuja 2007, 1).

The EU-LAC political dialogue, especially in its intergovernmental³, dynamic, is subordinate to the changing reality of Latin American integration. Those engaging with the EU in LAC, beyond the bi-regional dialogue itself, have been the sub-regions: MERCOSUR, the Andean Community of Nations, and Central America, and the countries with which there are Partnership Agreements in force, that is, Brazil, Chile and Mexico.

In the early years of the twenty-first century, faced with the increasing weakness of the Rio Group as a political spokesperson for the region and a counterbalance to the EU, the map of Latin American integration was reimagined as a post-liberal concept (Da Motta and Ríos 2007; Sanahuja 2010), or a post-hegemonic one (Riggirozzi and Tussie 2012), enabling a readjustment in the political dialogue, adapting it to the frameworks actually in operation in that area.

Consequently, given that the Rio Group did not fulfil either the initial expectations of Latin America or the European aspiration of representing the whole region, it ceased being a valid interlocutor (Gratius 2007), and was replaced by CELAC, made up of 33 countries. With the birth of CELAC, the EU could count on a legitimate spokesperson for the region. The EU-CELAC framework worked by bringing into one single mechanism the EU summits with the extinct Rio Group and the bi-regional EU-LAC summits.

However, a decade after the emergence of cooperation and integration frameworks with post-liberal or post-hegemonic tones, from 2015 we have seen major movements threatening their survival (Alvarez 2019). The current scenario of Latin American regionalism has some remaining sub-regional frameworks (MERCOSUR, the Andean Community of

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3. También existen instancias de diálogo para actores no estatales, incluyendo fundamentalmente parlamentos, organizaciones de la sociedad civil, y empresas.

Nations, the Pacific Alliance), others on their last legs (Union of South American Nations, UNASUR and the Bolivarian Alliance Peoples of our America, ALBA) and finally others attempting to come into existence (Forum for the Progress of South America - PROSUR). The EU itself understood the importance of these developments when it stated that the region of Latin America “has lost the ability to act collectively, having dismantled some of its regional organisation because of polarisation and political fragmentation” (EEAS 2020).

In fact, at regional level, CELAC remains seriously divided between its members, because of differences concerning the situation in Venezuela. One of the aspects most affected by this paralysis is the external⁴ operation of the organisation. In addition, a “heavyweight” like Brazil decided to suspend its membership in January 2020, as a result of the unorthodox foreign policy of Jair Bolsonaro.

The European and Latin American countries have not met together at a summit for five years. The last CELAC Summit with the EU was held in Brussels in 2015. The one that was due to be held in El Salvador in October 2017 was cancelled and eventually held at ministerial level in July 2018 in Brussels. The dialogue between the EU and the Rio Group continued for over 20 years; with CELAC only two summits were held.

The representative nature and the legitimacy of CELAC are being called into question. They are under threat from some elements of institutional weakness: it is not an international organisation with its own legal status, nor an institution of regional integration. This institutional minimalism was advantageous in achieving a certain flexibility and room for manoeuvre when the organisation was taking off but now it is a factor weighing against its resilience and relevance. The deterioration in the EU-CELAC dialogue can be seen not only in Europe but in the declaration of the last meeting of Ministers and Vice Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the CELAC countries in Mexico alluding to the possibility of holding a summit with China but without even mentioning the EU (C. Malamud 2020).

CELAC is a “dying” institution (C. Malamud 2020, 1), being divided internally and weakened externally and it has shown itself incapable of reacting to the challenges of the pandemic (Ayuso 2020). The Latin American countries presented uncoordinated responses to a common threat and have adopted very different strategies.

Many of the cooperation and integration frameworks of LAC should have produced regional or sub-regional cooperation but they are paralysed as a result of polarising tendencies (Soleri Lecha 2020).

The destruction of a robust regional structure occurred before the appearance of coronavirus, as we said earlier, but its consequences were revealed even more starkly, we might say, as an expression of the region’s inefficiency in providing any collective response. According to Ríos Sierra (2020), with the exception of the Central American Integration System (SICA) and the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO), it is scarcely possible to find any regional commitments beyond the exchange of information or concern about reactivating the economy.

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4. CELAC takes on the role of interlocutor with other countries and regional groups. Among these we could highlight the CELAC Dialogue with the EU, the CELAC-China Forum, the Mechanism for Dialogue with the Russian Federation, and approaches to the Republic of Korea, the Arab Gulf States, Turkey and Japan.

The LAC region is dealing with the pandemic situation devoid of common forums for consensus and cooperation. The end of a period of economic expansion, added to a social structure in ruins, with overwhelming unresolved needs, is not the best scenario for coping with the emergency health situation. Overcoming this set of circumstances essentially depends on international cooperation and effective multilateralism.

SOME SUGGESTIONS FOR A SHORT- AND MEDIUM-TERM AGENDA

Strengthening cooperation

A few years ago, at the height of the euro crisis, the European Commission decided to cancel bilateral aid to 19 upper middle-income countries. Of these, eight were LAC countries which “graduated” from being receivers of EU aid (Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Costa Rica, Mexico, Panama, Uruguay and Venezuela⁵) in 2014. The “graduation” rationale was also seen in other EU instruments for development cooperation, such as the Generalized System of Preferences (GSP) (Sanahuja 2012).

It may be the right time to revisit the question of granting generalised preferences within the framework of the World Trade Organization (WTO). The worsening per capita income of many LAC countries in recent years, obviously aggravated by the pandemic, as we have explained, should inspire a revision of the EU’s generous, but unilateral, SPG.

Even within the very area where for decades the EU played a dominant role, cooperation for development, priorities need to be adjusted. The national response to coronavirus limits the scope of the policies aimed at mitigating its effects. This requires thinking of bi-regional cooperation in much broader terms than the usual aid for development. Even before the appearance of Covid-19, the European Commission was advocating “an ambitious and innovative approach going beyond the traditional donor-beneficiary rationale” (European Commission 2019b, 2). It is a matter of cooperating from a more cross-cutting vision of joint working in order to respond collectively to what is by its very nature a common problem.

In this context, the new Instrument for Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation (NDICI), still under discussion, opens up opportunities to establish advanced forms of partnership with LAC. It partly leaves “graduation” behind and will be open to all countries in LAC, although not in every form. In particular, it sets aside considerable contributions for combined financing (blending) and investment support (Berbey Álvarez, 2020).

We can identify at least two lines of joint action between the EU and LAC. In the short term, actions targeted at the need to mitigate the immediate economic consequences of the pandemic, and in the medium and long term, the refinancing of the Latin American economies in order to re-orientate models of development.

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5. Venezuela and the countries affected by the Venezuelan crisis have benefited from humanitarian and emergency aid since 2018.

The announcement, in April 2020, by the EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Josep Borrell, that the EU – despite its own internal difficulties – would respond to the pandemic in LAC with a total of 918 million euros as part of the global response to support partner countries in their efforts to manage coronavirus (EEAS 2020), will help mitigate the impact in the short term.

The second type of aid should make it possible to safeguard the business fabric and employment, reinforce health and education systems, and avoid regression in gender equality, as well as help produce the investment needed to resume sustainable and inclusive growth after the pandemic. It would be advantageous to identify, as the Spanish government has said, “initiatives and actions agreed at the G20 and in other forums with the aim of facilitating access and providing debt relief to cope with the crisis” (Pérez 2020). Faced with the risk of a sovereign debt crisis, both regions can work together “in the G20 and in multilateral financial institutions so that there is greater fiscal space to avoid a collapse in health, an economic crash and a serious social crisis” (EEAS 2020).

A LIMITED YET EFFECTIVE AGENDA

The emergence of the coronavirus pandemic dramatically demonstrated the need to boost the Latin American agenda and renew its content, abandoning the emphasis on divisive topics such as the situation in Venezuela, and moving towards a more proactive intention. But at the same time, the bi-regional agenda could itself use the “window of opportunity” (Borrell 2020) presented by the pandemic to push forward long-awaited transformations.

It would be highly advisable to create a new themed coordination between the EU and LAC. This call to respond to the challenge of coordinating the various different forums for dialogue is nothing new. But now the Covid-19 pandemic could become a focal point for redirecting relations so as to reduce the fragmenting of themes and partnerships.

The health element, up to now almost totally absent from the bi-regional relationship, must be given a central place. It is a subject that requires specialist forums to forge consensus, but it has the added advantage that it has cross-cutting ramifications and involves all types of players in both regions. The pandemic provides a clear illustration of the vast array of topics arising from the intersection between health, financial resources, trade, politics and the economy. In this respect, and to give the dialogue greater legitimacy – and effectiveness – it seems essential to involve social and economic players more routinely.

The COVID-19 crisis also demonstrates that, when dealing with infectious diseases, health must be defined as a global public asset, which necessarily requires effective multilateral cooperation. It is essentially in these new themes of joint cooperation, as in public health, where the possible benefits of European cooperation may be more tangible for progress in the Latin American and Caribbean region than the “old” themes of trade and development aid, although the huge social regression in LAC will force these themes to be resumed in the short term. Even if this is so, as we have explained earlier, there are strong incentives for this to happen as partners on an equal footing.

SHOULD WE HOLD SUMMITS OR NOT?

EU-LAC inter-regionalism was largely characterised by summits establishing the political agenda for the majority of the other mechanisms of inter-regional cooperation (Gardini and Ayuso 2015). In addition to the limited practical results, the summits often presented challenges to the leaders, the diplomatic services and the national players in terms of time, energy, money, opportunity expenses and a bloated and diluted agenda (Gardini and Ayuso 2015). To many observers, a certain “fatigue” with the bi-regional relationship was evident as a product of successive summits without many tangible results.

In any case, we are not here to fall into the usual debate about the usefulness of European-Latin American summits. Clearly, summits give visibility and a political boost to the links between both regions. We can imagine two possible routes to resuming joint activity within the framework of the bi-regional dialogue at the highest level. The first (and most advisable) would be to once more opt for group to group dialogue, with diplomatic efforts being made for Brazil to return to CELAC either during the mandate of Bolsonaro or waiting for the Brazilian elections in 2022. The EU could also cooperate with CELAC despite the temporary suspension of Brazilian participation and the persistent internal divisions in the organisation, given that it has not been dismantled like other bodies (e.g. UNASUR).

The second and less desirable option would be to abandon the EU-CELAC framework for dialogue and replace it with a more diffuse dialogue with the countries of LAC. This seems to be the line recently taken by the European countries. Germany offered to organise an EU-LAC ministerial conference in Berlin in December 2020. According to the High Representative, this initiative could give a fresh boost to high-level participation (Borrell 2020). In March, a joint declaration by the Euro-Latin American Parliamentary Assembly urged “that a EU-LAC Ministerial Meeting be held urgently by video-conference, or preferably a Meeting of EU-LAC Heads of State and Government [...] to establish renewed cooperation to deal with the COVID-19 pandemic in the countries of the European Union and Latin America and the Caribbean” (EuroLat 2020). Neither this communication nor the German invitation mentioned CELAC, thus bypassing what had until relatively recently been the EU’s prime interlocutor in LAC.

Even before the appearance of the pandemic, various experts were indicating the need to rethink the dialogue with CELAC. This would mean replacing the EU-CELAC agenda that is too broad and generic and, therefore, not measurable, with specific agendas. It would even be possible to imagine that relations could remain at ministerial level (Serbin and Serbin Pont 2019). This is not in itself necessarily bad news. It might be unrealistic right now to think that viable initiatives could be put into action through summits with wide-ranging political agendas. While the pandemic made clear that cooperation between both sides of the Atlantic was necessary and urgent, the weakening of regionalism in LAC creates incentives for a pragmatic approach.

“ALA CARTE” COOPERATION

The trends described above could lead to the strengthening of a network with different levels of variable geometries. The fact that the countries of the EU and LAC might have to adjust to a variable geometry in bi-regional relations is nothing new, on the contrary, it was already provided for in the structure of the strategic partnership. In fact, alongside ways of relating in the political area and cooperating at bi-regional level, there have for decades also been models of sub-regional relations and those of the bilateral relationship. While some of these links are currently more dynamic (SICA, Mexico, Chile) than others⁶, this does not take away from the fact that this cooperation at different levels and between various different players can be effective in the face of post-pandemic uncertainties.

Of course, dialogue between the EU and sub-regions or individual countries has traditionally been coordinated by larger bodies at regional and inter-regional level. No level or channel of dialogue should be ignored or discounted. Dialogue with individual countries, sub-regions or bi-regional are all valid as long as they produce synergies and additional information on specific topics, as we have said earlier.

In the document “The European Union, Latin America and the Caribbean: joining forces for a common future” (European Commission 2019b) the idea of a relationship of “variable geometry” was reiterated with more flexible routes to collaboration compared to the traditional dynamic of bi-regional EU-CELAC summits and their rationale of the “lowest common denominator”, which requires the agreement of all. It also recognised the diversity of LAC, which implies that more progress is made with countries and groups that want and are able to make a greater commitment (European Commission 2019b).

The ministerial meeting of 18 European and Latin American countries⁷ on the initiative of France, Spain and the EU, held on 10 July 2020, is a good example. Here, importantly, countries thought it necessary to “learn lessons from the crisis and prevent more damaging consequences in the medium and long term” (Francia Diplomacia 2020). To this end they will evaluate their cooperation “in terms of medical, biological and pharmaceutical research in order to identify how it can be reinforced”. And they called for maintaining regular dialogue and inviting “other interested States from both regions to take part” (Francia Diplomacia 2020).

The President of the Spanish Government, Pedro Sánchez, likewise held a meeting in June to support Latin American countries in their efforts to tackle the socio-economic impact of the pandemic. The conference “Together for a response for Latin America and the Caribbean to COVID-19” was held by video-conference and was attended by the Heads of State of Argentina, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Paraguay, Peru, Dominican Republic Uruguay and Barbados – representing the Community of the Caribbean – as well as top representatives of international and regional financial institutions (La Moncloa 2020). This is a clear sign of Hispano-American dialogue, which is not a replacement for the EU-LAC dialogue, but which may activate, complement and/or enhance it in the context of the pandemic.

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6. For example, the EU has not held any summits with Brazil since 2014.

7. Germany, Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Croatia, Ecuador, Slovenia, Spain, France, Italy, Mexico, Netherlands, Peru, Portugal, Dominican Republic, Sweden.

As argued by Serbin and Serbin Pont (2019), an intermediate scenario between decline and division on the one hand and the global strategic partnership on the other would involve selective or à la carte inter-regionalism. That is, inter-regional relations progress, but only partially, in some specific sectors and with alliances of variable geometry” (Serbin and Serbin Pont 2019, 72). In this respect, we could imagine forums where the partially modified priorities of the bi-regional agenda could be harmonized, putting the emphasis on the short- and medium-term challenges arising from the pandemic.

FINAL THOUGHTS

Before the Covid-19 coronavirus made its appearance, the state of EU-LAC relations was going through a period of stagnation because of multiple factors, both internal and external, in each region. The pandemic made these links even more complex. However, the pandemic and post-pandemic scenario may have the potential for renewed understanding and cooperation if the players on both sides of the Atlantic can manage to capitalise on the advantages of mutual strategic relevance in the middle of increasing bipolarity.

The European institutional situation could help with this reinforcement, as the High Representative is of Spanish nationality – and we know that Spain has traditionally been a key European player in relations in LAC⁸ and that the presiding country of the Council in the current six months is Germany – a country interested in progressing some matters on the EU-LAC agenda, for example, ratification of the EU-MERCOSUR agreement. And in the first half of 2021 it will be presided by Portugal – another European ally in reinforcing links with LAC. The convergence of high-level offices of member States interested in maintaining and developing Euro-Latin American relations should not be wasted, in order to make progress with the reformed bi-regional agenda in the short term.

It is precisely during these months and those we are about to live through when urgent needs should be taken care of. Efforts in this first stage must centre on mitigating the immediate economic and social impact of the pandemic. The prospect of millions of newly poor and extremely poor people in LAC should be sufficient incentive for an EU active in re-directing additional resources towards the region, and for greater flexibility in tackling structural challenges and making the most of the opportunities of the bi-regional partnership.

As stated by the High Representative referring to the EU and LAC, “this has reminded us that our resilience also depends on international cooperation. We will only get out of this crisis by being united” (EEAS 2020). Beyond past errors and ups and downs, the Covid-19 pandemic could become a reason to reactivate links and renew cooperation in terms of working together, not only in the immediate future but also as a boost in the longer term.

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8. Needless to say, it should be borne in mind that, referring to the Commissioners, “Member States will respect their independence and will not attempt to influence them in the performance of their functions” (art. 245 TFUE).

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2. THE NEW BI-REGIONAL INTEGRATION OF LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN IN THE COVID- 19 ERA

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This paper analyses the bi-regional challenges between Latin America and the Caribbean, on the one hand, and the European Union, on the other, which are emerging following the current pandemic. The analysis comprises three parts. We first examine the background and the economic performance of each region during the period 2004-2019, and the political and trade relations between both blocs. We then identify the effects of the pandemic and the challenges arising for both regions; to this end we analyse the political, economic, social, and environmental context of both regions. The challenges revealed are of three main types: economic, social and environmental. In most cases, these challenges are not new, indeed, many of them are among the sustainable development goals; the pandemic has simply pushed them to the foreground. Finally, we put forward possible solutions to these challenges by strengthening relations between Latin America, the Caribbean and the European Union; and through a new multilateralism making it possible to tackle both current and future global needs in an opportune manner. We explain the need to reform, for this task, the United Nations, the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank. Considering that the countries of the two regions in the study represent one third of all countries, they could drive these reforms.

INTRODUCTION

The pandemic caused by Covid-19 has resulted in the greatest contraction in global output since the Second World War¹⁰. The shortcomings of the regions and their countries are now clearly seen. The rapid spread of this virus and the measures adopted by the governments of each country have had consequences for their economies and the economies of third parties. Within this context, we highlight the economic, social and environmental problems facing each region, in this case focussing on the European Union and Latin America and the Caribbean.

As in the rest of the world, many of the productive activities of Latin America, the Caribbean and the European Union also ground to a halt. This exacerbated the challenges facing both regions in the current situation; these are based on the reconstruction of polit-

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9. Third parties of the Institute of Socio-economic Research of the Bolivian Catholic University.

10. World Bank. 2020. "COVID 19, (coronavirus) plunges the world economy into the worst recession since the Second World War". Junio. 2020.

ical, social, economic and environmental relations. Against this background, both regions must reformulate their bi-regional relations for the purpose of promoting principles such as the fight against inequality, rights concerning health and well-being, trade relations and bi-regional projects of sustainable investment; all this must be done within an framework of respect and care for the environment. Finally, when faced with an uncertain future, we must work together, in cooperation with international organisations, towards a new multilateralism to respond to current needs.

As we have said, to succeed in meeting these challenges, it is hoped that both Latin America and the Caribbean, and the European Union, can strengthen integration between regions, to enable the joint progress of all member countries. In this case, the heterogeneity of the regions is what unites them and enables them to learn from each other. In tis respect, bi-regional integration is facing new challenges which need to be worked on and improved, as well as including the objectives related to the 2030 sustainable development agenda. The difference is that now the context has abruptly changed, and the 2030 goals should mostly be worked on now.

In making this analysis, this essay will begin by presenting the background of each region, and the relationship between them. We will then examine the situation created by the pandemic. Following that, we will present the points that must be addressed to achieve a new multilateralism. Finally, we will present our conclusion.

BACKGROUND

Before examining the challenges facing Europe and Latin America as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, it is important to briefly analyse the economic situation of the two regions in recent years.

ECONOMIC SITUATION OF LATIN AMERICA, THE CARIBBEAN AND THE EUROPEAN UNION

In the case of Latin America and the Caribbean, which is made up of 33 countries, there has been strong economic performance evidenced by the prices of commodities; as long as these remained high, the region showed considerable economic growth. In fact, according to data from the World Bank¹¹, between the years 2005 and 2013, the region grew at an average rate greater than 4% each year¹². However, the situation changed in later years. After the sudden fall in commodity prices, there was an average annual growth of 0.82% between 2014 and 2019. There was even one year of reversal registered, in 2016, when the regional GDP contracted by 0.34%. From these figures it is easy to see the dependence of the Latin American and Caribbean economies on commodity prices, the principal factors of instability and economic vulnerability. Despite these countries trying to achieve greater diversification of production, their economic situation is still based on the production - and price - of a few raw materials and the weak position of industrial products on the world

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11. World Bank. 2020. "Latin America and the Caribbean". Database. <https://datos.bancomundial.org/region/america-latina-y-el-caribe>

12. The exception was in 2009; owing to the global financial crisis, the region showed a contraction of 1.89%.

market. This scenario makes the region more vulnerable to a decrease in the price of these goods and to the external context.

In the case of the European Union, throughout the period 2004-2019, several fluctuations in the economic growth of the region were registered. To analyse them, it is important to look at the financial crisis of 2008, the same crisis as that which originated in the United States. This crisis represents a tipping point for the European countries and their economic performance.

Once again, according to the World Bank¹³, during the period 2005-2007, the European Union grew at an annual average rate of 3%. In 2008, because of the aforementioned crisis, growth in the region fell to less than 1% and in the following year negative figures were recorded; the European economy contracted by 4.28%. The following two years showed something of a recovery; nevertheless, between 2012 and 2013 there was a second recession. In those years, there was an average annual fall in European GDP of 0.39%. Recently, in 2014, a sustained recovery could be seen; in the period 2014-2019, the region saw an average annual growth of 2.18%. From this scenario, we can see that the European region was still coming out of a difficult economic situation; it still has not reached the levels of growth achieved before the crisis.

As may be appreciated, during the period under consideration, both regions experienced economic fluctuations. Latin America and the Caribbean enjoyed a golden decade thanks to the high prices of commodities. However, since 2014, a slowing has been recorded owing to the fall in these prices. As for the European Union, it recorded figures of sustained growth until the financial crisis of 2008. From that year, the region went through another recession; up to 2019, many of its members found themselves still coming out of it, trying to achieve pre-crisis levels of growth.

Up to this point, we have been looking at the performance of both regions before the pandemic; we will now study the relations between the two blocs. For this purpose, we will be examining trade and policies.

BI-REGIONAL RELATIONS

Concerning trade relations, the Latin American region exported around 9.2 billion USD to the European Union in 2019. This represents only 1.72% of the total imported by the European region in the period of our study. These exports represent only 8.75% of all the exports from Latin America in 2019¹⁴. On the other hand, the European Union exported to Latin America and the Caribbean around 134.1 billion USD.

This figure represents 2.34% of the total exports from the European Union in 2019. From the point of view of the Latin American region, the amount mentioned is 12.37% of the total respective imports in the year of our study.

13. World Bank 2020. „European Union“ Database. <https://datos.bancomundial.org/union-europea>.

14. International Trade Center. 2020. “Comercio bilateral entre América Latina y el Caribe y Unión Europea (UE27) Trade Map.

https://www.trademap.org/Bilateral_TS.aspx?nvpm=3%7c%7c15%7c%7c42%7cTO-TAL%7c%7c2%7c1%7c2%7c2.%7c1%7c1%7c1%7c1

These figures show a largely unequal bi-regional trade balance. The flow of goods from the European Union to Latin America and the Caribbean is almost 15 times greater than the flow in the opposite direction, from Latin America and the Caribbean to the European Union. This aspect must not be forgotten in the following analysis.

As for political relations, these became stronger with the arrival of this millennium. An important precedent can be seen in the communication from the European Community published in 1999, entitled “A new European Union – Latin America partnership at the dawn of the twenty-first century”. As the title states, it was hoped to establish a bi-regional strategic partnership with Latin America and the Caribbean.

