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Latin America: how to escape the trap of the Global South?**Latin America: how to escape the trap of the Global South?**This analysis is part of the [Strategic Vision 2025](#).

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Abstract:

Latin America is facing many internal challenges, from the expansion of organised crime to low economic growth rates. The political fragmentation reflected in the ineffectiveness of its regional institutions is also inauspicious. However, the hope that it will be able to distance itself much longer from the current geopolitical competition is not the same as a positioning strategy. In this sense, it must avoid falling into the conceptual trap of the Global South and recognise that it is inextricably linked to the Global West, which is formed by the United States and Europe. It is there that democratic countries with open economies and cooperative security structures in the region are more likely to succeed.

Keywords:

Latin America, Global South, Geopolitics, United States, China.

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Introduction

In its little more than two hundred years of independent history, Latin America has been rather dispensable for history, and has even become “relegable” at times, in the words of the former president of a country in the region¹. Whenever there has been a profound reordering of the international system, the nations of this part of the world observe the changes, adapt to them as best they can and, with difficulty, decide what place they want to occupy in the new geometries of power that are being articulated.

In an article in early 2024, Ikenberry argued that the Russia-Ukraine war is acting as a watershed and pushing the planet back into geopolitics, where the debate over global institutions and rules would identify three groups of countries: the global West, led by the United States and Europe, the global East, led by China and Russia, and the global South, an amorphous collection of non-Western and undeveloped nations². These would not be poles as they were known in the Cold War, nor coherent blocs, but loose coalitions trying to shape the current international system with agendas that can coincide and collide at the same time.

Given that the first two groups are more consistent, since they are maritime democracies and territorial authoritarianisms in their own right, both would be vying to attract members of the so-called global south through incentives ranging from security assistance (US) to soft loans for infrastructure projects (China).

In this context, the so-called global south would try to navigate by getting the best of both worlds and trying to stay out of the most direct clashes by invoking longstanding principles of neutrality and non-alignment. This has been possible so far, although there is no guarantee that this lack of engagement will be sustainable over time as tensions between Beijing and Washington are only set to escalate. If it is assumed that both the global West and the global East cannot shape a new international system on their own, then coalition-building becomes an imperative where more members will always be better. It is in the global south that potential partners are found, some of which have significant economic

¹ Lagos, R., Castañeda, J., and Aguilar, H. (2022). *La nueva soledad de América Latina*. Santiago de Chile, Penguin Random House, p. 13.

² Ikenberry, J. J. (2024). Three Worlds: the West, East and South and the competition to shape global order. *International Affairs*, 100(1), pp. 121-138.

weight, significant populations, critical resources for energy transition, or crucial geographic positions to ensure the flow of global trade (e.g. Brazil, Turkey, Indonesia, South Africa).

Latin America, like most countries in Africa, the Middle East and Asia, is often lumped into this motley collection of undeveloped nations regardless of the nature of their political regimes or their own geopolitical orientations³. Authorities, academics and journalists use the concept without giving much thought to its implications. This presents at least two fundamental problems. The first is that it forgets the cultural construction of the region as a legacy of the West, and the second is that it accepts the conceptual validity of the so-called "global south".

As a cultural area, Huntington himself warned that "Latin America could be considered either a sub-civilisation within Western civilisation, or a civilisation apart, intimately related to the West and divided as to its membership of it". He suggested that for an analysis focusing on the international political consequences of civilisations, including relations between Latin America on the one hand and North America and Europe on the other, the second option was the most appropriate and useful⁴. In other words, Latin Americans are not Western, but they resemble them, even if they do not always agree with each other on this condition.

It is not only a matter of looking at the Iberian languages that are massively spoken in the region or the predominant Judeo-Christian religion, but even the institutions that countries have built to govern themselves have their origins in a common trunk. Despite the context of "chronic institutional weakness" and the presence of "minimally effective states" - which varies from country to country - there are for the most part competitive democracies⁵.

³ See, for example, Vinjamuri, L. and Yoeli, M. (2024). America's Last Chance with the Global South: In an Age of Great-Power Competition, Washington Needs the G-20 [online]. *Foreign Affairs* [Accessed: 2025] Available at: <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/united-states/americas-last-chance-global-south>; Shidore, S. (2023). The Return of the Global South: Realism, Not Moralism, Drives a New Critique of Western Power [online]. *Foreign Affairs* [Accessed: 2025]. Available from: <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/world/return-global-south-critique-western-power>; Mohan, C. R. (2023). Is There Such a Thing as a Global South: The category is emotionally powerful but fundamentally flawed [online]. *Foreign Policy*. [Accessed: 2025]. Available at: <https://foreignpolicy.com/2023/12/09/global-south-definition-meaning-countries-development/>, and Brooke-Holland, L. (2024). What is the Global South [online]. *House of Commons Library*. [Accessed: 2025]. Available at: <https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/what-is-the-global-south/>.

