



[Who Will Save the Liberal World Order?](#)

The Rediscovery of Latin America

Europe's Partner for Global Governance?

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While the international order is increasingly characterised by new competition between liberal economic and societal systems on the one hand and authoritarian, state-capitalist models on the other, Latin America is becoming more and more a focus of German and European foreign policy. China's increasingly confident claim to global leadership and the withdrawal of the US as guarantor of an international order influenced by Western values are leading many to recall a sub-continent which had previously led a shadowy existence in international politics, but which in fact plays a central role in the continued existence of a liberal-democratic multilateral world order.

Upheaval in the World Order

Almost three decades after the end of the Cold War, the supposed “end of history”,¹ it is becoming increasingly clear that the liberal economic and societal model shaped by the West has not established itself as the global standard. On the contrary, experts of international politics have, in various studies, noted a “crisis of democracy”² and growing international influence of authoritarian actors. Many observers believe that this is closely related to the rise of China which, because of its economic strength and developmental progress, challenges the Western model of order, and presents itself as a good example in several regions of the world. At the same time, disunity in Europe due to Brexit, the unsolved challenges of flight and migration, and the retreat of the former protector of the Western community of democracy and values suggest a decline of the so-called West. Whether this “West” is defined militarily, according to NATO membership, or historico-culturally, in the sense of controversial US political scientist Samuel Huntington³, the concept of the West is of little use in coping with the current challenges of world politics, which are reflected in contrasting principles and models of order: democracy versus autocracy, free trade versus protectionism, and multilateralism versus unilateralism.

If Germany and Europe want their common system of values based on democracy and human rights and a liberal, sustainable economic system to be accepted as a global standard, they will only succeed by going beyond the traditional framework of the so-called West to find international allies. Democracies in the Asia-Pacific region (especially Japan and South Korea) must be involved in the shaping of a global alliance of values championing democracy, free trade, and multilateralism, as must the greater part of Latin American countries. The community of culture and values shared by Europe and Latin America – so often invoked in soapbox speeches and in various Latin America strategies of years past – must urgently be given life. The stakes are no less than the survival of our liberal-democratic societal system in a multipolar world. Of course, close relations with the US must be cultivated particularly intensively, especially in times of a US president acting unilaterally and without regard for international obligations and partnerships. However, President Trump's America First policy provides an opportunity to systematically deepen relationships with other regions and countries that consider themselves part of a free, democratic community of values.

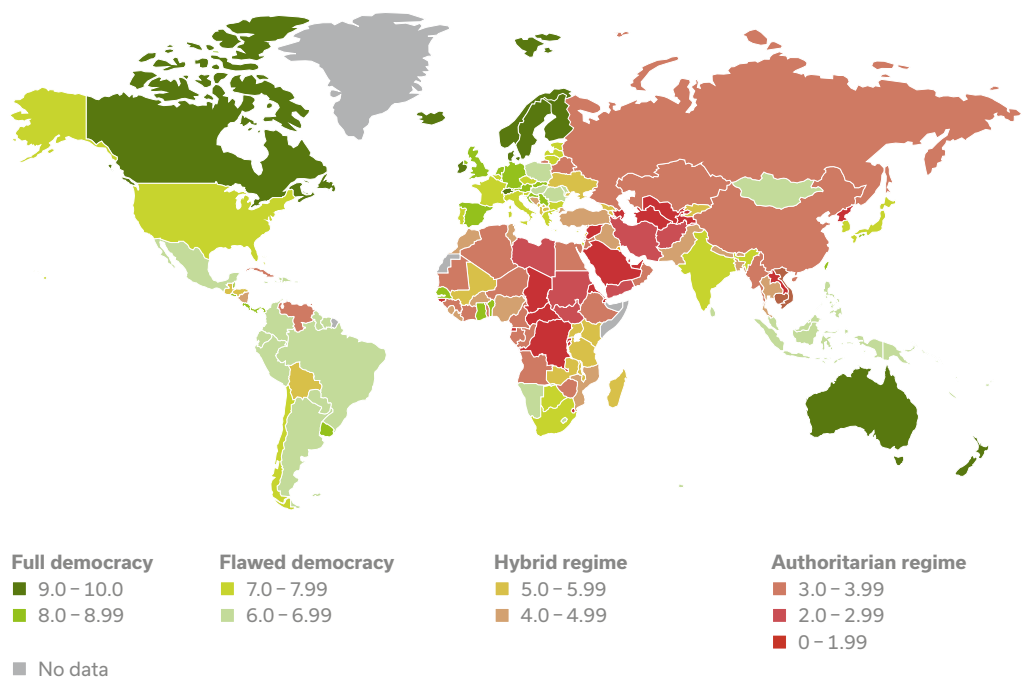
Latin America – a Natural Partner Region for Europe