In that same year, 1999, the first Presidential Summit was held in Rio de Janeiro with countries from both regions. The conference culminated in the creation of a bi-regional group at the level of senior officials, a group that was to meet regularly, overseeing and promoting priorities for specific action in the various different areas set by the Declaration. Since this summit, six further meetings were held at that level. Here we give details of each of these meetings in the following table:

Table 1: Presidential Summits of the European Union-Latin America and the Caribbean

Year	Location
1999	Rio de Janeiro
2002	Madrid
2004	Guadalajara
2006	Vienna
2008	Lima
2010	Madrid

Source: Drawn up by author

At each of the summits listed in the table above, the topics of concern to both regions were examined in some depth, with particular attention being paid to the strengthening of multilateralism. Some of the topics addressed were: i) strengthening the bi-regional strategic partnership; ii) democracy and human rights; iii) reinforcing the multilateral approach to promote peace, stability and respect for international law; iv) cooperation in the fight against terrorism; v) fight against drugs and organised crime; vi) environment and energy; vii) regional integration, trade and connectivity and viii) growth and employment.

At the end of 2011, the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States was set up. Since then, this partnership has become the valid interlocutor in the relationship with the European Union. To date, there have been two presidential summits between both communities, in 2013 in Santiago de Chile and in 2015 in Brussels. Two ministerial meetings were also held, in 2016 in Santo Domingo and in 2018 in Brussels. All these conferences sought to continue with the topics addressed at the first presidential summits. We should note that a third presidential summit was planned for 2017 in El Salvador; however, it

was cancelled because of disagreements within the Latin American bloc over the situation in Venezuela¹⁵.

To sum up, political relations seem to be stronger than trade relations. While the flow of goods between both regions is considerable, neither of the blocs is a principal trading partner of the other. To date, for both Latin America and the Caribbean, and for the European Union, regions such as North America and Asia constitute more important trading partners. By contrast, political relations have been strengthened since 1999 thanks to the presidential summits occurring every two years. We cannot, however, fail to note that these have not been held since 2017. These are the circumstances in which the COVID-19 pandemic appeared in the year 2020.

IN THE TIME OF THE PANDEMIC

In early 2020, the world began to hear about the sudden emergence of a new disease in Wuhan, China. In a short time, the virus (Sars-CoV2) spread throughout the whole world; neither Europe nor Latin America and the Caribbean were spared. Faced with the pandemic, and following the recommendation of the World Health Organization (WTO), most of the European, Latin American and Caribbean countries decided to impose a lockdown on their citizens for a fixed period and to limit the carrying out of economic activities. It was not long before this policy began to affect the economies of the countries and the general development between regions. Among these effects were:

i) a decrease in the economic activity of countries with their principal trade partners; ii) a fall in the prices of primary products; iii) an interruption in the world value chains; iv) a contraction in the demand for tourist services; v) a reduction in remittances and vi) an intensification of risk aversion and a worsening of global financial conditions¹⁶. These effects can be clearly seen in indicators such as growth rates of economies and trade flows between regions.

ECONOMIC EFFECTS

World Bank projections show a contraction of 5.2% in global gross domestic product in 2020, the deepest global recession for decades. Most regions are presenting negative growth rates for 2020. In terms of the volume of world trade in goods, the World Trade Organization foresees a decrease in world trade of 9.2%. Concerning the regions we are looking at, the European Union showed a fall of 22%, while Latin America and the Caribbean recorded a negative value of 26.1%¹⁷, and was the most affected developing region.

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15. EFE. 2017. "Cancelan definitivamente la cumbre Celac-UE en El Salvador." Agencia EFE, November 24, 2017. <https://www.efe.com/efe/america/politica/cancelan-definitivamente-la-cumbre-celac-ue-en-el-salvador/20000035-3448133>

16. Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (CEPAL). 2020. Enfrentar los efectos cada vez mayores del COVID-19 para una reactivación con igualdad: nuevas proyecciones.

17. Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (CEPAL). 2020. "Los efectos del COVID-19 en el comercio internacional y la logística." (August)

Concerning prognoses of economic growth, the European Commission¹⁸ states that in the case of the European Union, the GDP of the whole bloc is expected to decrease by 8.7% by the end of 2020. However, in 2021 a recovery of up to 6.1% is projected. In respect of Latin America and the Caribbean, according to estimates of the International Monetary Fund¹⁹, GDP is expected to fall by 9.4% by the end of 2020 and as in the European region, a recovery is expected in 2021, of 3.7%.

It is easy to see from this data that the pandemic caused both regions serious economic problems. In the case of the European Union, its consistent economic growth was halted, after the year of 2019 having been the seventh consecutive year of growth. Economic recovery from the financial crisis of 2008 and the second recession in 2013 was therefore also halted. As for Latin America and the Caribbean, in many countries the pandemic exacerbated the economic slowing they were experiencing after the fall in commodity prices in 2014.

The COVID-19 pandemic has led to a global recession and altered the positive trend of indicators for the next few years. This makes the situation of the European, Latin American and Caribbean countries even more difficult. Just as we have observed the economic fragility of the European Union, Latin America and the Caribbean, it has become clear that international problems between regions cannot be solved in an isolated manner. In this respect, the present and future scenarios present considerable challenges, not only economic but also social and environmental.

ECONOMIC CHALLENGES

As seen in previous sections, the trading relationship between the regions we are studying has shown every year that the European Union depends less on Latin America and the Caribbean than this region does on Europe. This flow must be balanced for the benefit of both parties. To do this, trade agreements must be reinforced that take account of the realities and heterogeneity of both regions.

It is certain that for the countries of the Latin American and Caribbean region with the least resources, there are unlikely to be many absolute and comparative advantages in their export products and, if there are, they are concentrated in sectors that are not complex, that is, primary sectors and extraction activities. Latin America and the Caribbean must therefore find a way of diversifying their export basket in an environmentally sustainable way. We must point out that investment from the European Union in the extraction activity of the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean reduced by total volume from 43% in 2005 to 14% in 2017²⁰. This provides an incentive for the Latin American and Caribbean region

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17. EFE. 2017. "Cancelan definitivamente la cumbre Celac-UE en El Salvador." Agencia EFE, noviembre 24, 2017.

Comisión Económica para América Latina y el Caribe (CEPAL). 2020. "Los efectos del COVID-19 en el comercio internacional y la logística." (Agosto).

18. Comisión Europea. n.d. "Unión Europea." Base de datos Eurostat. Accessed 2020.
<https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/data/database>

19. International Monetary Fund. n.d. "Base de datos y proyecciones." <https://www.imf.org/en/Data>.

20. Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC). 2019. *Perspectivas del comercio internacional para América Latina y el Caribe*. Santiago, Chile: n.p

because it opens the way to new projects with investment components related to the energy and renewable energy sector, provided that the Latin American and Caribbean region can implement an appropriate legal or institutional framework for the adoption of binding regulations through international agreements.

In light of this, bi-regional trade agreements are required that take all these aspects into account. Strengthening trade agreements and generalised preference systems is a determining factor for the development of the bilateral relationship between both regions. All these elements will enable greater economic dynamism in both regions. At the same time, excessive dependence on other economic blocs, such as Asia and North America, can be avoided.

SOCIAL CHALLENGES

The pandemic has not only revealed economic challenges, but also social challenges. During lockdown, the poverty and inequality existing in all countries, principally those of Latin America and the Caribbean²¹.

Concerning poverty, great vulnerability can be seen through various social issues, such as income, health, domestic violence, food supply, overcrowding and education. However, the problem comes not only from these matters, but also from the threat of more people falling below the poverty line. In other words, the pandemic is likely to cause a reversal in all the progress shown in social indicators²². Both the European Union and Latin America and the Caribbean must therefore present clear policies in these areas.

In respect of inequality, the divide between the rich and the poor has been exacerbated within the countries of the European Union²³ and those of Latin America and the Caribbean²⁴. Hence the need to formulate policies to establish mechanisms for risk distribution, to protect the most vulnerable (people and countries) in this economic adversity. Cooperation between regions is important for this task, sharing both previous experience and resources, to be able to best respond to this issue that affects all countries, especially those low-income countries with weak state structures that are principally found in the Latin American and Caribbean region.

Along with this, an essential issue that should be given immediate attention is access to vaccines against COVID-19, under development goal three, concerning health and well-being. In addition, agreements must be drawn up between countries and regions

21. United Nations. 2020. „COVID, hambre, pobreza y desigualdad. La combinación mortal que enfrenta América Latina.“ UN news. <https://news.un.org/es/story/2020/07/1477571>.

22. Europa Press. 2020. “La pandemia amenaza con provocar un retroceso del desarrollo humano por primera vez en 30 años.” Europa Press, mayo 20, 2020. <https://www.europapress.es/internacional/noticia-pandemia-amenaza-provocar-retroceso-desarrollo-humano-primeravez-30-anos-20200520163641.html>.

23. ACN. 2020. “La crisis por el coronavirus agrava la desigualdad económica entre el norte y el sur de Europa.” Diari Mes, March 28, 2020. https://www.diarimes.com/es/noticias/actualidad/2020/03/28/la_crisis_por_coronavirus_agrava_desigualdad_economica_entre_norte_sur_europa_79222_1095.html?

24. Centenera, Mar. 2020. “La pandemia agranda la brecha en América Latina: ocho nuevos multimillonarios y 50 millones más de pobres.” El País, July 29, 2020. <https://elpais.com/economia/2020-07-29/la-pandemia-agrandala-brecha-en-america-latina-ocho-nuevos-multimillonarios-y-50-millones-mas-de-pobres.html>.

and the companies developing the vaccines, to attempt to ensure fair and universal access between regions.

ENVIRONMENTAL CHALLENGES

The current crisis largely originates in the environmental weaknesses of a development model. The current pandemic also demonstrates the vulnerability of all countries in dealing with a global problem on their own. This is why it is important to pay special attention to the effects of climate change and the need for sustainable development. Against this background, bi-regional relations must prioritise the implementation of sustainable trade, also known as *green commerce*²⁵. Fortunately, the regions we are studying have positive experience in this area.

The European Union has been known as one of the leaders and precursors in paying timely attention to climate change. The Paris agreement is one of the principal foundations for the creation of strategies for the countries and regions in favour of the environment. The European region has likewise become a world leader in energy efficiency and renewable energy technology, which are tasked with ensuring the sustainable transition of other sectors of the economy to clean energy. One result of this is the European automotive industry, known for being less polluting. For this reason, because of its added value that includes quality standards and care for the environment, high levels of exports have been achieved. On this point we should note that the automotive industry is one of the most important sectors for the investment of European capital in Latin America and the Caribbean.

While we may highlight the environmental achievements of the European region, we should note that the Latin American region is not being left behind. In Latin America and the Caribbean, the Sustainable Development Index²⁶, measures the CO2 emissions of each country in relation to parameters linked to human development. In this context, Latin America and the Caribbean generally proved to be the region with the highest levels of sustainability. For example, Cuba is at the head of the developed countries of the world in terms of sustainable development, followed by Costa Rica and Panama.

In this context of progress, to complement 'green commerce', it is important for both regions to coordinate policies to mitigate and adapt to climate change. In addition, they must promote this theme as a priority issue on the global agenda, as the effects of climate change may turn out to be more harmful than the current pandemic.

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25. The concept of green commerce aims to encourage small traders to consider the importance of the fight against climate change and promote environmental responsibility in the commercial sector, involving both traders and consumers.

26. Sustainable development index. n.d. <https://www.sustainabledevelopmentindex.org/>.

TOWARDS A NEW MULTILATERALISM

Attention must be paid to post-pandemic challenges not only by both these regions together, but at global level. This is why the restructuring and reformulating of the policies of international organisations is becoming important. This situation is even more pressing when we consider that the structure of these organisations was set up to meet the challenges arising after the Second World War, more than half a century ago. To fulfil this mission, the countries of the European, Latin American and Caribbean regions have an important role to play. We should not forget that the whole bloc includes a total of 60 countries, which is equivalent to almost one third of all the nations in the world.

As far as the United Nations is concerned, the way decisions are taken needs to be changed. In recent years in particular, we have seen how the five permanent members of the Security Council do not reach unanimous agreement, making use of their right of veto. This leads to stagnation in dealing with global issues, which then become urgent, like climate change²⁷. We can see that there is a need to reform this Council; one possibility might be to elect the 15 members - none of them permanent – under the criterion of representation and democracy (for example, two representatives per region).

Another possibility is to give greater power to the General Assembly and its Secretary General. In this way, it would probably be able to respond in timely fashion to urgent matters that present challenges to the whole world. Once again, the issue of climate change comes to mind. It would probably be possible to come up with more adequate responses in this area if it was dealt with by all countries in a General Assembly.

Other organisations in need of reform are those such as the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank. We should remember that both international bodies came into being in 1944 after the Bretton Woods agreements. The reasons for their creation are therefore quite different from the challenges facing the world today. Through reforms - which were already begun to a degree in 2018 - both organisations can play an extremely important role in reactivating the economies of the Latin American, Caribbean and European regions. On the one hand, the International Monetary Fund can provide credit for countries which will enable them to increase their aggregate demand, stabilise their funds and boost their development. On the other hand, the World Bank can generate projects to mitigate post-pandemic effects. In short, we must facilitate low-interest loans and defer debt, especially in developing countries.

The outcome and responses to the current crisis will depend on the economic strength of each country and therefore, given the heterogeneity and asymmetries between countries and regions, the role of the international organisations will be essential to guarantee access to finance and to maintain economic activity, looking towards new horizons. These reformed organisations can not only better help cope with the effects of COVID-19, but they can also come up with new solutions to problems which existed in the past, continue to exist and will exist in the future.

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27. Ágora. 2019. "El Consejo de Seguridad de la ONU no logra consenso sobre la relación entre cambio climático y conflictos armados." Ágora, inteligencia colectiva para la sostenibilidad.
<https://www.agorarsc.org/el-consejo-de-seguridad-de-la-onu-no-logra-consenso-sobre-la-relacion-entre-cambio-climatico-y-conflictos-armados/>.

Faced with this critical context affecting everyone, the developed countries must act in a coordinated manner to avoid exacerbating the external conditions of the developing countries. We are deciding now how to act, and we must therefore incentivise optimal integration between regions supported by processes of inclusion, the green agenda, digitization and connectivity.

CONCLUSIONS

The current pandemic has not only caused a global economic recession, but has revealed the strengths and weaknesses of the regions for dealing with global problems on their own. In the case of the European Union, Latin America and the Caribbean, we have seen the vulnerability of their economies in the face of this type of event. On the European side, the pandemic halted the economic recovery after the financial crisis of 2008. As for Latin America and the Caribbean, COVID-19 exacerbated the economic situation that had already made itself felt from 2014, when the boom in commodity prices came to an end. Both regions are expecting some level of recovery in 2021; however, this could be greater if the existing inter-regional relationship was given fresh impulse. Such a boost would benefit not only the current situation, but the challenges of the future, both short- and long-term.

One of the first aspects both regions need to take into account is the current economic context. It is essential to consolidate trade and financial relations between the two regions. This is suggested to benefit all parties and reduce the high level of dependence on other countries, such as China and the United States. The inter-regional trade balance must be improved by implementing and renewing new trade agreements which take account of the comparative advantages of the various different countries. Such trade treaties may in turn be complemented by sustainable investment agreements to reinforce European investment in Latin America and the Caribbean and vice versa.

Another element made more visible by the pandemic is the existing inequality and poverty in each country. In the face of this, the sustainable development goals assume greater force and relevance for countries and regions in general. The first thing that the Latin American/Caribbean/European bloc should seek is to preserve health and well-being; that is why it is encouraging fair and universal access to the COVID-19 vaccines. Secondly, the current situation provides an unfiltered view of the inequality between countries and regions; priority should be given to protecting the most vulnerable through social, economic and environmental policies that can only be achieved with the integration of countries and regions and with international cooperation.

Finally, and no less important, the issue of the environment is one of the main matters that must be tackled without delay. The pandemic has revealed the weaknesses in the development models with serious fault lines in the environmental limits of the biosphere. There is therefore an urgent need to adopt new policy measures to solve environmental damage.

As a first step, countries must consider changing their economic development models to include the changing environment as an essential element in creating well-being within countries and between regions. Bi-regional integration must propose and design strategies for economic growth that promote green trade between regions and must implement sustainable projects. The lesson that must be taken to heart by countries, regions and international cooperation is that they have the responsibility of promoting growth and economic recovery without the need to do this at the cost of the environment.

All these elements must not only be developed between countries, but also at bi-regional level; however, it must be remembered that within these alliances international cooperation plays a very important role in decision-taking, owing to the fact that the countries of both regions total almost one third of the total number of countries. That is why the reform of international organisations must be galvanized, so that they can respond more quickly to the needs generated by global problems. The task ahead lies in creating conditions to respond to the crisis with aid from multilateral credit organisations, especially the IMF and the World Bank. Finally, bi-regional integration must strengthen regional forums and the synergies between both regions to reduce the external vulnerability in evidence now with the appearance of the Covid-19 pandemic.

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3. CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES OF THE HEALTH CRISIS: THE BI-REGIONAL STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP OF THE EUROPEAN UNION – LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN

**Bahía Agustina Gatti
Valentina Testa²⁸**

RESUMEN

This essay seeks to analyse the current situation in the context of the pandemic by focusing on certain principal areas such as the economy, sustainability, gender equality and cooperation. At the same time, it proposes possible solutions to the problems facing the 62 countries of Latin America and the Caribbean and the European Union in rethinking a more inclusive future, and attempting to circumvent the obstacles presented by the year 2020. The main premise is the need to strengthen international cooperation to give a greater boost to the EU-LAC bi-regional partnership, starting with the solidarity and working together of countries that share common values such as a commitment to human rights, fundamental freedoms, democracy and a multilateralism that is now seen to be in crisis.

Key words: COVID-19, coronavirus, pandemic, multilateralism, European Union, Latin America and the Caribbean, cooperation.

INTRODUCTION

The COVID-19 pandemic has thrown into relief the transformation processes already underway in the international system. For some time the global order has found itself in a process of change towards a dominant multi-polarity, and from 2001 there have been signs of disintegration in the hegemony of the United States in parallel to the ascent of China as a global power. All these phenomena generate analogous major effects in international and regional organisations, as in those that exist in the framework of Europe and Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC).

The international situation demonstrates the undeniable need to rethink multilateralism. Throughout 2020 all institutional structures have seen their levels of effectiveness, efficiency and transparency called into question. The decline in multilateralism is intrinsically linked to the crisis in the liberal international order. The reluctance of some countries to participate in the existing multilateral institutions shows the intention of the State to make a comeback as the leading player in the international system, with the ability to determine decisions.

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28. Universidad Siglo 21 / Argentine Youth Organization for the United Nations

The current unprecedented crisis situation has returned to the State its role as a protagonist in the arena of international society, as it is required to intensify its operations in the social, political and economic areas. This leads us to ask, is global governance therefore in crisis? More than the collapse of the Westphalian system, it would seem we are experiencing a return to its origins. By contrast, we maintain that we should now explore opportunities for coordination between the emerging countries, regional organisations and non-governmental players that form part of the machinery of the world.

The closing of borders, the interruption of global value chains, the uncoordinated reaction of governments and the globalized transmission are only some of the signs presented to us by this absurd scenario in which the crisis has placed us. The pandemic is global from the epidemiological angle and local from the political. It promotes globalization at the same time as it challenges it. Its origin and consequences are linked to the inter-dependent character of international society, and the centrifugal and centripetal forces of power are more than ever present.

Globalization as a process has not been uniformly conceptualized. Debates in the discipline distinguish three differentiated approaches: the hyper-globalizers maintain that globalization defines a new era in which the peoples of the world are increasingly subject to the discipline of the global market. They portray it as the broadening, deepening and acceleration of an inter-connected world in the contemporary social dimension of human life. The sceptics, on the other hand, believe that it is essentially a myth. For them, it seeks to hide the reality of an international economy increasingly divided into three major economic blocs in which national governments continue to be very powerful. Finally, the transformationalists maintain that the contemporary guidelines of globalization are understood as something without historical precedent. States and societies are therefore experiencing a process of profound change, while trying to adapt to an ever more inter-connected, yet also more uncertain, world²⁹. So we should ask ourselves: when this current context has been overcome, which of these currents will most appropriately reflect the “new normality”

The Turkish economist, D. Rodrik (2012), maintains that hyper-globalization, democracy and the nation State are three simultaneously incompatible premises, and that only two of them would be possible at the same time. He argues that democracy tends to become weaker in nation State integrated with growth in the international economy; that democracy and the nation State only coordinate if there are practical limits to globalization; and that democracy could only coexist with globalization if strategies were drawn up for transnational governance and the nation State were weakened. It presents this disjunction as “a political trilemma of the world economy”³⁰, and we now ask each other: Are we experiencing the confirmation of his theory?

In this essay we focus on the relations between the European Union and Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC). Despite their interchanges going back to the 1960s, it was not until 1986 – with the broadening of the European bloc and the inclusion of Spain and Portugal – that relations were particularly strengthened. Spain, largely because of its

29. Sáenz, S. D. (2008), *Regionalismo y globalización: procesos de integración comparados*, L. Granato, & C. N. Oddone (Eds.), Editorial Universidad Abierta Interamericana (UAI), 1, 18-19.

30. Rodrik, D. (2012), *La paradoja de la globalización*. Antoni Bosch editor, 9.

colonial, historic and cultural ties with the central and southern regions of America, was and continues to be the principal promoter of the link between both regions.

In 1999 the first EU-LAC Summit of Heads of State and Government was held in Rio de Janeiro. Here the objective was defined of creating a bi-regional strategic partnership that would strengthen cooperation in the political, economic and cultural fields, envisaging that the alliance would be sustained by shared values such as the commitment to human rights and fundamental liberties, democracy and multilateralism³¹.

The strengthening of relations led to the creation of the European Union-Latin America and the Caribbean Foundation (EU-LAC Foundation) in 2010. This body based itself on the mission to strengthen and promote the partnership, improving its visibility and encouraging the active participation of respective civil societies³².

To develop the essay we will be guided by the words of Dr. Blanc Altemir: "Latin America cannot be understood without reference to Europe, and nor can Europe without taking into account Latin America and the Caribbean"³³.

SUMMARY OF THE YEAR 2020

The strategic partnership between the European Union and Latin America and the Caribbean has in particular marked the development of a political process between governments on both sides of the Atlantic Ocean. Both regions work through this towards closer relations, and increased weight and relevance as blocs at international level, and seek to develop a joint, coordinated approach.

The signing of partnership and free trade agreements, especially at bilateral level, and the holding of Euro/Latin American forums for political dialogue and cooperation in different fields and at different levels (meetings of high government officials, forums of parliamentarians, trades unions, academics, businesses, judiciary and civil society) are some of the phenomena where a greater level of interchange and negotiation is seen.

The increase in inter-regional bilateralism is seen at two levels: on the one hand, through various strategic partnerships and/or free trade agreements such as those drawn up between the European bloc and Mexico, Brazil, Chile, Colombia and Peru. And on the other hand, through special partnerships between Spain, Italy, France and Germany and specific Latin American partners³⁴.

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31. Blanc Altemir, A. (2008), *La V Cumbre Unión Europea-América Latina y Caribe: Hacia un cambio de método en las relaciones birregionales?*, Anuario español de derecho internacional, 2008, vol. 24, 217.