⁴ Huntington, S. (1997). *The clash of civilisations and the reconfiguration of the world order*. Barcelona, Paidós, p. 52.

⁵ Murillo, M., Levitsky, S. and Brinks, D. (2021). *La ley y la trampa en América Latina*. Buenos Aires, Siglo Veintiuno Editores, p. 9.

Spanish diplomats have rightly described Latin America as the "most Euro-compatible region in the world"⁶.

Now, the global south is a polysemous concept, i.e. it means whatever one wants it to mean. As such, it lends itself to confusion, but it can also be used as part of strategic narratives because the category overlooks the enormous economic growth that several of its presumed members have experienced in recent decades and the deplorable performance of others, as well as underestimating the presence of very different political regimes and the dissimilar quality of governance they present.

Nor does the label give much precision about the geopolitical orientation of its members, which may even be opposite. In order to overcome the contradictions, including the geographical one - many of its members are located on the equator, for example, India, Egypt or Mexico - some give it the simple connotation of a "political fact" that confirms the emergence of countries that have, among their supposed common characteristics, been colonies or recipients of imperialism from the North⁷, a view more of the past than of the future. However, all this is not exactly new for Latin America. So Stewart and Huggins argue:

" One of the many tragedies of the Cold War was the tendency of the United States, especially, to treat the Third World as an undifferentiated terrain for zero-sum superpower competition, rather than to engage individual nations on their own terms, as actors in their own right possessing distinctive identities, interests, and motivations"⁸.

Of course, acceptance of the concept has been evident in international fora where the 'global south' claims to feel represented, notably at the summits of the so-called BRICS, attended by Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa, plus six new members and other invited guests. Without being overtly anti-Western, the rhetoric points to elements

⁶ *This needs a source. If it was at an event, you can say: Personal communication with the author.*

⁷ Ferrero-Turrión, R. (2024). The rise of the Global South demands a new consensus [online]. *Política Exterior*, 217, pp. 122-134.

⁸ Patrick, S. and Huggins, A. (2023). The Term "Global South" Is Surging. It Should Be Retired [online]. *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*. [Accessed: 2025]. Available at:

<https://carnegieendowment.org/posts/2023/08/the-term-global-south-is-surging-it-should-be-retired?lang=en>

of "fairness", "balance" and the development of their own financial instruments to compete with the US dollar as the global currency⁹. Recently, Indonesia, which enjoys the largest population and economy in Southeast Asia, became the tenth full member of the BRICS. Jakarta issued a statement saying that its accession to the group marks a commitment to "create a global structure that is more inclusive and fair"¹⁰. There would be nothing negative about this if countries such as China and Russia, whose actions tend to challenge the rules-based world order, such as the militarisation of disputed islands in the South China Sea and the invasion of Ukraine, were not part of the group, as well as their support for all kinds of dictatorships, in the case of Latin America, in Venezuela, Cuba and Nicaragua.

Some authors warn that, in a way, a non-aligned movement is taking shape behind the global south similar to the one that gained strength in the 1960s and 1970s with little significance, since at the end of the Cold War there were clear winners and losers¹¹. In other words, the problem of internal coherence is reborn. Thus, it can be inferred that there is little reason to ensure that such an inconsistent bloc is any more successful today than it was in the past.

"The nations of the Global South do not share a common ideology, and they have a wide variety of domestic institutions and enjoy disparate levels of political freedom and economic development. Some lean toward democratic Western powers, others toward authoritarian Eastern ones. And while many poorer countries may hope to play one side against the other in order to extract benefits for themselves from both, they show no signs of pursuing a coherent, collective strategy designed to benefit them all"¹².

⁹ BRICS (2024). *XVI BRICS Summit. Kazan Declaration: Strengthening multilateralism for just global development and security* [online]. BRICS. [Accessed: 2025]. Available at: https://cdn.brics-russia2024.ru/upload/docs/Kazan_Declaration_FINAL.pdf?1729693488349783

¹⁰ Deutsche Welle (2025). Indonesia officially becomes full member of BRICS bloc [online]. *Deutsche Welle*. [Accessed: 2025]. Available at: <https://www.dw.com/en/indonesia-officially-becomes-full-member-of-brics-bloc/a-71233628>

¹¹ Here should be the citation to those "Some authors" you mention at the beginning of the paragraph.