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34. García Rodríguez, L., & Jiménez Valderrama, F. (2014), *Balance de la asociación entre América Latina y el Caribe y la Unión Europea: La nueva agenda*, IUS magazine, 8(33), 7-33

TRANSFORMATION OF THE GLOBAL SCENARIO

In both the European region and LAC, the change in the international situation that occurred in recent years has been particularly relevant. The election of Donald Trump as President of the United States has had destabilising effects on the international economy, at times endangering the forums for multilateralism, as happened with his threats to the World Trade Organization (WTO) and the World Health Organization (WHO) requesting “greater independence from China”. Added to this was the trade war between Washington and Beijing, which marginalised Europe and LAC, causing them to be relegated as international players, but at the same time incentivising their defensive coordination.

The positive agenda of the Asian giant in LAC now stands in contrast to the isolationism of the United States. The first should be counterbalanced by greater presence in the region of the European Union, since shortly after the viral outbreak was recorded in Wuhan, China began to roll out a series of actions of international cooperation of a bilateral nature evidencing a new style of external politics popularly known as “mask diplomacy”.

Similarly, for some time now it has been possible to observe the appearance of China in LAC territory: since 2015 there have been Ministerial Meetings of the CELAC-China Forum, and in 2016 the Chinese government issued the “China Policy Document on Latin America and the Caribbean”. These actions are occurring at the same time as a “soft power” strategy reflected in the influx of Chinese businesses, generous flows of investment and study grants for the People’s Republic of China through which they hope to shape the future leaders of the region.

For the Chinese government, the overriding concern is protecting their state power, and not especially defending the western democracy set up to promote peace and development. As far as LAC is concerned, despite the current resurgence of certain right-wing political movements, there is a collective memory strongly connected to the wave of authoritarianism experienced in the 1970s. State institutions have been recovered by constitutional means, which gave a whole new and powerful meaning to democratic values, the defence of human rights, the rule of law and respect for pluralism. In this way, the countries of the region have made significant progress in consolidating democracy.

In this respect, Tokatlian³⁵ cautions that the Chinese internal political model would be very unattractive to Latin America, and that is why we maintain that Europe must defend its presence in the region as an essential partner, valuing historical links and the cultural tradition that unites both regions.

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35. Tokatlian, J. G. (2007), *Las relaciones entre América Latina y China: un enfoque para su aproximación*, *Análisis Político* (59), 46-56.

DEMOCRACY, LEGITIMACY AND THE RULE OF LAW

Freedom of movement, to meet, for business, negotiations and contracts, of transit of goods, expression, access to legal tribunals: all these have been limited in some measure to defend the national interest of each State. It is like a war against an invisible enemy without weapons but with numerous casualties.

Some of the governmental measures adopted to cope with the coronavirus health emergency have been considered as excessively limiting of fundamental rights by various sectors of public opinion. While the protocols implemented in different parts of the world are generally similar, differences arise from the legislative and constitutional frameworks in which the measures have been incorporated.

Whereas the regulatory bodies of some States include mechanisms allowing for a “state of emergency” to be declared or for extraordinary powers to be given to public institutions, there are others which do not. This may be for historical reasons, as in the case of Germany, where the memory still weighs heavy of the 1933 decree which brought the Nazi regime to power; or it may be due to the institutional tradition, as in the United Kingdom, which has an Anglo-Saxon system of law and therefore lacks a rigid regulatory framework. In Europe, with the exception of Spain, they have opted to adopt urgent normal legal instruments. On the other hand, the management of the situation in Latin America has been done using measures to restrict movement and activities not considered essential in the context of the health crisis³⁶.

The regulations implemented as emergency measures carried with them questions as to their time limits, scope, proportionality and legal security. Often the measures were even taken through Ministerial Resolutions or Decrees from the Executive Power, without taking account of or going through the control of Assemblies or collegiate bodies that were more representative. There is here an obvious point of conflict that leads to this question: is democracy also in quarantine?

In many countries of the region the mechanisms for checks and balances have become diffused, and from this we come back to and highlight the idea of Montesquieu: there is no such thing as total freedom, trust or legitimacy when the

Legislative and Executive powers are found in the same person or body. If this happens it might be feared that “the monarch or the Senate” might make tyrannical laws and execute them themselves in a tyrannical manner³⁷.

The general situation of the legal provisions implemented is a cause for concern among citizens. Although public policy must undoubtedly be based on proposals from multidisciplinary committees of experts, they must also channel the demands of civil society, existing pressure groups and communities that are generally excluded from any decision-making

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36. EPRS, European Union (2020), States of emergency in response to the coronavirus crisis: Situation in certain Member States, accessed the 20 of October 2020, <https://www.europeansources.info/record/states-of-emergency-in-response-to-the-coronavirus-crisis-situation-in-certain-member-states/>

37. Montesquieu (1748), *El Espíritu de las Leyes*, taken from <https://courses.lumenlearning.com/atd-pima-westerncivilization2/chapter/baron-de-montesquieu/> accessed 23 October 2020.

process. Given the scenario presented we must ask ourselves: is there room for inclusive social debate within the context of the health emergency?

The countries of the European Union and LAC must present a united front, exchange knowledge in respect of the crisis, collaborate with each other concerning good practice in the legitimacy of public decisions, and fight against the emergence of extreme-right nationalisms on both sides of the Atlantic.

THE ECONOMIC CRISIS AND ITS UNPRECEDENTED CHALLENGES

The pandemic brought with it the greatest economic crisis the world has experienced since the Great Recession; its features combine to make it unlike any other, as these include a decrease in production capacity (supply shock), a collapse in international markets and a downturn in internal demand (demand shock)³⁸.

The distinctive feature of this great crisis is that the problem is not centred on the financial markets, but on the real economy; the most affected are the workers, the SMEs and business. At the same time, it not only affects underdeveloped or developing countries, but large economic powers also find themselves with ruined supply and demand, and historically record low interest rates.

Latin America and the Caribbean represent one of the most vulnerable areas. Studies carried out in the region, with a sample of 18 countries, show that 29.6% of the people are living in poverty, and 10.2% in extreme poverty³⁹. At the same time, most of the population are involved in the informal economy, with neither security nor social protection.

In addition, the pandemic impacted LAC at a time of great economic weakness and macro-economic vulnerability, bearing in mind that after the world financial crisis, the regional GDP decreased between 2010 and 2019 from 6% to 0.2%⁴⁰.

The central region of America, especially the island nations, are being severely affected by the crisis as their economic structure differs greatly from that of the mainland. These local economies, often family businesses, concentrate on the production of raw materials and tourism, a sector harshly hit because it depends on borders being open, and which in the Caribbean employs some 2.4 million people and represents 15.5% of GDP⁴¹.

At the same time, LAC is facing problems of fiscal hardship, with total public income stagnating over the last decade because of the slowing of economic activity, tax evasion, the fall in international prices for raw materials, tariff reductions from trade openness and growing tax resistance from concessions in free-trade and processing areas⁴².

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38. Cifuentes-Faura, J. (2020), Crisis del coronavirus: impacto y medidas económicas en Europa y en el mundo, *Espacio e Economía*, accessed the 26 October 2020, <http://journals.openedition.org/espacioeconomia/12874>

39. CEPAL, NU. (2019), *Panorama Social de América Latina 2018*, 20.

40. ECLAC, NU. (2020), *Informe sobre el impacto económico en América Latina y el Caribe de la enfermedad por coronavirus (COVID-19)*, 8.

41. Cifuentes-Faura, *Crisis del coronavirus: impacto y medidas económicas en Europa y en el mundo*.

42. ECLAC, *Informe sobre el impacto económico en América Latina y el Caribe de la enfermedad por coronavirus (COVID-19)*, 10.

In this context, accentuated by the current economic crisis, problems of social protection in the region are accentuated: increases are seen in levels of labour informality - and therefore greater gaps in access to contributory social protection - there are few countries with unemployment benefits (only 8 in LAC in 2019 grant employment insurance to informal workers⁴³), systems of contributory social protection are being affected financially because of the increase in sick leave among formal workers, and there is an obvious need to widen programmes to protect low-income families who risk falling into poverty.

In the case of Europe, estimates have indicated that GDP growth forecasts for the Eurozone will be negative by -4% in 2020, with a positive recovery of 2% growth in 2021⁴⁴. Similarly, the PMI Index⁴⁵, made up of the Total Activity in the Eurozone in IHS Markit, fell for the third consecutive month in October, from 50.4 to 49.4, indicating the first contraction in activity in the private sector since June.

In order to deal with the health and economic emergency in the European bloc the Stability and Growth Pact (SGP) has proved essential. This pact, adopted in 1997, envisaged a safety clause to allow States, in the case of a severe economic recession, to temporarily diverge from their goals. This clause was activated by the European Union on 23 March, after the Ministers of the Economy and Community Finances studied the impact on public finances that will face the continent and the whole world in the face of the pandemic. Activating it enabled member States to adopt budgetary measures to tackle the situation adequately, within the preventive and corrective measures of the SGP, as long as applying them does not endanger fiscal sustainability⁴⁶.

World trade had already shown a 0.4% decrease in 2019 - the first since the global financial crisis – owing to the accumulation of trade barriers set up from early 2018, principally between China and the United States, and their effects on global value chains. The current fall in economic activity in the United States, Europe and China likewise has a direct negative impact on Latin America and the Caribbean, especially in raw materials, which has serious repercussions in a region that specialises in exporting primary goods⁴⁷.

Finally, we should mention the role played by oil, the main export product of the region. Projections from ECLAC studies show that decreased demand, by approximately 30%, will not be compensated for by the latest agreement of the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), which reduces the production of member countries of the organization by 20%⁴⁸.

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43. *Ibidem*.

44. Cifuentes-Faura, Crisis del coronavirus: impacto y medidas económicas en Europa y en el mundo.

45. IHS Markit (2020), Flash del índice PMI® de la Zona Euro, acceso el 26 de octubre de 2020, <https://www.markiteconomics.com/Public/Home/PressRelease/a23976c963a74878989b8c258ee6e190>

46. Albitos, B. M., & Puebla, D. M. (2020), Implicaciones jurídico-económicas de la crisis Covid-19 en la Unión Europea (The Legal-Economic impact of the Covid-19 crisis in the European Union), accessed 28 October 2020, https://www.derechoycambiosocial.com/revista060/Implicaciones_juridico-economicas.pdf

47. Cifuentes-Faura, Crisis del coronavirus: impacto y medidas económicas en Europa y en el mundo.

48. CEPAL (ECLAC), Informe sobre el impacto económico en América Latina y el Caribe de la enfermedad por coronavirus (COVID-19), 12.

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN THE POST-PANDEMIC WORLD

In both the United Nations and its specialist agencies, and at the level of governments and regional organisations, the environmental agenda has gained a pre-eminent place⁴⁹ which is reflected in an increasing flow of financial resources and awareness-raising about the climate crisis. Sustainable development which takes account of the link between economic and social development, and their effects in the short and medium terms on the natural environment, is no doubt one of the central themes on the bi-regional agenda. However, both regions show marked differences in the way they deal with it.

The European bloc has a well-established environmental conscience, unlike in LAC, where the idea of over-exploiting the natural resources to maintain development recurs frequently. Therefore considering sustainable development as a central element of the EU-LAC Strategic Partnership means analysing the complexity arising from the heterogeneity of its members, and this is where bi-regional cooperation in the search for a common policy takes on real meaning⁵⁰.

Following this thought, we should focus on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Although COVID-19 is a setback in the fulfilling of goals such as improving health, access to education, or even the creation of decent employment, it also offers an opportunity to put greater emphasis on objectives related to climate change. To give an example, the measures that are being applied in tourism to mitigate the pandemic could be used to improve the environmental and social sustainability of a sector which, according to ECLAC, represents approximately 5% of the world's emissions of greenhouse gases⁵¹. The reduction in city traffic has led to a consequent decrease in the levels of three principal pollutants in the breathable air of Latin American cities, which translates into better environmental and human health (it reduces respiratory morbidity and mortality) especially in vulnerable people⁵².

So that this phenomenon does not turn out to be merely temporary and limited to the period of the quarantines and the health emergency, it is more than ever necessary to develop and consolidate ways of producing and consuming, labour practices, and economic solidarity with the most vulnerable sectors. These must contribute both to the economic recovery and the improvement in the health of both people and the environment, in accordance with a new kind of healthy, inclusive and sustainable development, as the current model does not represent one that can be maintained over the long term.

Both the 2008 bi-regional Summit in Lima and the Madrid action plan (2010) have

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49. Gómez, C. (2015), El desarrollo sostenible: conceptos básicos, alcance y criterios para su evaluación, accessed 27 October 2020, <http://www.unesco.org/new/fileadmin/MULTIMEDIA/FIELD/Havana/pdf/Cap3.pdf>

50. Giacomini, M. (2012), El desarrollo sostenible como elemento central de la Asociación Estratégica UEALC: Respuestas europeas, respuestas latinoamericanas, accessed 29 October 2020, https://www.kas.de/c/document_library/get_file?uuid=db6dc80a-9b00-97b4-ea06-1e128d6c1f0a&gro_upId=262509

51. CEPAL, NU (2020), Medidas de recuperación del sector turístico en América Latina y el Caribe: una oportunidad para promover la sostenibilidad y la resiliencia, 9.

52. CEPAL, NU. (2020), Efectos de las cuarentenas y restricciones de actividad relacionadas con el COVID-19 sobre la calidad del aire en las ciudades de América Latina, 11.

established sustainable development as a pillar of the EU-LAC Strategic Partnership. If anything is clear it is that, despite the various different solutions that can be presented by both sides, it is essential that these should complement each other. Europe can bring to LAC its green technologies, high-level training programmes and social model, thereby helping diversify the economy. As for LAC, bearing in mind its abundance of natural resources and the dynamism of its markets, it could boost the recovery of growth in Europe⁵³.

NEW NORMALITY WITH A GENDER PERSPECTIVE

Since it first burst onto the scene after the Cold War, the feminist theory of International Relations has thrown into question many mainstream concepts in the discipline. These include the categorical rejection of the distinction between “the public” and “the private”, as it was understood that such a division is loaded with gender implications⁵⁴.

Starting from this idea helps us analyse the situation experienced by women all over the world during the pandemic. The vulnerability of Latin America and the Caribbean has been exacerbated as this is the region with the highest levels of inequality, and poverty also has a gender dimension⁵⁵.

The health emergency has accentuated the unequal organisation of society in respect of caring responsibilities, and women bear greater social responsibility as, at global level, they do two and a half times the amount of unpaid domestic and caring work that men do⁵⁶. This implies that when the schools close and/or the health systems become overwhelmed, it is they who look after the family members who become ill, elderly people, and children who are forced to stay at home. The crisis also creates conditions that exacerbate gender violence, especially in the domestic sphere, owing to the difficulty of accessing processes for lodging a complaint, getting a protection order and/or essential services that can save lives because of lockdowns and restrictions on movement. Gender violence obviously does not itself go into quarantine and States have been obliged to reinforce the mechanisms they have in place for women in situations of danger.

Another important aspect to bear in mind is that women comprise 70% of the healthcare workforce in the world⁵⁷. This implies that they are more exposed to contracting the virus because of the exposure required by the work. At the same time, women are in the majority in sectors that have been severely hit by the pandemic. One example is tourism, a sector where women make up the majority of workers all over the world and especially in Latin America⁵⁸.

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53. Giacomini, El desarrollo sostenible como elemento central de la Asociación Estratégica UEALC: Respuestas europeas, respuestas latinoamericanas, 5.

54. Sodupe, K. (2003), La Teoría de Las Relaciones Internacionales a Comienzos Del Siglo XXI, 199.

55. UNDP (2020), The Economic Impacts of COVID-19 and Gender Equality, accessed 22 October 2020, <https://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/librarypage/womens-empowerment/the-economic-im-pacts-of-covid-19-and-gender-equality.html>

56. UNDP, The Economic Impacts of COVID-19 and Gender Equality, acceso el 22 de octubre de 2020,

<https://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/librarypage/womens-empowerment/the-economic-im-pacts-of-covid-19-and-gender-equality.html>

57. *Ibidem*.

58. *Ibidem*.

Governments are undoubtedly facing great challenges in drawing up public policies intended to protect women engaged in informal employment, to attend to the immediate needs of those who work in the health sector, and to reinforce systems available for victims of gender violence, among many other aspects that have to be considered at state level from a gender perspective. There is no other choice than to construct socio-economic guidelines starting with the fair inclusion of women in decision-making forums, and empowering women and children.

It is fundamental for the EU-LAC strategic partnership to have at the forefront the commitments in the 1995 Beijing Declaration and Action Platform. Only by involving women in all phases of the response and in the taking of international and local decisions will we avoid divisions becoming ever deeper. It will be essential for multilateral relations to agree joint policies that contribute to the economic recovery and to the labour market with a gender perspective.

EDUCATION AND COVID-19

The interruption of activities in educational centres will have significant effects on learning, especially for the most vulnerable. Over 1,200 million school-age children around the world have been affected by school closures and, in the context of distance learning, UNICEF has warned that the divide inherent in the access to tools and technology could exacerbate the global crisis in education⁵⁹.

Studies on the educational situation in Latin America have shown that the majority of the countries have digital resources and platforms for remote connection, which they have been able to reinforce at great speed through the work of the Ministries of Education⁶⁰. . However, few countries have educational strategies that make the best use of ITC.

The context of the pandemic has shown up the need to make adjustments to school curricula and to reorder priorities and tools. The transformation in the way classes are delivered has brought about a paradigm shift in the use of ICT for education by both teachers and learners. This implies not only mastering the tools of technology but knowing how to use and apply them in a suitable way for knowledge acquisition⁶¹.

Reordering educational priorities will mean, on the one hand, seeking teaching and learning strategies that are collaborative and designed to build knowledge between all those who take part in educational activities: school authorities and teachers, students and families. And on the other hand, it will involve considering socio-emotional skills as part of an integral development that looks at both cognitive and attitudinal aspects, especially because of the need for actions of solidarity and participation by the community in the context of what we are living through.

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59. UNICEF (2020), La falta de igualdad en el acceso a la educación a distancia en el contexto de la COVID-19 podría agravar la crisis mundial del aprendizaje, accessed 25 October 2020, <https://www.unicef.org/es/comunicados-prensa/falta-igualdad-acceso-educacion-distancia-podria-agravar-crisis-aprendizaje>

60. *Ibidem*.

61. Monasterio, D., & Briceño, M. (2020). Educación mediada por las tecnologías: Un desafío ante la coyuntura del Covid-19. *Observador del Conocimiento*, 5(1), 100-108.

COOPERATION: A RETURN TO TRADITIONAL REALISM OR THE DEVELOPMENT OF A PERSPECTIVE OF INCREASING SOLIDARITY?

Regionalism in LAC involves a set of initiatives originating in the twenty-first century, with the exception of Mercosur. The various different models and schemes for regionalism express the aspiration of the member countries, whatever group they are members of, to promote dialogue and cooperation. At the same time they reflect the great heterogeneity of Latin America and the Caribbean, and the various visions of their members concerning the regionalism that is possible.

They represent an exercise in flexibility and political pragmatism such as was rarely seen in the past⁶².

The above is a result of a belief regarding current conditions in this global world: individual solutions to problems are less and less possible. Despite progress on the road to democratization and strengthening society and its participants, the dominant vision continues to be State-centric. Another common factor in the integrated blocs of Latin America and the Caribbean is the low level of institutional organisation, being inter-governmental, sometimes described as inter-presidential, and with a mainly commercial integrationist profile.

The weakness of regional institutions is commonly associated with nationalism and the traditional concept of sovereignty that characterises political culture in Latin America. However, the decision-making process is dominated by administrators, and this has led to serious problems of legitimacy and image. In addition, there are no institutional frameworks for the participation of civil society, and the “citizen dimension” of the integration is very weak. This “patchy regionalism” weakens the internal cohesion of integration and prevents it becoming stronger, which translates into commitments that can sometimes be contradictory⁶³.

CELAC (The Community of Latin American and Caribbean States), a bloc which frequently ties together the EU-LAC relationship, meets the new trends in regionalism and regional integration, prioritising the political element. It reflects two characteristics of regional integration: a full range of topics and broad geographical scope. The principal obstacle lies in the decisions and political will of Heads of State, which, in a crisis of confidence, drift towards the process of Latin American integration.

On the other side of the bi-regional relationship, the European Union also presents a paradoxical reality. Although it continues to be the most advanced process of integration in the world, and has been strengthened as a major player on the global scene by the signing of the Lisbon treaty, the bloc has difficulties in determining its joint external policy and articulating it appropriately. The negative consequence of this phenomenon is that its capacity for acting as an international player is reduced⁶⁴.

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62. Bernal-Meza, R. (2013), *Modelos o esquemas de integración y cooperación en curso en América Latina* (UNASUR, Alianza del Pacífico, ALBA, CELAC): una mirada panorámica, 18.

63. Sanahuja, J. A. (2009), *Del “Regionalismo abierto” al “regionalismo post-liberal”*. Crisis y cambios en la Integración Regional de América Latina, *Anuario de la Integración Regional de América Latina y el Gran Caribe*, vol. 7, 10-43.

64. Sanahuja, J. A. (2013), *Hacia un nuevo marco de relaciones entre la Unión Europea y América Latina y el Caribe*, 14.

The Union is now going through a major economic and financial crisis that began with the Great Recession of 2008. Added to this has been the refugee crisis, the proliferation of terrorist attacks, the rise of nationalism, the Brussels bureaucracy and the exit of the United Kingdom. The continent is therefore torn between the old and the new, that is, between returning to the past as nationalist countries fighting for their own interests to the detriment of the other countries, or seeking a solution to integration with more integration and democracy. These problems being experienced in the Eurozone in some way diminish its attraction and influence in LAC, so they must therefore be overcome with a view to reinforcing a mutually rewarding bi-regional partnership.

We could also analyse the world situation from a traditional realist approach, taking the pandemic as the creator of an anarchic landscape in which the zero-sum principle rules. Certainly the closing of borders, limitations on freedoms and the defence of national interests could act as tools of the State in a fight for power where its gains involve corresponding losses by others, and where the principle of self-help inspires the way it proceeds in the international system⁶⁵. However, we suggest a solution could be to move the EU-LAC strategic alliance away from this traditional State-centred and self-centred concept, deepening mutual cooperative relationships along with regional integration processes on both sides of the Atlantic. The various blocs in LAC need a process in line with their cultural, political and economic characteristics, and different from the supranational pathway and aspirations for political union of the European Union in recent decades.

POST-PANDEMIC AGENDA: A WORLD OF OPPORTUNITIES

A new shared agenda can be discerned in the future of the EU-LAC Partnership, and issues such as climate change, the fight against drug trafficking or fiscal policy will certainly begin to form part of it. Within their borders, both regions are facing problems such as development, populism, civil insecurity and the integration crisis. So, as they share similar problems, the proposal should be to work around actions which can be implemented in a joint manner, abandoning the traditional “donor/recipient” rationale⁶⁶ which generally implies unilateral transfers from the EU to Latin America, and proposing an innovative agenda based on learning from each other.

In fiscal policy we can see an opportunity to reinforce cooperation to achieve fair and efficient fiscal systems and social protection as essential instruments for promoting inclusive economic growth and tackling inequality. To do this we must share good budgetary governance, where there is a high level of commitment to tackle fraud, and tax evasion and avoidance⁶⁷.

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65. Arenal, C. D., & Sanahuja, J. A. (2015), *Teorías de las relaciones internacionales*, 2.

66. Gratius, S, *Europa-América Latina: retos regionales y globales compartidos*, 125.

67. Eurosocial (2019), *La Unión Europea, América Latina y el Caribe aúnan fuerzas para un futuro común*, accessed 28 October 2020, <https://eurosocial.eu/actualidad/la-union-europea-america-latina-y-el-caribe-aunan-fuerzas-para-un-futuro-comun>

In respect of drug policies, in LAC we can see a growing debate about decriminalization stemming from the failure in the fight against drug trafficking. The reasons underpinning its perception as a problem without a solution are its corrupting power from government and police collaboration, the vast size of the networks, increasing demand and the profitability of illegal dealing. Even in the places where these transnational networks have become established, a material and symbolic fight is evident to legitimise their illegal activity⁶⁸.

Latin America and Europe could decide to opt for an innovative solution to this scourge and not repeat the repressive prohibitionist discourse that seeks to totally eradicate it, with little sign of success. Connecting the Latin American and the European debates on the legalization and regulation of certain soft drugs such as marijuana, as already happens in the Netherlands and Uruguay, will therefore serve to drive a new inter-regional and global policy⁶⁹.

To sum up, we are seeking to achieve a more balanced political commitment, between equals, with an agenda of trade and responsible investment. Together they represent one third of the members of the United Nations, which makes them essential partners in a multilateral rules-based order.

CONCLUSION

The pandemic crisis occurred at a time when trust in globalization and multilateralism as development tools had been declining over more than a decade. COVID-19 only revealed problems that already existed, principally in LAC: inadequate health systems, the dominance of an informal labour market, high levels of poverty, limited public resources, unsustainable public debt, the impossibility of implementing fiscal packages, inequality, social unrest and major disturbances which occurred in 2019. All this shows the need for an alignment of leadership, long-term vision and collaboration between all the governments of LAC and relevant international players such as the European Union. It will only be possible to overcome the crisis in its economic, social and humanitarian aspects, and rebuild a new model of sustainable development in light of Agenda 2030, if it is built collectively from a strengthened multilateral dynamic⁷⁰.

In the twenty-first century international system, criss-crossed by the networks of global governance and by marked institutionalism, it is essential to reinforce from State level the tools and forums for the taking of decisions. The erosion of sovereignties leaves no alternative than to turn to international institutions. States must leave aside criteria that lead them to act at international level through the lens of their own national interests, and to this end the role of participation mechanisms and accountability constructed with the people takes on particular relevance⁷¹.

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68. Ovalle, L. P. (2010). Construcción social del narcotráfico como ocupación. *Revista CS*, 101.

69. Gratius, S. (2017). Europa-América Latina: retos regionales y globales compartidos, *Nueva sociedad*, (270), 128.

70. United Nations (2020), El multilateralismo será clave para superar la crisis económica causada por el COVID-19, accessed 28 October 2020, <https://news.un.org/es/story/2020/07/1477791>

71. Álvarez Arcá I. (2020), La pandemia y la crisis del multilateralismo/2, acceso el 27 de octubre de 2020, <https://aquiencia.net/2020/07/09/la-pandemia-y-la-crisis-del-multilateralismo-2/>

Multilateralism must be reinvented, given greater power and even reconfigured.

From the strategic point of view, neither of the two regions can allow itself to ignore the other if it wishes to reinforce or increase its weight as a relevant player in the international system. Now more than ever we must safeguard the institutionalization of the political dialogue and of its strategic partnership, as global challenges need efficient and coordinated responses on a large scale.

The upheaval generated by the pandemic in every society and economy of the world requires combined efforts to get ahead of a crisis from which, it is clear, no-one can recover just by themselves. The context requires sharing experiences, collaborating with good practice and turning once more to multilateralism.

The recovery from the COVID-19 crisis should lead us to a different economy, and in particular to one transfused by the gender perspective. Consolidating democracy in times of crisis is in the hands of the people and their political involvement, whether through traditional mechanisms, demonstrations or social media. The health situation requires rapid and effective measures to be taken but this must not stand in the way of citizen participation and accountability, and women must be carefully listened to and included in all areas of governance and high-level politics where the guidelines that will construct the future will be drawn up.

It is still early to draw any conclusions regarding the emergence of a new world order. However, some trends can already be observed, such as the major role of national States in managing the crisis. There are also the actions of international institutions seeking to get creditor countries to cancel the debts of poor countries with the aim of transferring resources to the health system.

The interest of the LAC countries in diversifying their external relations (especially with the countries of the Asian-Pacific region) is steadily increasing. That is why the European countries must redouble their efforts to ensure the EU remains attractive as a strategic partner compared to other possible competitors.

The essential element will be a renewed, dynamic cooperation, based on multilateralism, which can progress towards the political arena, leaving behind its purely commercial character, and in its turn empowering the vision and values shared by both regions.

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4. POST-PANDEMIC MULTILATERALISM: NEW STRATEGIES FOR THE RAPPROCHEMENT OF THE EUROPEAN UNION AND LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN: THE CASE OF THE ALLIANCE FOR MULTILATERALISM

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

We are in the presence of two crises affecting international cooperation: the questioning of multilateralism as a structure for coordination and the issues exposed by the COVID-19 pandemic. We should therefore ask ourselves whether, in this context, the course being taken by the global order is in some way affecting the bi-regional rapprochement between the European Union and Latin America and the Caribbean. The emergence of the Alliance for Multilateralism is a new approach in response to the crises and points the way to deepening the historic EU-LAC relationship.

INTRODUCTION

We are at a crucial point, marked by the crisis and by uncertainty, which gives us a historic opportunity to take stock. We need to reflect and draw up strategies in which multilateralism can be seen as a coordinated, viable and effective response. We need a multilateralism that listens and responds to the changes and reforms required of it. The global context has certainly produced examples of pessimistic international players, reluctant to be involved in cooperative work; at the same time, the past year has shown that the unilateral (or isolationist) route is not a real option. The dilemma between defensive seclusion and international coordination to find broad and effective solutions is turning definitively towards the latter. This approach means that multilateralism and international cooperation have a great challenge ahead of them.

This paper will tackle multilateralism from a post-pandemic point of view, through the case of the Alliance for Multilateralism as a forum for deepening bi-regionalism between the European Union and Latin America and the Caribbean. To this end, three areas are proposed for discussion: context, strategy and effects.

In the first section, we seek to establish a clear context and the implications of this framework against the scenario of international cooperation and multilateralism. The COVID-19 pandemic, the role of multilateralism and the challenges of the future are some of the top-

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72. Diploma in Design, Management and Project Administration with External Financing at the National University of San Martín (Argentina)

ics touched on in this section. The second section focusses on describing and analysing the Alliance for Multilateralism as a global initiative in response to the weaknesses and current demands upon international cooperation. As well as presenting its objectives, landmark successes, evolution and initiatives, we analyse the elements making this proposal a strategy to boost traditional multilateralism. The third section focusses on the positive effects of the Alliance for Multilateralism in respect of the bi-regionalism between the European Union and Latin America and the Caribbean.

The current multilateral system can certainly be improved upon as it has shown it does not always have the ability to provide a response to challenges at global level. So why is uncertainty so important in this context? From finances and technology to climate change, pandemics, migration and security, what the future holds for us feels increasingly uncertain and in need of alternative approaches. But uncertainty can be transformed into something positive. This scenario favours the position of those who have the will to act and influence through new ideas and approaches. We are experiencing a time of crisis and change, an opportune time for rethinking the role of multilateralism and strategies for international coordination.

THE CONTEXT: IMPLICATIONS OF THE POST-PANDEMIC ERA

There can be no doubt of the significance of the COVID-19 pandemic at global level. It will mark a before and an after in a variety of aspects which we certainly cannot yet identify. The pandemic has caused a huge crisis including, by way of generic classification, health, economic and social problems.

But what makes this time significant is not just the crisis itself but the implications it brings and the consequences determining a post-pandemic scenario. This situation opens up a range of possibilities to reassess roles, processes and the established global level status quo itself. Before looking at future scenarios, it is important to understand the context and the succession of events which brought the world to the place of uncertainty in which it finds itself today.

On 11 March 2020, the World Health Organization (WHO), represented by its Director General Dr. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, announced that the new disease known as coronavirus (COVID-19), already present in several countries and with alarming levels of transmission, could be classified as a pandemic⁷³. At that time, European countries were already experiencing serious problems and a sharp rise in cases and deaths. Spain, Italy and France were the first to show how difficult it was to deal with the COVID-19 pandemic from both a health and economic point of view. Meanwhile, Latin America had already recorded its first positive case of COVID-19 (26 February, Brazil) and the first death caused by the disease (7 March, Argentina). As the virus spread through Asia and Europe, during the months of January and February, the first indicators of a potential health and economic crisis began to be seen, setting the governments of the Latin American countries on alert to the need to take extraordinary actions of prevention, mitigation and control, faced with the first confirmed cases beginning to appear in the region.

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73. A pandemic is an infectious disease affecting people over a wide geographical area

By the middle of October, seven months after the WHO declared COVID-19 to be a pandemic, almost 38 million confirmed cases and over a million deaths due to COVID-19 had been recorded globally. Against this scenario, it is important to highlight the situation of Latin America and the Caribbean, which was impacted later but in a very significant manner. The region is one of the most affected areas, with 10 million confirmed cases and 367,000 deaths as a direct consequence of COVID-19⁷⁴. However, health is not the only area under attack. Latin America and the Caribbean continues to be the region with the highest levels of inequality in the world. It is estimated that levels of public debt went up significantly, fiscal imbalances are increasing, exacerbated by social transfers and Gross Domestic Product (GDP) is expected to decrease by 7.9% in 2020.

Local and intra-regional management represent a fundamental element in tackling the economic crisis that the COVID-19 pandemic brought along with it. At the same time, the support received by the region from international organisations, and even from other regions, will be essential to construct actions to help with post-pandemic reconstruction. This is where the role of the European Union and its member countries shows its relevance to Latin America and the Caribbean, especially regarding forums for creating development programmes aimed at encouraging growth and mitigating inequality, two systemic issues in the region that have been exacerbated by the pandemic. Faced with the current global situation, a consequence of the emergence and spread of COVID-19, there can be no doubt that Latin America is facing one of the major challenges in its history.

The crushing momentum of this situation, added to the different and specific measures taken by countries and regions according to each reality, have generated (and continue to do so) high levels of uncertainty regarding how to circumvent this crisis, its real impact, and the strategies that will help us on the road to the post-pandemic era.

It is against this background that international cooperation and multilateral institutions gain relevance as awareness grows of the facilities they offer for global coordination in the face of issues like that presented by the COVID-19 pandemic. However, the real impact of multilateralism is being much questioned, as is, more generally, this type of international arrangement as a consequence of changes in the global order. The idea of constructing a changing global order is reflected in varied dynamics and challenges that test the cooperation of States. Among others, we could mention the States' own capacities, economic flows, the political order, the involvement of non-state players, migration issues, environmental challenges, cracks in matters of international security, etc. In this regard, Hirst and Malacalza identify three factors structuring this crisis process: i) the fracturing of the international post-war order, ii) the impact of the United States – China confrontation, and iii) the failings and frustrations accumulated over decades from the trajectory of multilateral institutions (Hirst y Malacalza; 2020). Let us begin, therefore, by understanding what is now meant by multilateralism.

In the field of international relations, multilateralism is generally defined in comparison to bilateralism, or even unilateralism, and it is associated with the idea of institutionalised cooperation between three or more states. Based on the idea of cooperation, its greatest expression is seen in the system established by Bretton Woods as a global order and the emergence of the United Nations (UN) whose 75th anniversary was celebrated in 2020.

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74. 11 October 2020

At the same time, we are not talking about a static concept, as multilateralism implies constant evolution. This is its greatest challenge today: how to adapt to the changes in the global order?

According to various definitions, multilateralism means cooperation between states which have an interest in reaching common objectives, establishing a certain balance and regulating competence. Cooperation is a response to a rationale in which states recognise that acting together enables them to achieve certain results which they would not manage to effect without joint collaboration. In this sense, multilateralism can be understood as a necessary phenomenon responding to the context of globalization, inter-connection and dependence. Multilateralism guarantees cooperative work based on a set of principles and values established and shared by the parties entering into the understanding. For the current French Minister of Foreign Relations, Jean-Yves Le Drian, multilateralism is not a dogma and neither should it be associated with a definition linked to ideological questions. Le Drian defines multilateralism as an effective method.

In this respect, defining multilateralism as a tool for international cooperation to ensure objectives and results are attained through joint initiatives emphasises the need for collaboration. In the context of the pandemic and bearing in mind the requirements implied by designing a global coordination strategy, multilateralism takes on new meaning with increased relevance.

The international institutions created since 1945 to help nations manage and solve their problems peacefully, and jointly, are becoming weaker at a rate never seen since their foundation. However, taking the lead on global problems requires policies and actions that go beyond the mandate or capacity of any single state (Albright and Gambari, 2019). The post-pandemic era requires multilateral organisations to develop and continue promoting forums for dialogue and knowledge-building. Good practice, pathways to follow, impact strategies and policy coordination are some of the actions worked on through multilateralism with a view to growth and economic reactivation, to find the best way out of the socio-economic crisis and define the post-pandemic scenario. Latin America and the Caribbean now more than ever need these bodies of coordination and international cooperation.

Multilateralism is facing two specific challenges related to the global context. The first, in the short term, involves the health facilities relating to the development and distribution of the COVID-19 vaccine. There are already signs of dialogue and coordinated action relating to this matter, for example, the 12 million USD plan approved by the World Bank to guarantee rapid access to the vaccine. The second challenge, looking to the medium and long term, relates to the new development cycle at global level. This crisis provides an opportunity to rethink the role and strategy of multilateralism in the international order, with a view to making a major impact on sustainable and inclusive growth. Both these challenges (or opportunities) relate directly to the two systemic questions facing Latin America and the Caribbean mentioned earlier in this paper: promoting growth and mitigating inequality.

STRATEGY: ALLIANCE FOR MULTILATERALISM

The debate on the viability and functionality of multilateralism is still ongoing. Basically, there are fixed positions: on the one hand are those who hold a more closed view and talk about the lack of results from bodies of international cooperation through multilateral institutions; on the other hand, we have those who trust in the ability of multilateralism to reach a consensus on global issues in an increasingly inter-connected world, basing their position on the establishment of common understandings in respect of global principles and values.

Bearing in mind the context described in the previous section, these two positions are now exacerbating each other. However, it is interesting how the COVID-19 pandemic has exposed, although not in the best way, how inter-connected and mutually dependent is the world in which we now live. It therefore becomes necessary to find forums with power and influence that can help reinforce the mechanisms of international cooperation, guaranteeing effective global governance, including both nations that already form part of this scenario and increasingly prominent non-state players. Global issues such as climate change and the migration issue, among others, added to particular phenomena such as the COVID-19 pandemic, highlight the importance of countries adjusting their focus from their national interests and favouring support and international cooperation based on systems of international rules. This does not discriminate between developed countries and emerging or underdeveloped countries, neither has it anything to do with income classification; the importance of international cooperation and multilateralism lies in participation by all: everyone has something to offer.

Against the background of the controversy concerning the role of the multilaterals, and driven by the current context, alternatives are emerging which attempt to strengthen the existing instruments for international cooperation. This is the case with the Alliance for Multilateralism.

The Alliance for Multilateralism, an initiative that began to take shape in 2018 encouraged by the French and German Ministers of Foreign Relations, is an informal network of countries that agree on the importance of multilateralism. Through the Alliance, the countries express their belief that a multilateral order based on rules is the only guarantee of stability and international peace and, at the same time, that common challenges can only be overcome by cooperation.

On its website, the Alliance for Multilateralism states that, at a time when the key principles of the international order based on rules and the essential instruments for international cooperation are being called into question, its objective is to bring together those who believe in robust and effective multilateral cooperation, based on the goals and principles of the United Nations Charter, international law and justice, as an essential basis for ensuring peace, stability and prosperity. At the same time, they reaffirm their conviction that the principal challenges of our time, because of their nature and their global reach, cannot be tackled by countries separately, but must be dealt with jointly, and that such rules-based

multilateral cooperation is also a key guarantee of the sovereign equality of states (Alliance for Multilateralism, 2020).

While this type of initiative originates in the weaknesses apparent in multilateralism, its objective fits within the established order, with the intention of strengthening and deepening it, guaranteeing stability based on the rules of the system itself (in the case of the Alliance for Multilateralism, the reference is found in the United Nations). In this way, it could be defined as a course of action guaranteeing principles and rules seeking to make processes more flexible to respond to the current international momentum.

Specifically, the Alliance for Multilateralism intends to work in relation to the following challenges:

- Protecting and preserving the rules, agreements and international institutions that find themselves under pressure or threat, compensating for the lack of commitment that may have come about on certain issues;
- Pursuing a more proactive agenda in policy areas lacking effective governance and where new challenges require collective action;
- Promoting modernisation and reform in existing international institutions, without compromising the principles and key values agreed by all, with the aim of making multilateral institutions and the world order more inclusive and effective when it comes to offering tangible results to the citizens of the whole world. This agreement supports ideas of inclusion, representation, democracy, transparency, responsibility and efficiency.

Two years since it began to take shape and a little over one year since the initiative was formalised, the Alliance for Multilateralism is now becoming established as a body of consensus that can enable tangible actions to be achieved. At the same time, support from different countries has made it possible to progress and broaden the impact it hopes to have.

Table N°2: Milestones in the development of the Alliance for Multilateralism

2018 AUGUST	
Conference of Ambassadors in Berlin	The Canadian and German Ministers of Foreign Affairs presented in their speeches a joint analysis of the state of global relations and declared their intention to promote an international order based on rules and to generate political support for multilateralism.
2019 FEBRUARY	
Publication of OpED	France and Germany produced a joint publication reiterating their conviction that legitimate national interests and the global common good can be reconciled by working together in a multilateral way. At the same time, they asked for renewed global commitment to multilateralism.
2019 FEBRUARY	
Meeting as part of the Munich Security Conference	The Ministers of Foreign Affairs of Germany, Canada, France and Japan took up the message published a few days previously. They once again stressed the need for a renewed multilateralism.

Source: drawn up by the author based on information from the Alliance for Multilateralism.

Between April 2019 and September 2020, the Alliance went from being an initiative proposed by two countries, Germany and France, to being reinforced as an informal organisation for discussion and dialogue between over 60 countries in various different regions of the world.

Table N°3: Actions of the Alliance for Multilateralism

2019 APRIL	
Meetings in New York	Germany and France formally presented the idea of the Alliance for Multilateralism to a group of 14 countries. This event was accompanied by a public discussion (University of Columbia) in which the countries leading the initiative discussed the development of the Alliance in the context of renewed policy and powers at global level.
2019 JUNE	
Decentralised events	A series of decentralised events yet linked under the same banner took place in Berlin and Paris. This campaign, going under the slogan #MultilateralismMatters on social networks, focussed on the mass distribution of the message, explaining why multilateralism matters.
2019 JUNE	
Support from the European Union	The EU provides effective support for the objectives of the initiative. The External Affairs Council adopted the Conclusions of the Council on the EU action to reinforce rules-based multilateralism. This reinforces the message on the need to agree joint rules and efficient and inclusive institutions. For the EU this is the way to ensure peace, security, human rights, prosperity and sustainable development.
2019 SEPTEMBER	
Ministerial Meeting: Building the Network and Presenting Results	Bearing in mind that the UN is the heart of the multilateral order, the General Assembly in September provided the ideal framework to make progress with the Alliance for Multilateralism. On this occasion, the organisation did not depend on France and Germany alone, but included Canada, Chile, Ghana, Mexico and Singapore. Another 48 States also took part, demonstrating the growth and functionality of the Alliance as it produced tangible results in a variety of fields with partners from all over the world. Countries with similar ideas in various inter-regional forums came together around specific topics, looking for tangible political results.
2020 FEBRUARY	
Ministerial Meeting: Promoting International Humanitarian Law and Fighting Impunity	In the framework of the High Level Segment of the Human Rights Council, the ministerial meeting focussed in advance on two tangible objectives: the fight against impunity and the humanitarian question. In this way progress was made in constructing the Humanitarian Call for Action initiative, one of the most significant actions for the Alliance for Multilateralism.
2020 APRIL	
Declaration on COVID-19	In the context of the COVID-19 pandemic a joint declaration was made by the Alliance for Multilateralism which included the support of at least 24 Ministers of Foreign Affairs. A series of challenges were discussed which must be tackled through international cooperation and multilateralism: health, financial, information, preventive and economic.

2020 JUNE	
Ministerial Meeting	As part of the 75th anniversary of the signing of the United Nations Charter, a new ministerial meeting was held. The meeting was of course influenced by actions to mitigate the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. The health question and the structure of the health system became the central themes, which were tackled from the perspective of reform and modernisation with a view to reinforcement for the prevention of future crises.
2020 SEPTEMBER	
Ministerial Meeting	Another meeting of ministers was held as part of the 75th Meeting of the General Assembly of the United Nations. This event had a special character as it also marked one year since the official presentation of the Alliance within the context of the major crises at global level. Memberships were presented, the fundamental ideas of the initiative were restated, progress was reported and four main areas were proposed for the post-pandemic reconstruction: climate, health, digital transformation and equality

Source: drawn up by the author based on information from the Alliance for Multilateralism.

The Alliance for Multilateralism is presented as a strategy to reinforce international cooperation based on the multilateral order and institutional bodies to tackle global questions. In a context that tests the capacity of States, and above all, the need for collaboration, this initiative may grow in relevance and act as a channel for action from an updated perspective. A series of particular characteristics forming the constitution and action of the Alliance for Multilateralism will explain, in principle, the progress and support it has enjoyed from the international community:

- **Open participation:** while the Alliance is based on the traditional structure of the international system, promoting and reinforcing multilateralism, it seeks to involve non-state players as necessary to tackle global challenges, such as climate change, human rights and digital transformation. From its beginnings, it calls out to all who share the vision and want to join, maintaining an open position towards participation in the network. It is therefore open to the active participation of members of the international community, international organisations, regional institutions and other relevant players.
- **Flexible and specific structure:** it is not constituted as a formal institution, but is presented as an informal, flexible network based on a support structure to deal with specific issues and their consequent action plans. According to the principles of the Alliance for Multilateralism, being involved in one of its initiatives does not involve any commitment to the development of the other programmes.
- **Call for multilateralism:** the Ministers of foreign affairs of the countries involved in the initiative have communicated and raised awareness of the importance of deepening forums of international cooperation, especially in the current context. To this end they explained the importance of the network in terms of collaboration and working together on specific, one-off issues.

- **Context:** in a world full of uncertainty now going through one of the most serious health crises in its history, the Alliance for Multilateralism has been a forum for collaboration and coordination. From the April 2020 declaration to the actions supported by over 60 countries, projects directly linked to urgent issues at global level have been set in motion. Some which stand out are those relating to a fair world distribution of future COVID-19 vaccines and the possibilities of acting against misinformation related to the health situation.

In principle it is thanks to these four aspects that we have been able to make progress, just over a year since the formal setting up of the Alliance for Multilateralism, in six (6) principal initiatives. We should note that, while at structural level the characteristics described have provided a framework upon which to base the actions of the Alliance, each initiative has its own specific features that also enable each of these to be developed.