¹² Friedberg, A. L. (2023). A World of Blocs [online]. *Center for Strategic and International Studies*, The Marshall Papers, p. 11 [Accessed: 2025]. Available at: <https://www.csis.org/analysis/world-blocs>

Back to the West

In the current Latin American landscape, where there is a renewed presence of extra-continental powers (which are those that, by history, culture or geographical position, have no direct connection to the region, such as China, Russia or Iran)¹³, the idea of convincing some countries that they are part of the so-called “global south” is very effective when it comes to improving their relative position, either to secure access to strategic resources or to exploit traditional antagonisms, especially with the United States. Since the interest of these actors transcends trade and investment, the idea of using Latin America as yet another battleground for acquiring greater geopolitical influence is attractive.

This situation has been facilitated by specific commercial, diplomatic, scientific and military initiatives by Beijing and Moscow, and to a lesser extent Tehran, towards the rest of the world¹⁴, but also by the perception that the United States and Europe, i.e. the global West, have turned their backs on regions such as Latin America and Africa, leaving a power vacuum¹⁵.

Because Latin America is not a monolithic region, it is true that extra-continental powers in the global East have found Latin American allies willing to share political agendas and not just economic benefits. In the case of the People's Republic of China, this would be reflected in its open support for the most anti-Western governments of all, or those subject to economic sanctions by the US and diplomatic criticism from democratic European countries. Cuba, Venezuela and Nicaragua have shown themselves to be the most interested in calling for a world without hegemonies or globalisation without values. As Ellis argues:

"China offers options to authoritarian regimes under pressure from the West for their undemocratic behaviour, thereby extending their time in office, and "short-circuiting"

¹³ Toro, J. P. (2023). Las potencias extracontinentales en América Latina, *Política Exterior*, 214, p. 50.

¹⁴ Russia and China have joined similar positions on the creation of international alliances, leaving behind a history of rivalry and conflict. See: Fong, Clara and Mizland, Lindsay (2024). *China and Russia: Exploring Ties Between Two Authoritarian Powers* [online]. Council on Foreign Relations. [Accessed: 2025]. Available at: <https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/china-russia-relationship-xi-putin-taiwan-ukraine>

¹⁵ Islam, S. (2024). *Europe and the Global South. How to gain influence and credibility in a complex world* [online]. Real Instituto Elcano. [Accessed: 2025]. Available at: <https://media.realinstitutoelcano.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/ari50-2024-islam-europe-globalsouth-influence-credibility-complex-world.pdf>

the cycle by which such regimes have historically been driven from power by virtue of the corruption and economic chaos they produced"¹⁶ .

An attitude shared by Russia, whose role in Latin America is often undervalued because of its limited diplomatic resources, almost non-existent economic footprint and declining role as a supplier of military equipment. Nevertheless, Moscow has shown a willingness to show its flag by increasing naval missions to the Caribbean area and providing assistance to troubled partners, which creates two challenges in the short term. As Ortiz warns:

"On the one hand, Russia will continue to promote authoritarianism, seeking to replicate the criminal state model it has so painstakingly helped to build in Venezuela and Nicaragua. On the other hand, it will strive to turn the region into a hostile space for the US and Europe, nurturing actors with anti-Western sentiments, similar to what it does in the Middle East and Africa"¹⁷ .

However, the intensification of conflicts in the international arena, where the global East is acting in an increasingly coordinated manner, is helping to clarify the picture and unmask relations for politico-strategic purposes. Democratic societies around the world have been more openly supportive of Ukraine, whether in South America, Asia-Pacific or Eastern Europe¹⁸ . However, these are the decisive moments where simple economic interests or geopolitical expediency are not enough to establish loyalties in times of definitions¹⁹.

¹⁶ Ellis, E. (2024). Trends and strategic impacts of the People's Republic of China's engagement in Latin America. In: Vera, P. and Ortiz, R. (coord.) (2024). *América Latina en la nueva geopolítica global*. Lima, Centro de Estudios Estratégicos del Ejército del Perú, William J. Perry Center for Hemispheric Defense Studies and Strategic Studies Institute and U.S. Army War College, p. 100.

¹⁷ Ortiz, R. (2024). La estrategia rusa para América Latina después de la guerra de Ucrania. In: Vera, P. and Ortiz, R. (coord.) (2024). *América Latina en la nueva geopolítica global*. Lima, Centro de Estudios Estratégicos del Ejército del Perú, William J. Perry Center for Hemispheric Defense Studies and Strategic Studies Institute and U.S. Army War College, p. 100.

¹⁸ On the contrary, authoritarian countries in the region have given their unrestricted support to Russia. See, for example, Solar, C. (2023). Is Russia's War in Ukraine Aiding the Survival of the Venezuelan Regime? Sanctioned and Isolated States Pull Together [online]. *The RUSI Journal*, 168(1-2), pp. 50-60. [Accessed: 2025]. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/03071847.2023.2195751>

¹⁹ See this point in Schenoni, L., Leiva, D. and Carvalho, T. (2024). The Ukraine War and the Limits of Latin American Fence-Sitting [online]. *Bulletin of Latin American Research*, 43, pp. 300-304. [Accessed: 2025]. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1111/blr.13574>

When it comes to predictors of behaviour, in the end it is "fundamental values and institutions, including beliefs in freedom of expression, personal choice and the degree to which democratic institutions are practised and perceived as legitimate"²⁰. A study by the Real Instituto Elcano showed that, despite China's strong economic penetration in recent decades, it is far from having become a dominant force in the region, especially when investment, import-export and foreign direct investment are added together. In the case of Mexico and Central America, they would find themselves turned towards the United States in all areas, including military and human (migration), while South America would be more "European" in everything but trade²¹.

However, when looking at concrete data, it is clear that the idea of being part of the global south is inconsistent in practice for Latin America. To demonstrate this point, table 1 shows three areas where clear realities can be established: diplomatic, economic and military. For the first, votes in the UN General Assembly were evaluated in divisive cases such as the Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2022, the conflict between Israel and Hamas in 2024 and the political crisis in Venezuela after the presidential elections in 2024. The second asked for priority trading partners, using UN trade and development data from 2023. For the third, information was gathered on military trade, since the purchase of weapons systems implies a prior political relationship, according to the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute database. In addition, participation in combined military exercises was surveyed on the basis of open sources. Regarding military exercises, it was recorded whether the countries carry out these manoeuvres with US Southern Command forces. In the case of Mexico and Cuba, their participation in exercises with the Northern Command was considered.

Scope	Diplomat			Economic		Military	
	Ukraine	Israel-Hamas	Venezuela	Business partner	Foreign investment	Supplier	Exercises
Argentina	✓	✗	✓	Brazil	USA. USA.	USA. USA.	USA. USA.
Bolivia	✗	✗	✗	Brazil	China	China	-

²⁰ Foa, R. et al. (2022). *A World Divided: Russia, China and the West* [online]. Bennett Institute for Public Policy, University of Cambridge. [Accessed: 2025]. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.17863/CAM.90281>.

²¹ Malamud, C., Ruiz, J. J. and Talvi, E. (eds.) (2023). *Why does Latin America matter?* Real Instituto Elcano, Report 32, p. 107.

Brazil	✓	✓	✗	China	USA. USA.	USA. USA.	USA. USA.
Colombia	✓	✓	✗	USA. USA.	USA. USA.	USA. USA.	USA. USA.
Costa Rica	✓	✓	✓	USA. USA.	USA. USA.	USA. USA.	USA. USA.
Chile	✓	✓	✓	China	Canada	USA. USA.	USA. USA.
Cuba	✗	✓	-	Canada	Venezuela	Russia	-
Ecuador	✓	✗	✓	USA. USA.	USA. USA.	USA. USA.	USA. USA.
El Salvador	✓	✓	✓	USA. USA.	USA. USA.	USA. USA.	USA. USA.
Guatemala	✓	✗	✓	USA. USA.	USA. USA.	USA. USA.	USA. USA.
Honduras	✓	✓	✗	USA. USA.	USA. USA.	USA. USA.	USA. USA.
Mexico	✓	✓	Absent	USA. USA.	USA. USA.	USA. USA.	USA. USA.
Nicaragua	✗	✓	-	USA. USA.	Venezuela	Russia	-
Paraguay	✓	✗	✓	Argentina	Brazil	USA. USA.	USA. USA.
Panama	✓	✗	✓	China	USA. USA.	USA. USA.	USA. USA.
Peru	✓	✓	✓	China	USA. USA.	USA. USA.	USA. USA.
Dom. Rep.	✓	✗	✓	USA. USA.	USA. USA.	USA. USA.	USA. USA.
Uruguay	✓	✗	✓	Brazil	USA. USA.	USA. USA.	USA. USA.
Venezuela	-	-	Absent	India	China	Iran	-

Table 1. Diplomatic, economic and military relations between Latin American countries.