Table N°4: Initiatives of the Alliance for Multilateralism⁷⁵

INITIATIVE	Call for Action to strengthen respect for international humanitarian law and principled humanitarian action
SUPPORT	Endorsed by 45 countries, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • European Union: Germany, Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Denmark, Slovenia, Spain, Estonia, Finland, France, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, Malta, Poland, Portugal, Czech Republic, Sweden. • Latin America and the Caribbean: Chile, Costa Rica, Honduras, Mexico, Paraguay, Dominican Republic, Uruguay.
BENCHMARK	To put together tangible measures and best practice to reinforce and apply international humanitarian law throughout the world.
INITIATIVE	Paris Call for Trust and Security in Cyberspace
SUPPORT	Signed by 78 countries, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • European Union: Germany, Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Croatia, Denmark, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Estonia, Finland, France, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Czech Republic, Romania, Sweden. • Latin America and the Caribbean: Argentina, Chile, Colombia, El Salvador, Guatemala, Mexico, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Dominican Republic.
BENCHMARK	To introduce binding rules on stability and peace in cyberspace based on processes already in existence.
INITIATIVE	The Information and Democracy Partnership
SUPPORT	Signed by 34 countries, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • European Union: Germany, Austria, Bulgaria, Croatia, Denmark, Slovenia, Spain, Estonia, Finland, France, Italy, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Portugal, Czech Republic, Sweden. • Latin America and the Caribbean: Chile, Costa Rica.
BENCHMARK	To establish objectives and principles to guarantee free, pluralistic and high quality information, taking account of changes resulting from new forms of digital communication.

75. Figures as in April 2020.

INITIATIVE	The Gender Equality at the Center Initiative
SUPPORT	Signed by 13 countries.
BENCHMARK	To mobilise political support from the member States of the G7 and other key partners to support countries in defining, implementing, monitoring and evaluating the countries' own interventions to achieve gender equality in education. In the first instance, the initiative will focus on African countries.

INITIATIVE	The Climate and Security Initiative
SUPPORT	Endorsed by 48 countries, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • European Union: Germany, Belgium, Denmark, Spain, Estonia, France, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Sweden. • Latin America and the Caribbean: Belize, Mexico, Peru, Dominican Republic, Saint Vincent.
BENCHMARK	To agree joint actions in light of the fact that climate change is increasingly becoming a multiplier of the risks threatening the stability of countries and societies throughout the world.

INITIATIVE	11 Principles on Lethal and Autonomous Weapons Systems (LAWS)
SUPPORT	Endorsed by 82 signatories, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • European Union: Germany, Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Slovenia, Spain, Estonia, Finland, France, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Czech Republic, Romania, Sweden. • Latin America and the Caribbean: Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Peru, Venezuela.
BENCHMARK	To offer, by way of eleven principles, concrete guidelines in respect of the challenges that could arise from the development of new weapons systems.

Source: drawn up by the author based on information from the Alliance for Multilateralism

Finally, as a consequence of what has been described in detail in each of the initiatives, we should note the legitimacy evident in the actions developed by the Alliance for Multilateralism. The support of many countries from different regions demonstrates a fundamental element when it comes to analysing the strategy of the Alliance in the context of reconfiguring multilateralism and global cooperation.

THE EFFECTS: REINFORCING BI-REGIONALISM BETWEEN THE EUROPEAN UNION AND LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN

At the 75th General Assembly of the United Nations (September 2020) António Guterres, Secretary-General, began his opening speech with the following words: “The pandemic has disrupted the world, but this disruption has created the space for something new” (UN, 2020). The health and economic crisis of the past year could mean a paradigm shift for global society. Widespread issues and imminent challenges such as climate change, migration and the digital transformation have played a dual role in international governance: on

the one hand, they call multilateralism into question, on the other hand, they recognise the importance of international rules-based cooperation to deal with these matters.

One of the principal challenges facing multilateralism lies in the widely differing interests and positions in the international system (Zambrano; 2013). The Alliance for Multilateralism can therefore be seen as a new strategy which, by taking account of the weaknesses inherent in the system and bringing a partly reformist perspective, can help deepen international cooperation for development.

The role of the European Union, and of many of its member countries, is of major significance when it comes to finding active promoters of multilateralism. The European Union is a cornerstone of the multilateral system; compromise and consensus are deeply rooted in its DNA (Federal Foreign Office; 2019). They are seen as reliable partners and ready to take on increased responsibilities concerning the international order. Boosting inter-regional cooperation as an essential element of the multilateral order and engaging with cooperative regional players based on mutual interests is one of the tenets mentioned by the European Union in the conclusions of the Council of the European Union (EU; 2019). In this respect, Germany and France have represented these interests as they are the driving force of the Alliance for Multilateralism.

At the same time, Latin America and the Caribbean, although there have been both progress and setbacks, has an undeniable link with the European Union concerning international cooperation. A clear example of bi-regional support in this regard is the EU-Mercosur agreement. Without limiting ourselves to this, the reference illustrates the forum already in existence to create a broad and renewed relationship between the European Union and Latin America and the Caribbean, looking towards new aspects of cooperation. Chile and Mexico, as co-hosts of the Alliance for Multilateralism, have acted to promote this project and confirm the historic support they have given as States to multilateralism.

The Alliance for Multilateralism, even understood as a global and inclusive initiative that sets up action networks to tackle specific issues, can be a new channel for bi-regional exchange and cooperation, reinforcing the link between the European Union and Latin America and the Caribbean (and the countries making up both regions). For Latin America and the Caribbean, Chile was one of the host countries of the launch meeting for the Alliance for Multilateralism in September 2019. According to Riveros and Tomic, there are precedents confirming that the country has strong enough credentials to commit to a joint action to strengthen multilateralism and project the cooperation and coordination required in the political, economic, legal and social arenas (Riveros and Tomic, 2020). The case of Mexico, the second Latin American host country, is similar.

If we analyse the support received by the 6 initiatives set up by the Alliance for Multilateralism, we see that the countries of the European Union (and the European Union itself) and of Latin America and the Caribbean represent a significant number of all the countries that have declared themselves in favour of at least some of the current programmes. As well as Germany and France acting as hosts and Chile and Mexico being co-hosts, on behalf of the European Union the following countries have been involved: Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Croatia, Denmark, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Estonia, Finland, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Poland, Portugal,

Czech Republic, Romania and Sweden. Latin American and Caribbean participation included Argentina, Belize, Brazil, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, El Salvador, Guatemala, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Dominican Republic, Saint Vincent, Uruguay and Venezuela. The flexibility afforded by the Alliance for Multilateralism concerning membership for specific work on certain issues (with participation not necessarily involving any commitment to any other issues) is one of the most significant relative advantages of this initiative. There can be no doubt that the involvement of 25 countries in the European Union and 18 countries in Latin America and the Caribbean is very favourable for the bi-regional relationship.

The post-pandemic era will provide a new scenario for multilateralism and international cooperation in which collaboration will be essential. For Hirst and Malacalza, the inter-regional structure for designing and applying strategies for pandemic prevention can be an optimal way to demonstrate that multilateralism can recover its credibility (Hirst and Malacalza, 2020). The European Union and Latin America and the Caribbean can, through bodies like the Alliance for Multilateralism, make the most of forums to encourage joint initiatives with a view to developing opportunities to reduce inequality and mitigate the fragility exposed in many places by the COVID-19 pandemic. This does not imply either a one-directional road or traditional international cooperation in which the developed countries support the under-developed countries. The pandemic has shown that all countries are equally vulnerable in the face of a crisis such as the one we are currently living through. Countries with relatively less prominence such as Uruguay have provided examples of successful measures to manage health and the economy. Others such as Argentina have a potential for technological development that may be a defining element in drawing up the post-pandemic strategy.

Latin America and the Caribbean carry an outstanding debt of inclusion and reduction of inequality. The international context of the pandemic has highlighted the existence of shortcomings and weaknesses presented by the international system in finding solutions to this reality. So, what are we waiting for to generate change? Initiatives like the Alliance for Multilateralism show there is greater awareness of global (and regional) issues and creates a forum for interchange with great potential for deepening bi-regional relations between the European Union and Latin America and the Caribbean.

CONCLUSION

This paper sought to identify elements to understand post-pandemic multilateralism based on the idea of the Alliance for Multilateralism as the driver of a new channel to deepen relations of cooperation and coordination between the European Union and Latin America and the Caribbean.

Two fundamental elements were identified in this respect for later analysis:

- Despite the changes in dynamic, problems and challenges that have become well-known in the global governance structure linked to multilateralism there is a broad consensus regarding the need for joint working and international cooperation to deal with certain questions requiring a wide focus not limited to individual action. However, the perceived shortcomings and lack of capacity of multilateralism has direct consequences on its legitimacy before the international community and the penetration power of the actions developed under this framework. It would seem essential to envisage an adapted multilateralism to meet the demands of the current context when it comes to maintaining areas of understanding between international, state and non-state players.
- On the other hand, the context in which the year of 2020 has unfolded in relation to the COVID-19 pandemic has generated an unexpected impact that to date is still difficult to measure. COVID-19 has placed unprecedented challenges in the way of development, mainly because of the scale and speed of the threat. The crisis lays bare the asymmetries and exposes the shortcomings in the interactions between the international community. At the same time, the global pandemic and the challenge it implies to global society has acted as a reminder of the world's need for more and better instruments of global cooperation. Containing, mitigating and counteracting this pandemic requires a coordinated, cooperative, transparent and innovative global response. More, not less, multilateralism; a new focus on cooperation, not ceasing to cooperate, is most definitively the road to follow.

Given all this, the Alliance for Multilateralism stands as an effective strategy that can strengthen global coordination and multilateralism through specific, concrete initiatives on matters common to many countries, regions and international players. The Alliance presents an ambitious and realistic vision, backing common causes through its specific commitment to promote multilateralism. It responds to the crisis and to great changes by proposing a new approach, yet without breaking with the international structure of governance. The Alliance for Multilateralism is a new commitment to international cooperation and working together.

Finally, we should point out the positive role that may be afforded by this context of change and reconfiguration of the role of multilateralism, through the Alliance for Multilateralism, in the bi-regional relations between the European Union and Latin America and the Caribbean. Indeed, the participation of countries from both regions has helped develop the various different initiatives, providing a breadth of approach and focus. Bi-regional interchange promotes diversity and enhances joint actions, something that is highly desirable in the new, open, coherent and inclusive multilateralism needed by the global order. The European Union and Latin America and the Caribbean have a unique opportunity, given the situation and the international context, to shape strategies and resources for cooperation within the framework of a modern multilateralism that would ensure common questions were tackled jointly, favouring the balance of power and, at the same time, providing a response to a range of current challenges.

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5. HYBRID INTERREGIONALISM POST-REVISED: WHAT NEXT FOR EU-LAC RELATIONS IN THE POST-COVID-19 WORLD? EU-BRAZIL • EU-MEXICO • EU-CHILE

Jennifer Saskia Nicole Faber⁷⁶
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This essay investigates hybrid interregionalism between the European Union (EU) and Latin America. At the same time, we address the current reality of hegemonic transition and change, which the COVID-19 pandemic has triggered, and argue that the current structure of interregional relations is in need for reform. For the shaping of the post-pandemic world, we propose a renewed approach that we call post-revised hybrid interregionalism. After initially presenting the individual hybrid interregional experiences between EU-Brazil, EU-Mexico and EU-Chile, we employ a combination of elements drawn from critical theory, localization of the norm and interregionalism to examine previously identified mismatches. In this way we create an innovative, analytical and practical approach to strengthen EU-LAC relations based on a bottom-up approach. This will allow us to view the structure of international and interregional relations more horizontally.

INTRODUCTION

One virus, multiple effects. Covid-19 has changed everything: the way we take decisions, the way we interact with each other, and the way we respond to emerging challenges. As challenge the pandemic naturally induces anarchy and fragmentation in the international system but simultaneously it opens windows of opportunity and might provide fertile ground for establishing new ways of mutual understanding and the promotion of an “emancipatory global policy”⁷⁸ In the end, the pandemic will be what states make of it. Therefore, we need to ask: how do we want the world to look like after Covid-19? Do we want to return to a preCovid-19 reality or bring about institutional change? If everything changes, why continue defining international society in the traditional way we have done so far?

As Ambassador Schuegraf⁷⁹ puts it, the new multilateralism is now “coined for the global political discussion, and less for economic or other fields”⁸⁰. In this context, the disrupted global scenario prompts the need to restructure current institutional frameworks. In that sense, this essay reflects the attempt to rethink the normative foundations of EU-LAC

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78. Richard Devetak, *Critical Theory*. In *Theories of International Relations* (Palgrave MacMillan, 2005): 186. Accessed October 8, 2020. http://lib.jnu.ac.in/sites/default/files/ReferenceFile/Theories-of-IR_0.pdf

79. Representante del Ministerio Federal de Relaciones Exteriores de Alemania para América Latina y el Caribe.

80. Marian Schuegraf, interview by authors, October 30, 2020, interview 3, transcription.

relations and opportunities for a reshaping of these based on the analysis of a specific cooperation mechanism, namely hybrid interregionalism. Faced with the fragmentation of regional integration initiatives in Latin America, the EU has adjusted its external approach over time and opted for strengthening its relations with single countries⁸¹. Specifically, this mechanism has been substantiated by agreements signed with Brazil, Mexico and Chile⁸². Following a similar strategy, China has privileged strategic partnerships with CELAC and several Latin American countries. Against this background, the strong presence of China in Latin America appears as major challenge for the EU. However, China's presence in Latin America is mainly commerce-related. This is precisely the aspect that allows the EU to enhance its position in the region, insofar as its focus goes beyond mere trade relations and moves towards an influence based on the diffusion of norms which is capable of accompanying the transformation processes that Latin American countries are experiencing. According to Ambassador Schuegraf this "is not only a question of solidarity [...] we want a partner region, which is able to act in foreign policy, which is socially and economically stable and thriving, and that is with the severe setbacks due to the pandemic currently challenged"⁸³. Embedded in this context, our research question is the following: how can hybrid interregionalism bolster EU-LAC relations in the post-COVID-19 world? For investigating this, we examine the previous hybrid interregional relations between EU-Brazil, EU-Mexico and EU-Chile and reveal tensions between discourse and political implementation. We assume that these mismatches can be attributed to a problem with the diffusion of norm.

Further, we argue that decision-makers should consider a perspective called norm localization⁸⁴. This implies changing the approach concerning the diffusion of norm and focusing on the incorporation of the Latin American gaze in forthcoming cooperation. For this purpose, we propose moving towards a new concept: post-revised hybrid interregionalism. This will allow the reinvigoration of EU-LAC relations from a bottomup perspective in the post-pandemic world.

In theoretical terms we base our research project on a critical perspective of International Relations (IR) Theory and argue that international structures are mutable. In the current scenario of hegemonic transition, states must consider international logic, but particularly local situations. In that sense, Acharya proposes a dynamic explanation of norm diffusion, ascertaining that local agents reconstruct foreign norms to ensure the norms' fit with the agents' cognitive priors and identities. Hence, we need to concentrate on the norm-takers' side to avoid that "universal norms" prevail over "local norms" and vice versa⁸⁵. Against this background, this essay focuses on what Devetak calls "the normative foundations of political life"⁸⁶. Following Cox, this allows "a normative choice in favour of a social and political order different from the prevailing order" which "limits the range of choice to alternative

81. Vinod K. Aggarwal and Edward A. Fogarty, «The Limits of Interregionalism: The EU and North America», *Journal of European Integration* 27, no. 3 (2005).

82. Brazil: Strategic Partnership Agreement, 2007; Mexico: Association Agreement, 2000; Strategic Partnership Agreement, 2008; Chile: Association Agreement, 2002.

83. Marian Schuegraf, interview by authors, October 30, 2020, interview 3, transcription.

84. Amitav Acharya, «How ideas spread: Whose norms matter? Norm Localization and Institutional Change in Asian regionalism», *International Organization* 38, no. 2 (2004).

85. Acharya, «How ideas spread: Whose norms matter? Norm Localization and Institutional Change in Asian regionalism.», 252.

86. Richard Devetak, *Critical Theory*, 172.

orders which are feasible transformations of the existing world”⁸⁷. The strengthening of EU-LAC relations thus provides one way to counteract future forms of Chinese hegemony in Latin America. To this end, it is imperative to propose solutions to the conditions of hegemony that prevail in international relations⁸⁸.

For this purpose, we rely on qualitative methodology and use both primary sources (official documents and reports, semi-structured interviews, online press notes) and secondary sources (specialized academic papers). The interviews were conducted with the Chilean Embassy in Brussels (written form), Brazilian foreign policy expert Miriam Gomes Saraiva and Ambassador Marian Schuegraf, Representative of the German Federal Foreign Office for LAC.

The essay follows a two-part approach. First, we critically deal with theory and outline the analytical framework. Second, we investigate the practice of hybrid interregionalism between EU-Brazil, EU-Mexico and EU-Chile to discover elements that will enable us to derive proposals for the strengthening of current schemes. In this way, we can move hybrid interregionalism towards a post-revised form in the future.

ANALITICAL FRAMEWORK

Norm Localization in International Relations

Linklater points out that Critical Theory stands in opposition to empirical claims about the social world which assume that existing structures are immutable. The central objection to these claims is that notions of immutability support structured inequalities of power and wealth which are in principle alterable. Critical Theory investigates the prospects for new forms of community in which individuals and groups can achieve higher levels of freedom”.⁸⁹ From this critical perspective, we introduce a multidimensional approach to norm diffusion that considers more than the classical unidirectionality in the relations between the EU and Latin America⁹⁰.

Considering the previous, specialists have focused the study of the effect of socialisation in IR through the study of the diffusion and internalization of the norm. Checkel, for example, understands socialisation as a process of induction of norms by society to the actors⁹¹. Ultimately, the traditional arguments of normative constructivists and in particular the one of Risse and Sikkink are monocausal insofar as they point out that “the concept of socialization may be useful in understanding how the international society transmits norms to its members”⁹² (norm-entrepreneurs to norm-takers). In this line, normative constructivists point out that localization is the internalization of norms

87. Robert W. Cox, «Social Forces, States and World Orders: Beyond International Relations Theory», *Millennium* 10, no. 2 (1981): 130

88. Gonzalo Álvarez, «Hacia una perspectiva constructivista y crítica del análisis de política exterior», *Revista Estudios Internacionales* 47 (2015): 60.

89. Andrew Linklater, ed., *The Achievements of Critical Theory: International Theory: Positivism and Beyond* (279-298): 280 (Cambridge University Press, 1996), Accessed October 10, 2020, doi:10.1017/CBO9780511660054.015

90. Socialisation and Diffusion of Norm are concepts associated with the constructivist approach in the IR Theory.

91. Jeffrey Checkel, «Why Comply? Social Learning and European Identity», *International Organization* 55, no. 3 (2001).

92. Thomas Risse and Katherine Sikkink, «The socialization of international human rights norms into domestic practices: Introduction», Cambridge University Press (1999): 11

by “other” states (countries of the Global South) pretending to be part of the “club”.⁹³ However, socialisation is not only an internalized norm, but also the socialisation of disputed identities that contain subsidiary norms or socialisation of identities of resistance (Acharya’s idea about subsidiarity of the norm⁹⁴). Therefore, socialisation cannot be conceived as a transmission and homogenisation process between an exclusive club of states and others. Norm diffusion is by no means a vertical or boomerang process⁹⁵, as further elements need to be taken into account, such as the “disapproval” of these norms⁹⁶, although such definition is in turn related to the forms of response and normative disputes between agents. In this vein, Acharya argues that such response regularly inhibits the general acceptance of a given norm (that is full compliance), while often also precluding total rejection. Instead, the above leads mainly to processes that Acharya refers to as “localization”: framed and inserted processes by local actors that give legitimacy to the norm “by infusing it with local characteristics and making it congruent with the local context”⁹⁷. In Acharya’s explanation of the nature of norm, diffusion of norm and localization of norm, the latter category is dynamic and progressive. This needs to be clear because the localization of norm in the transnational context can manifest itself in three forms: 1) Local Resistance (when the norm-takers do not accept the foreign norm); 2) Norm Localization (when the external norm generates an internal consensus and institutionalization); 3) Norm Displacement (when the foreign norm is displaced for the local norm).⁹⁸ Accordingly, it is crucial to understand that “norm diffusion in world politics [is] not simply about whether and how ideas matter, but also which and whose ideas matter”.⁹⁹

Our main conclusion is that the social constructivism of IR continues to have two positions: a more developed one, which we call socialisation through the norm, attached to its compliance or non-compliance, and another one, which we call socialisation through power, focusing on the dynamics of co-constitutional agent structure from a macro-social learning process. Ultimately, for the purpose of this essay, we adopt the former approach, considering the process of localization of norms developed by Acharya, from a critical perspective that allows strengthening the relations between the EU and LAC in the future. In the following we will develop the previous ideas by conducting an analysis of the EU-Brazil, EU-Chile and EU-Mexico hybrid interregional experiences.

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 93. Jonas Wolff and Lisbeth Zimmermann, «Between Banyans and battle scenes: Liberal norms, contestation, and the limits of critique», *Review of International Studies* 42, no. 3 (2016).

94. Amitav Acharya, «Norm Subsidiarity and Regional Orders: Sovereignty, Regionalism, and Rule-Making in the Third World.», *International Studies Quarterly* 55, no. 1 (2011).

95. Martha Finnemore, *National Interests in International Society* (Cornell University Press, 1996), Accessed October 10, 2020, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.7591/j.ctt1rv61rh>.

96. Jonas Wolff and Lisbeth Zimmermann, «Between Banyans and battle scenes: Liberal norms, contestation, and the limits of critique», 6.

97. Acharya, «How ideas spread: Whose norms matter? Norm Localization and Institutional Change in Asian regionalism», 244.

98. Acharya (2011) complemented this concept of localization with a more controversial type of reaction on the part of local actors, namely, the “subsidiarity of norm”. In this case, the response leads local actors to reject specific external ideas and try to establish “subsidiary norms” to counteract external influences or promote other international norms which they consider more universal.

99. Acharya, «How ideas spread: Whose norms matter? Norm Localization and Institutional Change in Asian regionalism», 239.

POST-REVISIONIST APPROACH TO INTERREGIONALISM

For the sake of conceptual sharpness, the categorisation of the manifestations of interregionalism proposed by Hänggi¹⁰⁰ is considered in the following, as it covers the multilayered interregional relations between the EU and LAC. In that sense, one can distinguish between so-called pure interregionalism, transregionalism (also bi-regionalism) and hybrid interregionalism (also quasi-interregionalism). Whereas pure interregionalism involves two formalized regional organizations (e.g. EU-MERCOSUR), transregionalism covers the relations between a regional organization and a group of states operating individually within a loose framework (as it was the case for EU-LAC before CELAC). Ultimately, hybrid interregionalism encompasses relations between a regional organization and a single power (such is the case here for EU-Brazil Strategic Partnership Agreement, EU-Mexico Strategic Partnership Agreement, EU-Chile Association Agreement). Empirical observations indicate that the above-mentioned spheres of interregionalism are fluid rather than fixed categories and that new shapes of interregionalism have emerged.¹⁰¹ Resulting from this scenario, we meet the challenging task to examine the concept of hybrid interregionalism as a piece in the mosaic of intersecting interregionalism which is naturally interconnected with multilateralism, bilateralism and regionalism – leading to what is referred to as “complex interregionalism”¹⁰² in the literature.

Against this background, we believe that the scholars draw wrong conclusions regarding the implications of hybrid interregionalism. Exemplarily, Malamud observes that “the strategic partnership with Brazil is a tacit recognition that interregionalism has shone in the past”.¹⁰³ In contrast, following the ideas of Ayuso and Foglia¹⁰⁴, we hold that the debate about the tension between the different types of interregionalism is obsolete. We share the argument of De Sales, Meyer and Telò that interregionalism might be the only viable option to reinvigorate multilateralism and to tackle currently growing forces such as anarchy, geopolitical rivalry, populism and unilateralism¹⁰⁵. In view of the current fragmentation of the world order, it therefore becomes a necessity to explore new, more dynamic approaches for EU-LAC relations, without being “trapped in [an] inefficient formula of inter-regionalism”¹⁰⁶. In this context, we rethink the concept of hybrid interregionalism from a revisionist perspective and give recommendations on how the mechanism needs to be reshaped in the post-pandemic era. For this purpose,

100. Heiner Hänggi, «Interregionalism: empirical and theoretical perspectives» (Dollars, Democracy and Trade. External Influence on Economic Integration in the Americas, Los Angeles, May 18, 2000.