Diplomatic sources:

1) Aggression against Ukraine: Resolution /RES/ES11/1 adopted by the General Assembly. Available at <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/3959039?ln=es>;

2) Advisory Opinion of the International Court of Justice on the Legal Consequences Arising from Israeli Policies and Practices in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and from the Illegality of the Continued Israeli Presence in the Occupied Palestinian Territory: Resolution A/RES/ES-10/24 adopted by the General Assembly. Available at <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/4061432?ln=es>;

3) Voting in the Organisation of American States to demand that the Venezuelan government hand over the voting records of the 28 July 2024 elections. *Note:* Venezuela cannot vote in the UN General Assembly due to its excessive debt to the organisation. Available at: <https://www.un.org/es/ga/about/art19.shtml>.

Economic sources:

- 1) Main trading partner, available at: <https://unctadstat.unctad.org/CountryProfile/en-GB/index.html>;
- 2) Main individual foreign investor (data not provided by the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela since 2022). Available at: <https://www.bcra.gob.ar/Pdfs/PublicacionesEstadisticas/informe-inversion-extranjera-directa-4TRIM-2023.pdf>;
<https://www.investchile.gob.cl/wp-content/uploads/2024/12/FDI-Report-eng-2023.pdf>;
https://www.banrep.gov.co/sites/default/files/nota_de_prensa_inversion_directa.pdf;
https://www.banrep.gov.co/sites/default/files/nota_de_prensa_inversion_directa.pdf;
<https://mundominero.com.ec/analisis-inversion-extranjera-ecuador-2023/>; <https://banguat.gob.gt/page/ied-ano-2023>;
www.mic.gov.py/empresarios-brasilenos-exploran-oportunidades-de-inversion-en-paraguay/#:~:text=Seg%C3%BAAn%20datos%20del%20Banco%20Central,inversiones%20destinadas%20a%20empresas%20maquiladoras; <https://www.laestrella.com.pa/economia/inec-inversion-extranjera-directa-en-panama-sube-35-en-2023-y-cae-para-la-cepal-un-22-FJ9795799>; <https://www.investinperu.pe/es/invertir/inversion-extranjera/inversion-extranjera-directa#:~:text=Reino%20Unido%2C%20Espa%C3%B1a%2C%20Chile%20y,saldo%20a%20diciembre%20de%202023>; <https://www.bancentral.gov.do/a/d/5862-economia-dominicana-registra-expansion-interanual-de-24--en-enerodiciemb>

Military sources:

Major arms supplier, available at: <https://armstransfers.sipri.org/ArmsTransfer/CSVResult>. Conducts combined military exercises with the US Southern Command: <https://www.southcom.mil/>.

Given the above, it is very difficult to claim that Latin American countries are fully committed to the so-called global south when their diplomatic, economic and security orientations have a strong US accent. This does not stop presidents such as Brazil's Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva from suggesting that “the global south is becoming an inescapable part of the solution to the main crises afflicting the planet”²² ; Chile's Gabriel Boric from adding that 'we need a united voice from Latin America; we need more joint work from the global south’²³ , and Colombia's Gustavo Petro and Peru's Dina Boluarte from invoking the concept in an attempt to situate themselves in the world. Even veteran Brazilian minister and current Lula's chief diplomatic advisor, Celso Amorim, claimed that, upon assuming his first presidency in 2003, Brazil had a definite “southern” approach to the “global south” when the concept was not yet in common use.

²² Presidency of the Republic of Brazil (2024). Lula: Development can no longer be the privilege of a few [online]. *Presidency of the Republic of Brazil*. [Accessed: 2025]. Available at: <https://www.gov.br/planalto/es/ultimas-noticias/2024/02/lula-desenvolvimento-nao-pode-continuar-sendo-privilegio-de-poucos>

²³ Government of Chile (2022). President Gabriel Boric Font addresses the 77th session of the United Nations General Assembly [online]. *Press Office of the Presidency of Chile*. [Accessed: 2025]. Available at: <https://prensa.presidencia.cl/comunicado.aspx?id=201143>

It can be agreed, then, that the concept is a slogan that if it no longer obeys geography (China and India are in the northern hemisphere), neither does it obey the diplomatic, political and security realities of the countries. It therefore has an obvious political purpose, especially for those who want to position themselves as part of it, because it does not function as an accurate description of the world²⁴. Comfort suggests that decision-makers use the concept with caution:

"While many Western policy-makers believe they should treat the non-Western world as a whole without variation, they should use the phrase 'global south' with particular care. The specific dynamics within and between the countries of Africa, Asia and Latin America will shape their political futures more than their identity as a group. The West must see these states for what they are, not fall into the fallacy that they operate geopolitically as a single entity²⁵ .