101. Gian Luca Gardini, Simon Koschut and Andreas Falke, eds., *Interregionalism and the Americas* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2018).

Gian Luca Gardini and Anna Ayuso, «EU-Latin America and Caribbean Inter-regional relations: complexity and change», *Atlantic Future Working Paper*, no. 24 (2015)

102. Alan Hardacre and Michael Smith, «The EU and the diplomacy of complex interregionalism», *The Hague Journal of Diplomacy* 4, no. 2 (2009).

103. 8 Andrés Malamud, «La Unión Europea, Del Interregionalismo Con América Latina a La Asociación Estratégica Con Brasil», *Revista CIDOB D'Afers Internacionals* 97/98 (2012): 230

104. Anna Ayuso and Mariana Foglia, «Tensiones entre el regionalismo y bilateralismo en las negociaciones de los acuerdos de asociación estratégica», *Revista Aportes para la Integración Latinoamericana* 22 (2010).

105. José Luís De Sales Marques, Thomas Meyer and Mario Telò, eds., *Regionalism and Multilateralism: Politics, Economics, Culture* (Routledge, 2020).

106. Susanne Gratius, «Brazil and the European Union: from liberal inter-regionalism to realist bilateralism», *Revista Brasileira de Política Internacional* 61, no. 1 (2018): 12, Accessed October 28, 2020, doi:10.1590/0034-7329201800103.

we introduce a new concept: post-revised hybrid interregionalism. This approach bears the potential of moving hybrid interregionalism further towards a more advanced, sophisticated framework for relations, which can complement the bi-regional partnership, through capturing the following four variables, which are derived by considering the hybrid interregionalist schemes and the approach of norm localization:

Table N°5: The four variables of post-revised hybrid interregionalism

1) Socio-Pragmatic Relations:

Considering that social and interregional relations need to be more resilient and adaptive to cope with the world in transition.

2) Progressive Norms:

Taking into account that local beliefs and practices interact daily with external norms, changing or creating local beliefs and practices and/or changing or creating institutions.

3) Bottom-up Experience:

Identifying solutions and problems, which can be observed from the local level, with the aim of improving mutual understanding between the parties.

4) Emancipatory Policy:

Exploring what is currently not working in the implementation of the collaboration agendas between the parties, with the aim of identifying the actors that participate in the diffusion of norm process and the actors that should be included to achieve social transformation.

Considering this perspective might serve as a catalyst for EU-LAC relations and builds the corner stone for working together towards a new post-hegemonic multilateralism: one that is ought to be more legitimate and emancipatory

HYBRID INTERREGIONALISM IN PRACTICE

Most interregional agreements announce major political objectives and convey a spirit of optimism envisaging the joint striving for “effective multilateralism”. In this context, interregionalism and its summitry exercise are frequently criticised for not producing tangible results despite strong diplomatic discourse¹⁰⁷. Based on this observation, the following case studies investigate the development of hybrid interregional relations between the EU and Brazil, Mexico and Chile, respectively. In this way, we reveal the tension between diplomatic discourse and practice and conclude that we need a new approach to strengthen the mechanism of hybrid interregionalism.

THE EU-BRAZIL EXPERIENCE

The strategic partnership with Brazil was launched in 2007 and institutionalised EU-Brazil relations. Within the framework, special focus has been set on areas such as political dialogue, climate change, interregional cooperation, science and technology and cultural affairs. After 13 years of partnership, one might ask: what conclusion can be drawn?

From a practical point of view, the strategic partnership has not unfolded the catalysing effects sought by policymakers and revealed the absence of cohesive positions between the EU and Brazil. Exemplarily, Brazil’s efforts to act as norm entrepreneur by proposing the Responsibility While Protecting (RWP) initiative in the UN failed. Ultimately, Brazil shares values with the EU, but refuses to acknowledge the EU as a normative power in the international order¹⁰⁸. In the light of the tenure of Bolsonaro, the strategic partnership now appears to have been de-activated, as the former rhetoric of striving for the creation of a multilateral order is overshadowed by the government’s clear stance against multilateralism. In fact “Bolsonaro does not defend the values of multilateralism, he is against them” and the best example to support this is that “Bolsonaro no longer negotiates an action plan within the framework of the Strategic Association Agreement with the EU. The last meeting was under the Government of Dilma Rousseff”.¹⁰⁹ Currently, the dialogue between the parties does not exist anymore.

As Poli notes, Brazilian and the EU’s views have not always been consistent, but there are still plenty of promising areas where a shared multilateral agenda needs to be pursued, such as climate change and green energy¹¹⁰. In contrast, Saraiva argues that she is “not entirely in agreement with the statement that Brazil and the EU have coincident positions on the environmental issue [...] internally the Brazilian government faces many resistances to implement the EU’s nominations, due to its political base in the congress”.¹¹¹ In this context, the environmental issue has been a permanent problem in the relationship. Saraiva notes that currently “the President, Vice President and the Minister of Environment are involved in the destruction of the Amazon. They have a very old vision

107. Gardini, Koschut and Falke, *Interregionalism and the Americas*.

108. Miriam Gomes Saraiva, «The Brazil-European Union strategic partnership, from Lula to Dilma Rousseff: a shift of focus», *Revista Brasileira de Política Internacional* 60, no. 1 (2017), Accessed October 19, 2020, doi:10.1590/0034-7329201600117.

109. Miriam Gomes Saraiva, interview by authors, October 29, 2020, interview 2, transcription.

110. Eleonora Poli, «European External Actions in a Multilateral Arena: An Analysis of EU Relations with Brazil», *Istituto Affari Internazionali* (2018).

111. Miriam Gomes Saraiva. «A parceria estratégica entre Brasil e União Europeia: uma mudança de foco», *SciELO em perspectiva*, October 20, 2020, <https://humanas.blog.scielo.org/blog/2017/04/27/a-parceria-estrategica-entrebrasil-e-uniao-europeia-uma-mudanca-de-foco/>.

of the Amazonia, Brazilian sovereignty depends on maintaining control of the Amazon. In addition, there are groups of “quaristas” who support Bolsonaro who are burning and cutting down the Amazonia¹¹². This shows clearly that Brazil does not accept the norm promoted by the EU. Therefore, the French government has recently opposed the signing of the agreement with MERCOSUR, urging that both Brazil and MERCOSUR have to respect the Paris Agreement¹¹³.COP-21). However, at the same time the EU tolerates the purchase of wood from the Amazonia, as a report by Amazon Watch points out, which criticizes the collaboration between European and American companies and illegal loggers in the country¹¹⁴.

As outlined above, the most sensitive tension in current EU-Brazil relations regards the environmental issue. This tension can be analysed through two lenses: the perspective of the norm-taker (Brazil), and the one of the norm-entrepreneur (EU). Focusing on the former, we see that the Brazilian government does neither fully reject, nor fully accept the environmental norm promoted by the EU. In reality we face a paradox between the rhetorical commitment to climate change on paper (Paris Agreement) and domestic policies on the ground (Amazonia). While Brazil certainly shares values with the EU when it comes to the environmental issue, their approaches are not congruent, a trend which is reinforced during the current Bolsonaro tenure. Whereas the concern about the environment can be described as historically endorsed principle for Brazilian Diplomacy¹¹⁵, the current government rejects the EU’s norm, fully endorsing the exploitation of the rain forest. Therefore, the current situation can be classified between the categories “Norm Localization” and “Local Resistance”. To overcome these challenges, we believe that considering an approach of norm localization will allow both parties to transcend transformative rhetoric and insert fresh legitimacy to their relations. Through focusing on the norm-takers’ side, the EU might assist Brazil in the process of normative adjustment, in accordance with local standards. For that, we rely on incorporating a bottom-up dimension to the current perspective applied in negotiations. When understanding that norm localization is a process which is marked by the challenging and feedback of local agents, political dialogue can provoke behavioural change and institutionalization. Civil society plays a decisive role in this context, as its constructive engagement in the construction of joint agendas can facilitate the norm localization process.

In face of the post-COVID-19 international scenario, current relations might be considered pragmatic, but are currently unable to produce joint initiatives on the socio-environmental issue, as reflected in the strenuous EU-Mercosur negotiations.

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112. Miriam Gomes Saraiva, interview by authors, October 29, 2020, interview 2, transcription

113. French Embassy in Brazil. 2020. «Entrega do relatório da comissão de avaliação do projeto de Acordo UEMercosul». Accessed October 8, 2020. <https://br.ambafrance.org/Entrega-do-relatorio-da-comissao-de-avaliacao-do-projeto-de-Acordo-UE-Mercosul>.

114. Deutsche Welle. 2019. «Deforestación ilegal en Brasil: empresas europeas trabajan con dudosos proveedores». Accessed October 10, 2020. <https://www.dw.com/es/deforestación-ilegal-en-brasil-empresas-europeas-trabajan-con-dudosos-proveedores/a-48490420>.

115. Brave New Europe. 2020. «Miriam Gomes Saraiva – What Next for Brazil-EU Relations?». Accessed October 5, 2020. <https://braveneweuropa.com/miriam-gomes-saraiva-what-next-for-brazil-eu-relations>.

THE EU-MEXICO EXPERIENCE

Concerning the relevance of Mexico as study case, it needs to be highlighted that Mexico and Brazil are the EU's only designated strategic partners within Latin America. Above, Mexico was the first Latin American country with which the EU negotiated an Association Agreement (AA), entering into force in 2000.

At that time, the negotiation of the EU-Mexico Global Agreement represented an important impetus for the democratisation processes within Mexico and explains well why norm-takers feel the need to localize due to changes in the domestic political sphere. A controversial issue within the negotiation process was the EU's insistence on incorporating the democracy clause to ensure respect for fundamental human rights, which intrinsically touched Mexico's sovereignty. Finally, the Mexican government realized it had no other choice than accepting this norm, which "marked the beginning of new quality in relations between Mexico and the European Union".¹¹⁶ Further, the EU demanded the Mexican government to accept EU funding for electoral observation. Ultimately, Mexico succumbed to this pressure as well, which has rendered electoral monitoring by NGOs a political routine over time, resulting in a strengthening of civil society¹¹⁷. In this example, normative change was not only directed by the EU peddling universal norms but also by Mexican norm-takers acting as active constructors of these foreign norms, leading to a redesign of the latter under the influence of pre-existing ideas. The exchange of ideas has contributed to a convergence between Mexico's objectives and EU's standards. In this example, the negotiation process and conclusion of the Global Agreement served as positive incentive and catalyst for norm diffusion and generated a sustainable impact on the local institutional framework insofar as it reinforced democratic practices¹¹⁸.

Stipulated as one of the major political objectives within the strategic partnership framework was the modernisation of this Global Agreement. After only four years of negotiations, both parties managed to conclude the revised agreement in April 2020, notably in times of the COVID-19 pandemic, sending a clear signal for open and fair trade in the face of rising protectionist tendencies. The new trade deal will allow almost all trade in goods to be exempted from duties. Apart, Mexico is the first Latin American partner with which the EU has reached an agreement on the question of investment protection¹¹⁹. Moreover, "the agreement contains strong commitments in the area of rule of law and sustainability"¹²⁰ However, civil society expressed concerns about the protection of human rights remaining on the sidelines. At this point, one could ask: are these concerns justi-

116. Anita Monkiewicz, «Evolution of EU-Mexico relations: time for real partnership?», *Anuario Latinoamericano – Ciencias Políticas y Relaciones Internacionales* 4 (2017): 193, Accessed October 7, 2020, doi:10.17951/al.2017.4.187

117. Roberto Domínguez, «Diffusion of EU norms in Latin America: The cases of Mexico, Venezuela and Honduras», Jean Monnet/Robert Schuman Paper Series 10, no. 1 (2010).

118. 3 Isabelle Ioannides, «The effects of human rights related clauses in the EU-Mexico Global Agreement and the EU-Chile Association Agreement: Ex-Post Impact Assessment» (2017).

119. European Commission. 2020. «EU and Mexico conclude negotiations for new trade agreement». Accessed November 1, 2020. <https://trade.ec.europa.eu/doclib/press/index.cfm?id=2142#:~:text=The%20European%20Union%20and%20Mexico,of%20their%20new%20trade%20agreement.&text=Under%20the%20new%20EU%20Mexico,Mexico%20will%20be%20duty%20free.>

120. 5 Marian Schuegraf, interview by authors, October 30, 2020, interview 3, transcription.

fied? Albeit the cumulative effects of Mexico's trade liberalization over the last years, along with the strategic partnership and cooperation with international donors, have strongly promoted human rights related reforms in Mexico¹²¹, the situation continues to be precarious. From a practical point of view, the area of human rights and the pattern of impunity still provide legitimate grounds for international concern, as Mexico keeps on rejecting the norms encouraged by the EU. To be more precise, let us have a glance at the following: the "protection of human rights" captures an explicit point in the Joint Executive Plan in the framework of the EU-Mexico strategic partnership. However, Mexico faces skyrocketing numbers of violations against human rights regulations. The year 2017 was the deadliest year for Mexico in its history¹²².

At this very moment, the count of "desaparecidos" exceeds 60.000 people, including the 43 students of Guerrero¹²³. However, until today, the EU has neglected the activation of the Global Agreement's sanctioning clause (related to the democratic clause) and has continued to engage in regular business with Mexico over the past decades. What are the implications of this? First and foremost, it shows that we face a paradox between the EU's and Mexico's outwardly emphasized importance of the respect for human rights on the one hand, and severe human rights violations on the other hand. This tension reveals how political and economic aims might undermine social objectives, leading to a mismatch concerning the aspired diffusion of norms.

In summary, what can be inferred? The fast-track negotiation to modernise the agreement despite geopolitical turmoil undermines the firm ethos underlying EU-Mexico relations - one favouring institutionalized and fruitful cooperation mechanisms. In that sense, the EUMexico relationship is symbolic of how joint efforts and commitment lead to genuine cooperation. Notwithstanding, Mexico is still facing major internal challenges that "need to be resolved with comprehensive reforms that foment credibility and good governance practice"¹²⁴.

Finally, this case provides many clues regarding the question on how to face the post-COVID19 international scenario from the perspective of post-revised hybrid interregionalism. In the first place, it considers socio-pragmatic relationships, to the extent that the AA was quickly renewed, without major obstacles. Second, it considers progressive norms such as those related to investment protection. Third, it is partially bottom-up, because it does not consider all the local tensions derived from violations of human rights. Fourth, it is partially emancipatory and bears the potential to sustainably transform social reality, which has been proven in the past through actions related to democratisation.

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121. Ioannides, «The effects of human rights related clauses in the EU-Mexico Global Agreement and the EU-Chile Association Agreement», 4.

122. «Murder statistics reveal 2017 to be the deadliest year in Mexico's history», The Guardian, September 23, 2017, Accessed October 25, 2020. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/dec/23/new-figures-reveal-2017-to-be-the-deadliest-year-in-mexico's-history>.

123. «Murder statistics reveal 2017 to be the deadliest year in Mexico's history», The Guardian, September 23, 2017, Accessed October 25, 2020. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/dec/23/new-figures-reveal-2017-to-be-the-deadliest-year-in-mexico's-history>.

124. Monkiewicz, «Evolution of EU-Mexico relations», 199.

THE EU-CHILE EXPERIENCE

The AA between the EU and Chile was signed in 2002 and entered into force in 2005. The agreement includes political dialogue, economic cooperation, trade and tariff matters, development cooperation in various areas, financial services, transparency and dispute resolution. Currently, negotiations are underway to modernise the agreement. Regarding the future of the political relationship and cooperation between the parties, the Embassy of Chile in Brussels emphasizes that the effort which both parties have made to establish mechanisms such as the Bilateral Fund for Development in Transition is a sign of adaptation and resilience in the current context. Similarly, “the parties have continued to work based on common values such as democracy, human rights, gender, and the rule of law, which has been reflected in an important advance in the negotiations of this pillar of the Agreement”.¹²⁵

From a practical point of view, current negotiations are being carried out successfully between the parties, particularly with regard to the political pillar. “Despite the fact that the Chileans also had to cope with social unrest in their country the agreement is making good headway”¹²⁶, notes Ambassador Schuegraf. However, there are still sensitive issues to be negotiated between the parts in commercial matters: Geographical Indications, Financial Services, Investments, the Investment Court, Energy and Raw Materials, Subsidies, Sustainable Development, Gender and Trade, State Companies, Trade Defense and Intellectual Property¹²⁷. Negotiations have not been without problems, which can be attributed to the effect of the agreement on some social groups in Chile and for some economic sectors (for the EU, the problems derived from the agreement are minor, because Chile’s impact on the EU is negligible).

Moreover, as the original agreement was negotiated, it did not include the diffusion of norms on the environment or on labour matters, putting both under the pillar of cooperation¹²⁸. Although the cooperation between the parties can be considered positive overall, the mechanism will not generate an impact on the local institutional framework. While in the EU the right to health will probably not be affected¹²⁹, it is expected that the agreement will have a severe impact on Chile, particularly in industrial “zonas de sacrificio”¹³⁰. This scenario leads to increased pressure from local actors against the norm-takers, which might turn into a problem of norm resistance. Should the agreement contemplate a norm localization approach? In our understanding, yes.

In a similar way, the effects on employment and wages are estimated to be negligible in the EU and small in Chile, where the modernised agreement (under the ambitious scenario) is expected to generate changes in employment at the sectoral level ranging

125. Chilean Embassy in Brussels, interview by authors, October 28, 2020, interview 1, transcription.

126. Marian Schuegraf, interview by authors, October 30, 2020, interview 3, transcription.

127. SUBREI, «Minutes of informative meeting fourth deputy of negotiation modernization of the Chile-European Union Association Agreement». Accessed October 14, 2020, https://www.subrei.gob.cl/docs/defaultsource/cuarto-adjunto/acta-cuarto-adjunto-vii-ronda-cl-ue-vf.pdf?sfvrsn=31fd7199_2.

128. Carlos Furche and Rodrigo Contreras, «Acuerdo de Asociación entre Chile y la Unión Europea: Evaluación del Pilar Comercial», Serie Comercio Internacional -CEPAL 125 (2013).

129. European Commission, «Evaluación del impacto de sostenibilidad de la Modernización del pilar comercial del Acuerdo de Asociación entre Chile y la UE» (Luxemburg, 2019): 2

130. Zonas de sacrificio: Term linked by Chilean civil society to designate those areas of the country with a massive concentration of contaminating industries, especially coal. The French company ENGIE (GDF Suez) is involved in two of these areas.

from an increase of 2, 2% in the vegetable oil sector to a decrease in the industrial sector of around 2.9%.¹³¹ What does this indicate? Probably, the industrial sector in Chile will oppose the agreement. Finally, following Hernández (2020), we would like to point out that the EU's rules of origin are not as advanced compared to the Chilean ones, so it will be complex for Chilean SMEs to adapt to those rules. To ensure that this situation does not create a scenario of norm displacement in the future, it is imperative to consider the localisation of norms.

In summary, what can be concluded? Localization of norms in its conceptual definition is not considered in current negotiations. It is unclear whether or not local actors or local normtakers are involved in the negotiations. Therefore, current EU-Chile negotiations reflect an intermediate position between "Local Resistance" and "Norm Localization", exhibiting a tendency towards the latter dimension.

CONCLUSION

The current pandemic clearly exposed: "The world is one and many"¹³². In a scenario of hegemonic transition actors therefore need to consider international logic, but particularly local situations. In that sense, we developed an argument that goes beyond the current logic of power and organization of the international society and addresses the normative foundations of EU-LAC relations. In the face of the internal fragmentation of Latin America, which has been further deepened by the pandemic, rethinking and restructuring current institutionalised mechanisms appears not only timely but necessary.

Embedded in this context, the essay attempted to answer the research question: how can hybrid interregionalism bolster EU-LAC relations in the post-COVID-19 world? In this sense, we assumed that the identified mismatches in hybrid interregional relations can be attributed to a problem with the diffusion of norm, where the Latin American gaze has previously not been sufficiently considered. After examining the case studies (EU-Brazil, EU-Mexico, EUChile), it can be concluded that this hypothesis is partially correct for the following findings. Both in the EU-Brazil and EU-Chile case the (re)current tensions in negotiations could be traced back to a problem with the diffusion of norm due to the absence of norm localization. In the Brazilian case, the most evident problems were derived from the environmental issues. Meanwhile for the Chilean case, the problem arises from environmental, labour market and trade tensions. On the other hand, the analysis of the EU-Mexico case revealed that the process of norm localization can be carried out successfully. Notwithstanding, also the analysis of this case exposed inter-relational tensions, primarily related to the area of human rights. For a reshaping of interregional relations in the post-pandemic era, we therefore proposed a new concept to bring the current schemes onto their next stage: post-revised hybrid interregionalism. By emphasizing the norm-takers' perspective and combining the elements of socio-pragmatic relations, progressive norms, bottom-up experience and emancipatory policy, this approach bears the potential to move EU-LAC relations ahead to jointly cope with the world in transition.

131. European Commission, «Evaluación del impacto de sostenibilidad de la Modernización del pilar comercial del Acuerdo de Asociación entre Chile y la UE», 3.

132. Gian Luca Gardini, «Introduction: A framework for both analysis and reflection». In *The world before and after Covid-19: Intellectual reflections on politics, diplomacy and international relations*, ed. por Gian Luca Gardini (Salamanca-Stockholm: European Institute of International Studies, 2020): 1

APPENDIX

Semi-structured interviews

- What impact has the COVID-19 pandemic had on EU-Latin American relations?
- What is the current state of relations between the EU and Brazil, Mexico and Chile? Tell us about the current cooperation agenda with these countries and the negotiation processes.
- How have you perceived the negotiating partners so far? Have the negotiations been easy or difficult?
- What role does Germany currently play in relations between the EU and Latin America? Does Germany play a leading role in view of its presidency in the EU Council? •
- What strategy is the EU pursuing in Latin America in view of China's growing influence in the region?
- How do you look into the future? What opportunities and challenges do you see for the years ahead and the "new multilateralism"?

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6. SCIENTIFIC, TECHNOLOGICAL AND INNOVATION DIPLOMACY BETWEEN THE EUROPEAN UNION AND LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN: A BRIDGE OF CONNECTION

Débora Jael Salamanca Chávez¹³³

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

From its origins the relationship between the EU and LAC has offered a forum for political agreement, integration and cooperation such as had never previously been seen, one could say, that created a political environment favouring dialogue and negotiation by way of the Summits. In the current situation caused by COVID-19, it is more important than ever to continue cooperating between regions, guided by science, technology and innovation to manage the crisis in the best way possible. This essay therefore explores the place occupied by the Diplomacy of Science, Technology and Innovation within the cooperative frameworks existing between EU and LAC, as well as revealing the relevance of this tool together with other political instruments to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals of Agenda 2030, as before, in terms of global governance and effective multilateralism.

Key words: Scientific, technological and innovative diplomacy; Latin America and the Caribbean; European Union; Multilateralism; Global Governance.