Recovering ground

If some Latin American countries want to stop being "relegated", as proposed²⁶ , and acquire a certain prominence on the basis of their economic performance, their availability of critical raw materials or their maritime projection, they have a better chance of doing so if they manage to escape the conceptual trap of the global South and assume that they are closer to the global West than they think, given that this is where their interests lie, but also shared values that include respect for international norms. In other words, they must recognise, and make known, where they are really located on the geopolitical spectrum and not where they pretend to be.

In an era of competition and conflict between great powers, trying to be neutral about who one trades with, who one buys arms from or which international fora one participates in is becoming increasingly difficult. Nor is embracing partners that share only an incomplete level of development, colonial pasts or are revisionist powers a guarantee of equity and justice. If Latin American countries have any acumen, they should identify those actors

²⁴ Nye Jr, J. (2023). What is the Global South? [online]. *Project Syndicate*. [Accessed: 2025]. Available at: <https://www.project-syndicate.org/commentary/global-south-is-a-misleading-term-by-joseph-s-nye-2023-11/spanish>

²⁵ Comfort, E. (2024). The Trouble with the "Global South" [online]. *Foreign Affairs* [Accessed: 2025]. Available at: <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/world/trouble-global-south>

²⁶ Lagos, R., Castañeda, J. G. and Aguilar, H. (2022). *La nueva soledad de América Latina*. Debate.

both within and outside the region for whom these concepts of the global south or non-alignment are functional to maximise their influence and who, at the same time, question the United States and Europe by painting them as decadent.

For the global West, in turn, it would be appropriate to understand that, in the race to attract more countries into its orbit, it is necessary to disarm concepts that lend themselves to use by its rivals by contrasting them with data²⁷. In this way, they increase democracies' chances of survival, better secure access to critical resources and gain greater security. It is therefore desirable to continue to develop incentives that demonstrate that there are greater benefits outside than within the global south, such as infrastructure-building initiatives like the EU's Global Gateway and the G7's Build Back Better World.

In the same vein, the association agreement reached between the EU and the Southern Common Market (MERCOSUR, which includes Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay and Uruguay), after two decades of negotiations, is the kind of concrete measure that can bring Latin American countries closer to their historical partners.

Contrary to predictions, before taking office, the incoming administration of Donald J. Trump made important gestures to show its interest in the region, such as quickly announcing the names of future ambassadors to Argentina, Mexico, Colombia and Chile, probably the fastest nominations in living memory. Officials with extensive experience in Latin America were also appointed to important posts, such as Secretary of State Marco Rubio and State Department special envoy Mauricio Claver-Carone, both of Cuban descent.

The latter could be the first sign that the US will seek to contain China's influence in the region, along with that of Russia and Iran, and bring the countries in its orbit closer together again, even extending the trade war against Beijing to the Western hemisphere. As of now, Trump has a potential partner in South America in the libertarian Javier Milei, the Argentine president who, in just one year in office, has restored his country's relations with Washington, Brussels and Israel. The Salvadoran president, Nayib Bukele, seems another possible interlocutor, but for Central America. There will also be general elections in Chile in 2025, and if the centre-right wins, there could be a new rapprochement.

²⁷ Patrick, S. and Huggins, A. *Op. cit.*

It is true that Latin America is facing many internal challenges at the moment, from the expansion of organised crime to low economic growth rates. The political fragmentation that is reflected in the inoperability of its regional institutions is not auspicious either. However, the hope that it will be able to disengage for much longer from the current geopolitical competition is not the same as a positioning strategy. If one assumes that it is just "a place where very diverse people have to coexist and prosper"²⁸, then the question is where it is most likely to manage that coexistence and prosperity. Closer to open societies and economies, which are united by a common trunk and have already travelled the road to development or joining forces with a motley group of countries whose "global south" brand serves to camouflage pretended leaderships, geographical inconsistencies and sow confusion. Latin America is closer to the West in practice, and it is time for it to take its place in a positive way in a riskier world where alliances are key, something that the global East sometimes seems to understand better.

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²⁸ Granés, C. *American Delirium. A cultural and political history of Latin America*. Bogotá: Penguin Random House, p. 517.