INTRODUCTION

The whole world finds itself in a state of crisis, as we now go through the second wave of COVID-19 infections and once again many countries are imposing a new lockdown. In Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) COVID-19 will leave an unprecedented mark due to the social and economic consequences related to increasing inequality, growing poverty and extreme poverty, popular unrest and weakening social cohesion, among many other things. The measures taken to date to halt the spread of the virus have caused loss of employment and reduction of income, and those most affected are the poor and vulnerable, as well as people who work in insecure jobs.¹³⁴

This crisis will not be overcome with merely national efforts, vision and global collaboration are required, using the capacity of institutions of every type: public, private, academic, philanthropic, to put the public interest at the centre of everything. In this task of rethinking

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134. It is estimated that in 2020 poverty in LAC will increase by at least 4.4 percentage points (28.7 million additional people) compared to the previous year, bringing it to a total of 214.7 million people (34.7% of the region's population). Among these people, extreme poverty would increase by 2.6 percentage points (15.9 million additional people) and would affect a total of 83.4 million people (ECLAC 2020, 2).

ing the options we have as a Latin American region, there is the option of reconstructing ourselves from a new international system based on stronger multilateralism that trusts in science, technology and innovation as the drivers of sustained growth. Along with this goes renewed international cooperation based on solidarity and new ways of cooperating between States, going beyond the old, traditional schemes of North-South cooperation. In this worldview, Scientific, Technological and Innovation Diplomacy (STID) can help overcome political tensions, to rethink and rebuild international society.

In LAC various political and economic efforts towards integration exist and coexist. The Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC) is one of these efforts, although not the only one. It originated in the 1983 Contadora Group which was succeeded by the Río Group (1986), and is considered a forum for dialogue and agreement, although we should point out its lack of legal status and its internal challenges, as it has even cancelled high-level meetings with other players such as the European Union (EU). However, we should look at the actions currently being produced through this organisation.

LAC enjoys a strategic partnership with the EU which constitutes the major donor of Official Development Assistance (ODA) and International Cooperation, committed through its External Action to eradicating poverty and to development (art. 208 TFUE). The EU has updated its policy for cooperation with LAC and with the rest of the world in expectation of the new global challenges centred on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) of Agenda 2030. In this readjustment, focussing on not leaving anyone behind, new forms of cooperation with LAC are required –Triangular and South-South – taking account of its status as a region of “development in transition”.¹³⁵

Against this background, this essay reflects around the question: What is the place of STID within the cooperation agenda between LAC-EU? Why should it have priority in the EU-LAC agenda? All this with the objective of analysing options for cooperation and existing mechanisms for the region in terms of STID, as well as presenting it as an essential tool that can respond to needs arising in the post-covid-19 era, in its turn offering a roadmap to the inclusion of STID as a focus for work between regions.

We tackle this subject from the point of view of international relations and the international regulations currently in force, along with a historical look at international cooperation. This is a pertinent and significant theme, as there is minimal literature on the subject and it could provide a starting point to continuing research, without ignoring the potential of both regions as a strategic partnership to solve problems experienced by both. In producing this essay we revised and analysed newspaper sources and official documents of the European Union, the United Nations, ECLAC, and other international organisations, in addition to specialist literature and working papers.

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135. A new paradigm for international cooperation for development is under consideration, one which recognises that development is a continuous process, understands that all countries — whatever their income level — face challenges linked to development, recognises the benefits of multidimensional measures, considers bespoke national strategies to be appropriate and guides the multilateral agenda towards Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development. In addition, it supports strengthening structures of multilateral governance, in particular through South-South cooperation and triangular cooperation, and it extends the tools of cooperation beyond financial instruments to include, for example, the exchange of knowledge, the development of skills and the transference of technology (OCDE et al 2019, 5).

The essay has been divided into three well differentiated sections plus conclusions. The first section sets out a general view of the concept of STID in a context of governance and multilateralism; the second deals with relations between the EU and LAC and the parameters under which cooperative actions are carried out; the third sets out the importance of STID between both regions and why it is an essential tool for development, and therefore it is essential to create, reinforce and consolidate an ecosystem of innovation through STID in LAC and the EU, in addition to offering some ideas on how to operate this STID.

CONCEPTUAL AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK: SCIENTIFIC, TECHNOLOGICAL AND INNOVATION DIPLOMACY (STID) FOR GLOBAL GOVERNANCE IN AN EFFECTIVE MULTILATERALISM

Scientific, Technological and Innovation Diplomacy (STID)

Generally speaking, scientific diplomacy is the action of "soft power" through scientific collaboration to ease and facilitate political relations between two or more nations. There is no widely used definition of science/scientific, technological and innovation diplomacy, although there is broad agreement on the link between the scientific policy of any State and its foreign policy (Leijten 2017, 2; Langenhove 2017, 8).

According to the Report on Scientific, Technological and Innovation Diplomacy by the Spanish Government (2016, 6-7), STID "constitutes the set of initiatives taken to promote collaborative and innovative research, in both the bilateral and multilateral spheres, to seek solutions to problems of common interest, to promote the mobility of researchers and scientific, technological and industrial capacities", according to this definition, it is about the internationalization of national systems, research and development which enhances the reputation of researchers and companies, and which also translates into social and economic well-being for the population.

The British Royal Society and the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS), classified scientific diplomacy by using historical and contemporary examples, pointing out that the concept can be extended to an understanding of the role played by science, technology and innovation in three specific aspects or spheres (The Royal Society et al 2010, 5-14), these are:

- Science in diplomacy. Looking towards a sustainable future, together with the generation of global public goods and an awareness that public problems attain international dimensions that cannot be tackled unilaterally, science in diplomacy is explained as a fundamental factor in foreign policy; its objective revolves around the role of science in tackling challenges that cross borders: natural disasters, droughts, food security, migration, security, energy, etc., the diplomacy would have to ensure the efficient acquisition of high-quality scientific inputs and products to design and reinforce policies.
- Diplomacy for science. This aspect of scientific diplomacy refers to the collaboration between researchers working in crucial areas and on crucial projects which generally carry

a high level of cost and risk, and investment generally also involves special infrastructure for their development, so working together facilitates these processes. Such collaboration would not necessarily be possible between institutions and scientists with close cultural ties or shared history. This is where science can build new bridges with the help of diplomacy, together with creative tools and sufficient resources, between institutions and governments that have had weak or non-existent political links.

- Science for diplomacy. This is an expression of soft power in foreign policy. In circumstances where tension between countries will not give way, scientific links can intercede to re-establish, maintain and strengthen relations. One major example of this type of scientific diplomacy is the scientific agreement as the first bilateral treaty between the United States and Libya in 2004, after which Libya abandoned its biological, chemical and nuclear weapons programmes.

Pointing out the power of the influence, persuasion and example of science to build and re-establish a country's reputation, and thus secure a positive image to others, in addition to creating links, Ruffini constructs a definition that includes the components described above, and points out that scientific diplomacy occurs "at the intersection of science and foreign policy, and refers to all actions where researchers and diplomats interact, which may be directly related to government interests, by promoting cooperation between scientists of various countries, and conversely, when international scientific relations facilitate the exercise of diplomacy or play a pioneering role, and when the scientific experience helps diplomats to conduct international negotiations" (Ruffini 2017, 16-17).

Leijten (2017, 2, 19-20) prefers talking about a "diplomacy of innovation" or "diplomacy for innovation", which includes in its definition the scientific and technological elements. This is because it is useful to talk about innovation as a key element in other policies, in other words, innovation opens up a space within policies on the economy, trade, investment, security, etc., especially to respond to market rationales based on innovation, which is essentially a matter of science, technology and their dissemination, although not only responding to the market, but as a direct contribution to human knowledge (society of knowledge), with the potential to unite nations around matters requiring joint action (Leijten 2019, 2-3), such as the generation of global public goods – a healthy environment, public health, clean energy, etc.

Wishing to define the concept and practice of scientific diplomacy, Langenhove (2017, 8-9) proposes categorising it as "explicit scientific diplomacy" and "implicit scientific diplomacy", the former being all those acts qualified as such because of their objectives and moreover, the actors carrying them out openly refer to their activities as scientific diplomacy; there are practices and policies which are carried out under the same circumstances but are not labelled by actors carrying them out as scientific diplomacy, these can be called "implicit scientific diplomacy". This document will use the concept of STID, distinguishing their explicit and implicit parts, and incorporating the technological and innovation elements to refer to it.

GLOBAL GOVERNANCE AND MULTILATERALISM

Global governance came to the fore in International Relations at the end of the 1980s and beginning of the 1990s. Some of its fundamentals may be found in liberal theories, for example the categorical imperatives of Immanuel Kant, reflected in the global agenda and which are ethically relevant in the need for global government. Global governance forms part of a group of theories where there is an ideal of change based on humanity being able to define the direction and exercise freedom of decision in a world with clear rules and in a collaborative way. It is therefore structural, that is, it is seen from a scenario that is a global structure integrated with various interconnected elements and which favours globalization (López-Vallejo 2014, 417, 419).

In an exercise analysing actors, Kasper (2020) mentions that tackling world governance is a complex matter, made up of a wide variety of study focuses and structures, governance does not mean government, but rather implies a collaborative effort by a multitude of actors, both public and private, formal and informal; it also implies understanding that it is a project under construction, it is constantly evolving. Of course, there is no single definition or theoretical approximation of global governance; nevertheless, some of the basic hypotheses of this theory are (López-Vallejo 2014, 418-419):

- a) Governance relations are favoured within a context of globalization,
- b) The State is not the only body that holds authority and power; global governance may therefore enable reflection on a wide range of interests, values and ideas,
- c) There is a broad diversity of actors who inter-relate in various ways, with different intentions and agendas; the ultimate purpose is the production of global public goods,
- d) In order to achieve these global public goods, the various actors (States, international organisations, NGOs, societies, etc.,) have to standardise their policies towards common agendas and produce them in collaboration with each other,
- e) There is no distinction between high politics and low politics, whichever topic, actor or relationship is being analysed under global governance, as any actor may have authority and exercise power.

So now, in relation to multilateralism, this is a principle and legal norm, as well as a political discourse, a moral aspiration and a functional rationale, it is a constructive principle of international order; it defines an aspiration and a need for cooperation arising from the societal character of the international system, it appeals to the political and moral imperative of the universal, or when applicable, regional legal order, based on norms universally recognised as legitimate; it also refers to the practices and specific forms of international cooperation, to the debate about the institutions that take decisions, implementation mechanisms, their capacities and resources, and above all, the effectiveness of the organisations and institutions that make up this multilateralism (Sanahuja 2013, 31).

Manrique maintains that multilateralism is a practice or tool that reinforces and consolidates international society and is based on coordinating national policies between States. The experience of international society with multilateralism has shown that is a tool with the potential to meet the great global challenges; nevertheless, it could be not held accountable for not having yet achieved great changes or definitive solutions for a better world order, so it must be constantly changing and seeking new instruments that will enable it to meet the challenges facing international society (Manrique 2009, 296).

Some of the characteristics of multilateralism we could mention are: the search for a world based on rules, negotiation and cooperation; diplomacy before coercion; international Law, agreements and public opinion as working tools; the use of economic and trade ties as tools of rapprochement between international players; the search for consensus, compromise and conciliation. Some of the factors generating this multilateralism are: the need to maintain order in international society, the respect for legal equality between players and an international political culture in favour of regional and/or global multilateralism (Manrique 2009, 289-290).

Multilateralism stands out as the instrument par excellence for effective global governance; nevertheless, there are a large number of narratives around multilateralism, not to mention its effectiveness and the current crisis it is going through (Welfens 2020). In this document it will therefore be understood as global governance along with the aspiration for effective multilateralism

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE EUROPEAN UNION AND LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN: ON WHAT TERMS DO WE COOPERATE?

What is bi-regional has turned out to be extremely complex both to study and to operate; among other reasons are: the mechanism of “summits” has suffered a certain degree of exhaustion “because of the excess of rhetoric and little follow-up in terms of results as products of the commitments undertaken”. During the summits, there was no response aligned with the expectations that had been raised, rather they became a “place for rhetoric and, at most, for proclaiming principles and determining areas of cooperation between both regions” (González-Sarro 2020, 1137). It should also be noted that regionalism in LAC has also not converged into one single initiative or system of predominant integration.

In fact, one can observe differences between different regionalist movements, or waves, and a set of phenomena in the region which have led to the proliferation of different regional organisations and overlapping governance agendas, so that regionalism in LAC can be called “eclectic, multi-faceted and multi-level”. The variety of overlapping organisations and the benefits or harms they bring to the region would depend on the objectives and decisions of the players, each one seems to choose their own model of regionalist governance according to their interests: a regionalism à la carte (Selleslachs, Briceño-Ruiz and de Lombaerde, 2020, 241),

In respect of this last point, some specialists (Gómez-Mera 2015, cited by Selleslaghs, Briceño-Ruiz and de Lombaerde, 2020) say that this proliferation of regional schemes encourages competition between players – especially in the economic sphere – and it has the potential to erode unity and inter-regional cohesion; on the one hand, it is also noted that initiatives that produce segmented regionalisms are a sign of exhaustion in the potential for successful integration (Malamud and Gardini 2012, cited by Selleslaghs, Briceño- Ruiz and de Lombaerde, 2020). Finally, in these conditions the scope of regionalism could be limited to “low politics”, because of the declaration of many objectives and proclamations dressed up in verbose rhetoric and the establishing of more “strategic partnerships”, whatever that might mean (Gardini and Malamud 2018, 16).

Notwithstanding the above, it should also be recognised that the regional Summits have institutionalized political dialogue with the EU at the highest level, “they have made it possible for all those responsible for taking decisions in the regions to sit down at the same table to discuss matters of common interest” (González-Sarro 2020, 1137). We should specifically highlight in the LAC-EU and CELAC-EU Summits the visibility and thematic agenda they have taken a stance on, generating an appropriate political environment, together with governmental mobilisation, and the incorporation, albeit slow, of civil society. Some very significant programmes of bi-regional cooperation can be mentioned as a product of these Summits, such as: ALBAN, EurosociAL, EuroLat, EU-LAC Foundation, Euroclima, to mention just a few.

High-level mechanisms for institutionalized dialogue

Players	UE-ALC	UE-CELAC
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Heads of State and Government • Summits of Presidents and Prime Ministers 	EU – Rio Group	Santiago de Chile Summit (2013)
	Rio Summit (1999)	Brussels Summit (2015)
	Madrid Summit (2002)	El Salvador Summit (2019)
	Guadalajara Summit (2004)	
	Vienna Summit (2006)	
	Lima Summit (2008)	
	Madrid Summit (2010)	

Source: drawn up by author

THE FRAMEWORK FOR COOPERATION BETWEEN THE EU AND LAC

The current EU cooperation policy is based on the Lisbon Treaty (2009) which has not brought any substantial changes; however, starting from the approval of the SDGs, the EU is updating its framework of action, and it is taking as a guide to its cooperation policy: Agenda 2030 (UNGA 2015); the Communication “Trade for all” (European Commission 2015); the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction (UN 2015); the Global Strategy on Foreign and Security Policy in the EU (2016) and the European Consensus on Development (European Commission 2017), all this under the cooperation paradigm LAC is experiencing: “development in transition”.

The key points of this policy which have altered the trend in EU-LAC cooperation are:

1. The Programme for Change (European Commission 2011); this document established the “graduation of countries” of candidate countries for cooperation in accordance

with their per capita income level, resulting in the great majority of the countries in LAC ceasing to be priority countries for receiving cooperation in the traditional way.

The Programme for Change (2011) was reflected in the following Financial Framework of the European Union (2014-2020), in the Instrument of Cooperation for Development (ICD) (European Commission 2014), which established the headings for cooperation with LAC, it was established that *cooperation for development should be based on the needs of the partner country, on its capacity for generating and creating financial resources, on its capacity for absorption in its commitments and results, and on the potential impact of EU development aid* (European Commission 2014), this is known as the *differentiating principle*.

In addition to the differentiating principle, there are the principles of graduation and gradation. Graduation was activated from economic indicators that placed the countries in the category of medium/high income countries (LMICs-UMICs); as for gradation, Serrano-Caballero (2018, 461), states that it refers to creating new actions and tools for cooperation between countries that no longer have priority for receiving cooperation, so that there is no abrupt cessation of receiving aid and cooperation.

2. Approval of the Sustainable Development Objectives of Agenda 2030 (2015). In response to the SDGs, in 2017 the European Union approved a revision of the European Consensus for Development of 2007 based on the Millennium Development Objectives (MDGs).

Approval of the SDGs involved the EU updating its frameworks for external action; the Programme for Change (2011), together with its principles and financial frameworks, would have to adapt to the new reality established by Agenda 2030, that would mean abandoning principles of differentiation, graduation and gradation, since this time the agenda would focus on people, the planet, peace, prosperity and alliances, all without leaving anyone behind (European Commission 2017, 9-37). These objectives in their turn complement the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction (2015) and the Paris Agreement on Climate Change (2015). The EU adopted these principles under the principle of subsidiarity, like a route map and a standard for sustainable development up to 2030.

In addition, it includes an Innovative commitment to countries with the most advanced development, which have major repercussions and influence in their regions, including as sources of regional stability; the EU will therefore develop alongside these a wide range of original forms of cooperation, with special emphasis given to South-South and triangular cooperation that is coherent with the principles of effective development. (European Commission 2017, 38).

3. Multiannual Financial Framework (for the period 2021-2027). To be adopted.

Based on this new budget, the EU will continue cooperating with LAC and the rest of the world, it is intended to give the EU the resources and tools necessary to reconcile its values and interests in the face of a more complex, disputed and inter-connected scenario and, at the same time, contribute to effective cooperation to achieve the SDGs of Agenda 2030 (Ruiz and Sanahuja 2020, 298).

To conclude, the cooperation policy of the EU is taking on the challenge of these new changes in its activities, which involves establishing new forms of cooperation, where development escapes the traditional paradigms of North-South perspectives and dependence on OAD; instead new forms of partnership are being put forward, public-private partnerships, the incorporation of new players such as civil society, in multi-level frameworks, on target to meet Agenda 2030 without leaving anyone behind.

STID AS A MEANS OF CONTRIBUTING TO GLOBAL GOVERNANCE AND EFFECTIVE MULTILATERALISM: A TOOLKIT

As part of the bi-regional precedents, at the Sixth EU-LAC Summit in Madrid in 2010, the Madrid Declaration was issued: "Towards a new stage in the bi-regional partnership: innovation and technology to promote sustainable development and social inclusion" (Sixth EU-LAC Summit 2010), this declaration is one of the explicit precursors of the intention of both regions to cooperate on matters of science and technology; another important precedent is the Communication "The European Union, Latin America and the Caribbean: joining forces for a joint future" (European Commission 2019, 7) which envisages improving investment in knowledge and innovation to develop a common research forum between the EU and LAC within the framework of what will be the successor programme to Horizon 2020.

Some other initiatives of the region relevant in terms of STID include the very recent Ibero-American Summit which issued the Declaration "Innovation for Sustainable Development – Goal 2030", in which it recognises the role of innovation in economic and social transformation (SEGIB 2020); another example is the digital agenda for Latin America and the Caribbean eLAC 2020 (ECLAC 2018), from the Sixth Ministerial Conference on the Information Society of Latin America and the Caribbean, which seeks regional efforts aimed at digitisation. As far as CELAC is concerned, it incorporates, in its 2020 plan of work, explicit elements of STID, thus recognising its potential for development and integration in the region, (CELAC 2020), and in addition it has recently resumed, together with the EU, the CELAC-EU Joint Initiative on Research and Innovation (JIRI), also taking up again the Brussels Declaration of 2015 and the CELAC-EU action plan for science and technology (SRE 2020).

Algunos ejemplos de cooperación en materia de DCTI entre la UE y ALC son los siguientes. Some examples of cooperation between the EU and LAC in terms of STID are the following programmes which have been implemented within the financial frameworks of the EU described above, although not all use STID explicitly within their objectives and presentation: AL-INVEST (1995-1999), AL-INVEST II (1999-2004), AL-INVEST III (2004-2007), AL-INVEST IV (2009-2013), AL-INVEST 5.0; Erasmus mundus (2007-2013), Erasmus+ (2014-2020); EULAC-RIS; ERANet-LAC project (2013-2017); ELAN Program; ELAN Network; INNOVACT project (2017-2018); Horizon 2020 (2014-2020), and, currently under way, Bella project.

This means that STID occupies a significant place in the agendas of EU and LAC, both jointly and separately, as it is one of the cross-cutting themes of documents guiding the cooperation actions between both regions. So, why should it occupy a place of priority?

Agenda 2030, the roadmap for sustainable development, has enabled science, technology and innovation to become a priority approach for cooperation to meet the SDGs. This is because scientific and technological knowledge, together with innovation, determine key challenges such as environmental sustainability, the digital transformation, improvements in the health of the people, and in general, in various types of infrastructure related to society-based public services. Finally, we should mention that the link between science, technology and innovation, and development is based on reducing asymmetries at global level (Álvarez and Natera 2020, 279-280).

Another very important point concerning STI in relation to diplomacy, is that both elements are inter-connected at world level and open new horizons to companies that could benefit from global markets, skills and resources (Sánchez 2018, 7); other players, including States, could also exchange experiences; in this area, new eco-systems of innovation also require new players (Leijten, 2019). In terms of foreign policy, we need to recognise and incorporate a new concept of diplomacy that includes these factors in addition to a public sector prepared to change and play a key role in promoting policies to support STI as a crucial part of development – and, of course, of its regulation – by use of new tools and instruments to enable cooperation and better coordination of policies and programmes already in existence, to contribute the creation of a true eco-system of innovation to generate supply and demand (Sánchez 2018, 7; Leijten, 2019).

Leijten reveals that whereas scientific diplomacy has undoubtedly been focussed on collaboration, its increasing importance is driven by placing knowledge as a factor in economic growth, to do this it uses the concept of “eco-systems of innovation” where a wide variety of stakeholders can work as part of a social, political and economic power to generate new geographies of innovation with economic, social and environmental benefits (Leijten 2017, 4; 2019).

In the multilateral sphere, STID is one of the main drivers for agreements that are often difficult; nevertheless, it participates and contributes to the agenda. One proof of this is in the SDGs aimed at halting climate change and helping preserve eco-systems (SDG 13, 14, 15). Science has itself built up international scientific relations that have adopted various forms of self-organisation between researchers, peer-to-peer dialogue, the movement of people, they have transcended borders (Ruffini 2017, 105). Global problems challenge scientific knowledge, scientists appear in the first line of defence, able to offer responses to generate decisions with a much greater positive impact for humanity; science, technology and innovation are key to discussions in multilateral forums.

A TOOLKIT

An STID strategy may be a crucial factor in improving capacity in science, technology and innovation in a country; together with its international relations it can help create a multilateral forum for scientific collaboration, according to the interests of the region (Sánchez 2018, 9).

By creating eco-systems of innovation, generating global public goods, synergies between players: institutions, international organisations, civil society, academia, networks, with initiatives in the subject, and taking as a base Langenhove’s classification of strategic, operational and supporting tools (2017), we attempt in the following table to offer some elements for a coherent strategy to promote STID, all within the forms of cooperation (triangular and S-S) which are promoted for the region. Each element should, of course, be described alongside its potential and objective, however, this guide provides at least a start.

STID strategy aimed at achieving the SDGs				
	Strategic tools	Operational tools	Support tools	
Creating an eco-system of innovation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Political objectives Official communications 	Instruments of public policy <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Specific resources and mechanisms for action Agreements and accords for cooperation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promotion of STID Capacity building Training activities Awareness-raising activities Platforms for dialogue and consultation Knowledge management 	Generating Global Public Goods
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recognition of the potential of STID to resolve global problems and drawing up of a roadmap for the action of the STID. Meetings and exchanges between ministers responsible for science, technology and innovation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Additional scientists in the diplomatic representations Financial and action mechanisms Programming around STID 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Creation of a database of good practice in terms of STID. Policy dialogues with stakeholders: State, academia, NGOs, and other players Reinforcing partnerships and creating synergies with related initiatives 	
	Multilateral and regional spheres			
State – Diplomats – Companies – NGOs – Multilateral bodies – International organisations – Research centres – Civil Society – Research networks Activities: generation of				
International cooperation South-South Cooperation ← → Triangular Cooperation				

Source: drawn up by author

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

Atravesamos un período de la historia que es clave para el cambio a una sociedad digital. We are going through a key period in history for the change to a digitised society; the automation and robotisation of processes is part of the near future, science, technology and innovation are essential in the transit to a new normality, and also key to forming new markets with a rationale of productivity.

In addition, CDTI is a priority factor in resolving global issues and producing global public goods. This is why it is important to know which instruments are available to the Latin American and Caribbean region to form part of the major programmes of cooperation with the objective of science, technology and innovation.

The EU and LAC have created a fitting political environment in accordance with a long relationship based on their regional partnership which has allowed Heads of State and Presidents to meet in high-level dialogues to speak on matters on which they have taken a stance in both the regional and bi-regional agendas. Of course, it is argued that the excess of rhetoric has often led to no results, however, progress has also been made in matters of international cooperation which have arisen as a result of the Summits.

The creation of a STID strategy for the region that incorporates strategies, instruments and tools to strengthen and consolidate the STID approach would doubtless be great progress, as well as forming an eco-system for LAC together with the EU which would not be a simple task, but it would be ideal, to really reap the benefit of that strategic partnership which is so much talked about, and which would contribute to the progress of global governance, in a multilateral order and in fulfilment of the SDGs.

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7. ¿Everybody wants to rule the world? The COVID-19 crisis and the bilateral opportunities between the European Union and Latin America and the Caribbean

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The present paper seeks to assess the role of multilateralism in the time of COVID-19 from a European and Latin America relations perspective. The whole world is facing an economic downturn, but Latin America and the Caribbean is probably the developing region that will be the most affected by the pandemic, due to its structural issues and initial conditions. In this sense, that could mean a huge challenge, but as well an opportunity for the bilateral cooperation between the EU-LAC for the future in terms of digital infrastructure, climate change and migration, which will probably be the most relevant aspects that will have to be faced during this decade. Latin America and the Caribbean countries need a big push and the European Union as well as the multilateral organizations can help the region improve its situation during the next decade. The central message is that cooperation and no competence is the way to get out of this crisis.

Keywords: Multilateralism, Economic Integration, Latin America, European Union, COVID-19.

INTRODUCTION

The COVID-19 pandemic has brought to surface the weaknesses of all the countries- even the developed ones are suffering the virus impact. This way, the world is facing one of the deepest economic crisis since the Great Depression, that occurred almost once century ago: world output is estimated to decrease around 4,4% -and 5,8% in the advanced economies- by the end of this year and oil prices projections are to go down more than 30% (32,1%) (IMF 2020). This threat has different negative effects on inequality and poverty: For the first time in over twenty years, this year, extreme poverty rate is expected to rise (World Bank 2020a). This situation is worrying for developing countries such as the Latin America and the Caribbean ones where a combination of precarious work conditions, high levels of debt distress and insufficient fiscal and policy space coexist, which limits their options to respond efficiently (UNCTAD 2020).

However, the globe was already in trouble even before the sanitary crisis, due to the difficulties in the United States (US)- China relations. The current COVID-19 crisis has just deepened those tensions. In this sense, some people could talk about the possible death of multilateralism. Is it really that way? Or maybe this crisis could give the world the chance to optimize the multilateral system? As well, could the COVID-19 crisis mean an opportu-

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nity for the bilateral regional cooperation between the European Union and Latin America and the Caribbean for the following years considering all the new challenges ahead?

Following that line and trying to answer those questions, this article is divided in 5 sections. The main objective of the next section is to analyse the possible multilateralism crisis since the pre-COVID-19 scenario and in the current context. After that, section 3 presents the COVID-19 socioeconomic effects on Latin America. Moreover, section 4 aims to assess the bilateral opportunities between the European Union and Latin America in terms of the most important aspects that will have to be faced in the next decade: infrastructure, climate change and migration. Finally, conclusions are given in section 5.

THE DEATH OF MULTILATERALISM?

Multilateralism represents a world that shares some basic values or rules within a framework usually determined by International Law. In this sense, the United Nations is probably the most recognized example. Nowadays, just the same as the world is facing a crisis due to COVID-19, it is said that the multilateral system is inside one, too. Therefore, this section will provide a general perspective of the multilateral system crisis by analysing the pre-COVID scenario and the current one.

2.1 Pre-COVID crisis

During the last years, the relations between the United States and China have not been the best since there has been an intense competition for global economic and technological leadership (ECLAC 2019). This generated an abrupt increase in trade barriers such as tariff increases that were imposed to each other constantly. Thus, it was a panorama with growing uncertainty for the world. This way, those tensions generated a huge impact on the economy: In 2019, global trade performance was the worst since the international financial crisis in 2009 (ECLAC 2019).

Moreover, the trading system - the World Trade Organization (WTO)- has been in a middle of a crisis. Some of the main critics have been related to the difficulties in making internal agreements as there is a lack of consensus for the WTO's decision and all of that has been happening in a context of proliferation of regional trade agreements (RTAs), which could give the idea that countries prefer them rather than working in a multilateral way.

The United States claimed that the WTO was not playing fair and impartially because its decisions would benefit nobody but China as it is considered as a developing country, which gave this country a number of benefits due to its status. Due to this, the US decided to block the (re-) appointment of the judges of the WTO's Appellate Body Crisis, which has deeply touched the trading multilateral system as that is the area in charge of settlement trade disputes.

Indeed, the United States decided to withdraw from the Paris Climate Agreement in 2019 as he is not really committed to climate change. Taking this into consideration, some experts claim that there is a lack of international leadership – mainly of the United States

(Wouters 2020). In that line, Jeffrey Sachs even mentioned that, nowadays, the US more than a leader, it is a force of destruction and that Trump policies are “rejecting the constraints of the UN Charter and global treaties” (2020:34), as he is overtly rejecting the values of multilateralism, values that the United States had been supported for decades. This scenario was considered as a check to the multilateral system and the situation probably got worse with the appearance of the coronavirus and its spread around the world.

2.2 The COVID-19 crisis and multilateralism

There is no doubt that the pandemic has deepened the tensions in the US- China relations. In that line, could it be said that the COVID-19 is responsible of worsening the multilateral system crisis?

Or maybe could this be an opportunity to reshape it?

It is known that Donald Trump blames China because of the creation of the coronavirus and he even said that China would have to pay for the current crisis. As well, the United States decision to pull out of the World Health Organization (WHO) and stop funding it in these difficult times has definitely hurt the multilateral system. Nevertheless, maybe it could mean an opportunity to optimize it and reshape it as well as letting other actors like the European Union, for example, play a more important role in the global governance as there is a transformation of the strategic global scenarios.

Under such a difficult context like the one the whole world is now experiencing, more cooperation is needed, countries cannot isolate themselves and act alone, they need each other if they want to control this emergency (World Bank, 2020a). Following this line, Ursula von der Leyen, President of the European Commission, stated: “A global pandemic requires a world effort to end it – none of us will be safe until everyone is safe”. This is a global crisis and, therefore, global solutions are required.

Governments, private sector, civil society and multilateral organizations should join together in order to support a sustainable recovery (Watkins, 2020). In that line, COVID-19 does not represent the death of multilateralism, but an opportunity to optimize it with the aim of building a more sustainable and inclusive future.

This way, in the short run, international cooperation will play a key role in ensuring the access to the vaccine and medicines against COVID-19 to all the countries. The logistics for their distribution represents a challenge for the world, but mainly for the least developed and developing ones. Thus, efficient coordination between countries and political will is required to overcome the situation.

In the medium and long term, multilateralism and cooperation will be vital as the recovery of the crisis is not going to be the same for everyone as countries do not have the same initial conditions. Least developed and developing countries will need a big push to kick-start the economy and improve the well-being of its citizens. In this sense, the role of the multilateral organizations and banks of development will be of great relevance to achieve that goal.

COVID AND THE SOCIOECONOMIC DIMENSION IN LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN

The sanitary crisis has made the governments around the world take different measures to prevent the spread of the virus. The economic and social effects are enormous. In this sense, this section seeks to present the economic outcomes and outlooks for the region of Latin America and the Caribbean as well as the COVID-19 effects on the social dimension.

3.1 Economic scenario

Lockdowns and the different restrictions applied all over the world have caused significant outcomes in the economy. Probably, Tourism industry has been the hit hardest by the pandemic. According to the United Nations World Tourism Organization [UNWTO] (2020), tourism flows around the world have decreased in around 70% until august: 64,8% in the Americas and 67,7% in Europe and expectations remain weak for the rest of the year. Concerning a possible recovery, most experts do not see a return to pre-pandemic 2019 levels before 2023. This situation is completely distressing because Tourism is an important economic activity in the region -representing even 50% of the GDP in some islands in the Caribbean.

In this way, the outlook for the Latin American and the Caribbean economy is bleak. As stated by the International Monetary Fund [IMF] (2020), the growth projection for the region in 2020 is -8,1% and next year, the economy is expected to rise 3,6%, while the forecast of UNCTAD (2020) is a recovery of 3% in 2021 claiming that LAC will probably be the most affected developing region in the world due to the COVID-19 impacts. Some factors that explain those forecasts are the initial conditions of Latin America and the Caribbean- slow economic growth during the last years close to zero levels and structural inequalities- as well as its high exposure to commodities prices variation and to international financial conditions (UNCTAD 2020; IDB 2020).

Taking that situation into account, ECLAC (2020) projects that, this year, more than 2,7 million of formal businesses, usually the little and medium enterprises, may close in the region with an estimated loss of 8,5 million jobs. Due to that, countries are applying fiscal policies to provide urgent assistance to the private sector in order to preserve employment and, as well, to citizens with the aim of facing quarantines and restrictions. However, some LAC countries, like Equator and Argentina were already facing fiscal deficits and a not so good economic performance.

Concerning Europe, it is true that it is now facing the second wave of coronavirus cases with some countries implementing more restrictions and even new lockdowns like the case of France. Although the region would present a fall of 8,3% of its GDP this year- probably worse than in LAC-, the latest region will be more affected as Europe may recover sooner, due to the financial instruments, fiscal gaps to act and better institutions it counts with. The pandemic requires a countercyclical fiscal policy which means that more investment is required to overcome the crisis. Debt is not a bad thing and Latin America could see in the European Union and other international organizations a friendly hand to apply those

policies. In this sense, it must be kept in mind that Europe already counts with bilateral regional trade agreements with some LAC countries, it could be an excellent idea to optimize them and use them as much as possible in order the two regions can benefit from it.

3.2 COVID-19 unequal effects on society

The pandemic has made awareness of the great existing inequalities and structural problems in Latin America and the Caribbean and in fact, that is the reason why some organisms- such as the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB)- have called it the inequality crisis. Although the poverty rate in LAC has been falling during the last years from 42.3 percent in 2002 to 23.1 percent in 2018, this region is still one of the most unequal in the world. In terms of income, the richest 1% captures 21% of the entire economy's income, which represents 100% more than the average in the industrialized world (IDB, 2020b). Therefore, this crisis is hurting people in different ways depending on their economic situation, educational level, age, gender and migratory status.

Concerning employment, according to the International Labour Organization (2020), Latin America and the Caribbean is the region most affected in the world in terms of hours worked and labour income with a contraction of 20,9% and 19,3%, respectively, analysing data until September, while the world rate contraction of income from work is 10.3%. Those effects have not been the same for all the groups: Women and young people are the most affected because of the nature of the sectors where they work. They usually work in the tourism industry or in commerce services, which are by far the hit hardest by the pandemic.

In this sense, there must be a gender focus in a transversal way as women tend to have more informal jobs and are worse paid than men. Moreover, during the COVID-19 context, this group is doing more unpaid domestic work as well as more childcare activities.

The situation is worsened because of the high informality that exist within the region: 1 out of 2 workers in Latin America and the Caribbean is informal and the panorama is worse in Peru and Paraguay, where 2 out of 3 households are informal, which leads to more people without access to social security and thus, no services such as health insurance nor pensions (IDB 2020b).

Just a little percentage of people is allowed to work from home, usually the ones with higher educational levels: Just around 1 out of 26 jobs can be done from home in low-income countries compared to the 1 out of 3 in the high-income countries (World Bank, 2020b). In this sense, internet access and the nature of jobs are important factors for that reality.

Furthermore, Venezuelan migrants also represent a vulnerable group within the region. The Venezuelan humanitarian crisis has displaced almost 5,5 million people representing the second diaspora in the world, just after the Syrian one (R4V, 2020). Most of the migrants are located in urban areas in Colombia and Peru, accounting for more of the 50% of total migrants- and those countries' policies such as cash transference or food baskets have not included this group. This is really worrying because Venezuelan migrants have more presence in the informal labour market than local people and earn less than them (Vasquez, Castro, Licheri 2020).

There is no doubt that the COVID-19 crisis will have strong effects on poverty worldwide. According to the World Bank (2020a), by the end of the year, extreme poverty is expected to rise for the first time in over 20 years. Apart from the chronic poor from rural areas who usually work in agriculture, the new poor of this new normal era are people living in urban areas who are usually engaged in informal services and in the sectors the most affected by the pandemic and its lockdowns and mobility restrictions.

In this sense, achieving the Sustainable Development Goal N°1 of ending extreme poverty by 2030 seems each time further and further as the world is rather moving in the opposite direction. Indeed, COVID-19 pandemic will likely generate higher inequalities going against the SDG N°10 that aims inequalities reduction within and among countries. Therefore, taking fast and effective responses is vital in order to make the gaps expand the minimum possible -although not all would be the ideal scenario, but unfortunately, that is almost unrealistic.

BILATERAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR THE FUTURE: EUROPEAN UNION- LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN

This section is aimed at analysing the EU-LAC agenda in the short and long term considering some basic points: Infrastructure, climate change and migration which will be the most important challenges for the next decade. In that line, funding and technical assistance aspects must be addressed. The role of the multilateral organizations and banks of development will be vital as Latin America needs a big push to kick-start the economy and improve the well-being of its citizens.

4.1. Infrastructure

Infrastructure spending is a priority because it can contribute to close the inequality gap, support human well-being and foster economic growth and development. This infrastructure should not just include roads or transport infrastructure which generate higher externalities or power plants, in fact, there has been too much focus on that point -and in spite of that, there are still gaps to close (ECLAC 2018; IDB 2020a). However, little effort has been done on other aspects such as the digital one. Therefore, prioritizing this type of projects is a must.

COVID-19 has made the world changed and this change has been done it in the quickest way possible. The new normal requires connectivity, which now should be a central dimension while designing policies. Nevertheless, there is still a huge digital gap in Latin America which usually affects more vulnerable people, people from rural areas and the poorest ones.

Latin America and the Caribbean have failed in achieving the Sustainable Development Goal N°9 and its goal of providing universal and affordable access to Internet by 2020. As stated by PISA (2018), less than the half (45%) of the 20% low-income households in the region have access to Internet and only 29% has a computer (IDB, 2020b). There is a high inequality within the countries as the proportion of people from rural areas that have ac-

cess to the service and to digital inputs at home remains low. How could it be expected that children study from home if they do not have access to digital inputs?

Moreover, the governments were not prepared for a situation like this. In the new normal, government services must be, in lots of cases, digital. For example, the cash transferences applied would have been easier if the LAC governments had had better digital infrastructure. Therefore, a government digital transformation is needed.

Therefore it is relevant to promote projects that seek to improve the telecommunications infrastructure in the Latin America and the Caribbean region and those projects should have a green focus as the infrastructure have to be resilient and sustainable, just as the SDG N°9 mentions.

Regarding the funding, in line with ECLAC (2019), a good alternative is to enhance PublicPrivate Partnerships, which represents a high percentage of private investment in infrastructure and are usually more efficient than public works. Thus, this would be a great opportunity for European investment and for development banks. However, possible governance and regulation fails must be considered, so it is necessary to evaluate projects efficiently analysing priority as well as their technical viability. In this sense, a regulatory framework that considers contracts and time construction delays is one of the main challenges as that kind of issues usually lead to overexpenditure and higher risks for the government, which is the opposite aim of this type of partnership (ECLAC 2019).

As well, Latin American governments efficiency must be considered in the formula. There is a special need to invest better because, at the moment, LAC countries lose 35 cents on every dollar that is invested in poorly designed projects, delays, and corruption (IDB 2020a). According to the Inter-American Development Bank, governments of the region are eight times less effective than their European counterparts in reducing inequality: “While Latin America and the Caribbean interventions reduce inequality by 4.7 percent, the OECD-EU reduces it by 38 percent” (2020b: 280). This means that working on strengthening institutions is also a relevant aspect that should be worked in a transversal way and mostly in the infrastructure projects as in the past, corruption cases have been linked to this sector.

Hence, investing in well-managed and well-chosen projects will be really helpful -and a necessity- to kick-start the LAC economies. Investing in digitalization is investing in economic growth by increasing productivity, but as well it means more inclusion and less income inequalities (IDB, 2020a). In this sense, this could help to the attainment of the SDG N°9 about infrastructure and the N°10 about inequalities with a sustainability emphasis as the projects have to take into account the environment in a transversal way.

4.2. Climate change

It cannot be denied that climate change is a reality and there will not be many good news regarding this topic if no action is taken now. As said by Galindo and Samaniego (2010): “Even though the LAC region has not significantly contributed to climate change, it is especially vulnerable to its negative consequences” (EU LAC: 6). Therefore, it is necessary to work in the green agenda and design projects and policies with an environmental focus.

The region may be harmfully hit by climate change as Mexico, the Caribbean and Central America will probably be drier, cities in the Andean region will be subject to water stress and South America will be increasingly exposed to flooding (ECLAC 2018). In this sense, it is vital to work in the management of natural disasters risks.

The climate change impacts may be disproportional as they may harm mainly the poor. According to Kim (2012), the poor are, in many cases, more exposed to natural hazards and climate change: Globally, they are at least twice as exposed to natural disasters than the nonpoor (IDB 2020b). In Latin America and the Caribbean, lower-income inhabitants are usually concentrated in disaster-prone areas or with higher exposure to natural disasters as they often reside on the periphery of cities. This is the case, for example, of cities in Peru, Colombia, Bolivia and Brazil where its inhabitants are more exposed to river floods and landslide hazards (IDB 2020b).

This way, climate change is expected to push millions of people into poverty and this will exacerbate inequality. According to IDB (2020b), poor people may suffer greater losses in proportion to wealth when climate shocks get to happen, and they have fewer resources with which to recover from climate shocks.

Therefore, investing in Research and Development is vital in order to get new green technology and new sources of energy as many countries are lagged in terms of the composition of their energy matrix (IDB 2020a). Hence, looking for renewable energy technology should be one of the central dimensions concerning climate change as in order to reduce greenhouse effect, a shift in the industrial system is needed.

As well, new ways of transport are needed and the greater digitalization can help in that objective. LAC countries should try to get more electric and autonomous vehicles in its crowded urban areas. As well, a more sustainable mobility should be fostered by using more bicycles, scooters, and trucks. Those actions together with electrification and technological advances may create cleaner and more eco-friendly cities (IDB 2020a).

As stated before, Latin America will be one of the regions suffering the worst effects of climate change (IDB 2020b). This way, the region and the world must take action now and do something to reduce the diverse effects of climate change. However, there is a huge financial gap in the region to fund the different projects that should be on the agenda by 2030 in order to get a Sustainable Development. In this sense, fostering green financial mechanisms and diversifying them is a must.

Green bonds, debt instruments created with the objective of funding projects that have positive environmental and/or climate benefits, could be an excellent option (Restrepo et al 2020). However, they just represent less than 1 percent of the market (IDB 2019). According to CBI, LAC countries have only contributed 2% to the total of global issuance, which means that there is still growth potential in the region as they present a rising demand for green products (Restrepo et al 2020). Moreover, thematic bonds could also play an important role as those are also aimed at funding activities with a green and social objective in the region.

However, according to those authors, one big challenge that will have to be faced is the necessity of fostering standardization of these financial instruments by designing common taxonomies and issues standards for the region, as well as working in transparency in order to increase trust and frictions in the market (2020).

Climate effects must be prioritized in all the programs, which implies that development policies need to consider climate goals and disaster risk management objectives in order to get a real change at the same time as reducing inequalities (IDB 2020b).

4.3 Migration

Another topic that will be of particular concern in the following years is forced migration caused by climate change. Due to the rising of sea and river levels, decreasing crop productivity and shortage of water, lots of people, usually the most vulnerable ones could be forced to move within their own countries to safe places in urban areas. The World Bank (2018) projects that, by 2050, around 17 million of people, up to 2.6% of the region's population, may migrate if no concrete climate and development actions are taken.

As told by the World Bank: "Internal climate migration may be a reality, but it doesn't have to be a crisis" (2018:184). If countries work in cutting greenhouse gases, embedding climate migration in development planning and invest now to improve understanding of internal climate migration, the number of migrants could be reduced. Indeed, it has to be kept in mind that climate migration will not occur in isolation as there may be other internal migrants driven by other forces such as economic, social or conflict reasons.

Urban areas will probably be the ones dealing with the biggest challenges as in LAC countries, around 80% of the population lives in urban areas. More urban people would probably mean more negative externalities that would have to be faced such as more generation of greenhouse gases, vehicle traffic, soil degradation and cardiopulmonary diseases (ECLAC, 2018). In this sense, it is necessary to adapt cities. Creating more sustainable and equitable cities is not a choice, but a must.

Moreover, the Venezuelan migration that should be analysed in the short-term agenda could give a better understanding of the challenges ahead in terms of migration and its main challenges. Nowadays, Latin America is facing one of the largest migration flows of its history with the Venezuelan diaspora. These people face difficulties in their insertion to cities due to their vulnerable situation and the challenges they present to get housing and access to public services such as education and health. Indeed, they face discrimination and women have to deal with hyper sexualization stereotypes (Oxfam 2019).

Venezuelan migration is a transversal phenomenon as nobody can deny it is a regional issue and therefore, regional solutions should be addressed. Thus, it requires a great coordination, In the short-term, humanitarian aid is needed to improve the life conditions of this vulnerable group. As well, working in their migratory status should be one central point.

Hence, policies and projects that aim to understand in a deeper way the migration to urban areas phenomenon are required as well. It is necessary to work with synergy with international cooperation as well as with local governments to take measures to anticipate to this phenomenon and then, trying to insert people in cities in the best way possible in order to make this forced migration the less harmful possible for them and for their wellbeing.

It should be kept in mind that climate change migrants will be forced ones, they will be vulnerable and probably, when getting to their new areas, they will face the same or more challenges as the Venezuelan migrants are doing now. Thus, ensuring them access to basic services and a sustainable city should be mandatory. Hopefully, there is time to prepare the region for that.

CONCLUSIONS

It is said that the coronavirus does not discriminate, the virus can spread to anyone. However, its effects they do. The COVID-19 crisis impact will hit countries and people in different ways. This way, probably, the biggest challenges for the next decade will be reducing inequalities and fighting against climate change and its different effects. In this sense, there are great opportunities concerning the Latin America and the Caribbean and the European Union relations.

In difficult times like the ones the world is living now, it is better to be as close as possible. The solution to this crisis is not social distance between countries, instead it requires them to be more united than ever before. This is a global pandemic; thus, global solutions must be addressed. Cooperating is better than being in a constant competence and it is needed in order to achieve a real sustainable development. The following years will be crucial to get that goal.

The COVID-19 crisis does not mean multilateralism is facing its death, but a renovation time. In this sense, The COVID-19 crisis is an opportunity to reshape the development paths the world has been following during the last decades. Will the global leaders manage to make a real change?

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