A glance at the world map in the 2017 Democracy Index clearly shows why most Latin American countries are important components of this global alliance of values championing liberty and democracy, and should be involved as such. Despite all the difficulties and challenges that Latin American democracies face, the sub-continent is the most democratic region on earth after Europe and North America. While Cuba and more recently Venezuela and Nicaragua can be classified as dictatorships, the region is otherwise characterised by democracies, whether deficient or well-developed. Already today, the EU and most Latin American nations share the conviction in multilateral fora such as the United Nations (UN) that democratic governance and open markets are the basic prerequisite for achieving the sustainable development goals agreed upon in Agenda 2030. These joint

efforts need to be further strengthened and coordinated. Together, European states (the EU) and Latin American and Caribbean states (CELAC)⁴ form a critical mass to promote common values and interests at a global level. Taken together, the two regions have a population of more than one billion, producing more than 40 per cent of the gross world product. With their 61 states, the EU and CELAC together account for almost one third of all UN members.

Economically, the EU and Latin America are closely intertwined. There are trade agreements with 26 of the 33 CELAC states. The EU is Latin America's second-largest trade partner, its largest investor, and its most important partner in development cooperation. Liberalisation of bi-regional trade flows is well advanced. There are free trade agreements with Mexico and Chile which have just been or will soon be updated. There are other agreements with Columbia, Peru, and Ecuador. Negotiations

Fig. 1: Democracy Index 2017 (Scale by Rank Classes)



Source: Own illustration based on The Economist Intelligence Unit, in: <http://bit.ly/2LbQLd8> [11 Dec 2018].



Soy for China? As part of the “New Silk Road”, China has also become one of the most important investors and lenders for Latin America. [Source: © Paulo Whitaker, Reuters.](#)

with MERCOSUR (Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay, Uruguay) resumed in 2016 after years of stagnation, and are far along. However, the talks have stalled again, and the successful conclusion of the talks under the Argentinian presidency of the G20 were not accomplished before the elections in Brazil in October 2018. Given the protectionist policy of US President Trump, an agreement with MERCOSUR would be not only symbolic, but also of great strategic significance. The value of this trade agreement would be eight times

that of the one concluded with Canada (CETA) and four times that of the most recent agreement with Japan, which is currently the EU’s largest. At the same time, the EU’s market position would be strengthened at a moment when it was displaced as MERCOSUR’s most important trading partner by China.⁵ In addition to MERCOSUR, the Pacific Alliance (Chile, Columbia, Mexico, and Peru), founded in 2011, is also gaining in importance. It is a regional integration alliance that accounts for 34 per cent of the Latin



Other international players have long since recognised Latin America's strategic significance.

It appears that German foreign policy has recognised the signs of the times and is tentatively trying to awaken relations with Latin America from the slumber of the last two decades. Federal Chancellor Angela Merkel's trip to Latin America and the publicly celebrated solidarity with Mexico and Argentina ahead of the 2017 G20 summit were clearly visible signals. But foreign policymakers in the German parliament are also showing greatly increased interest in Latin America, as evidenced by an increase in contacts and bilateral working visits. The German Federal Foreign Office is using the 250-year anniversary of the birth of the famous naturalist and Latin America researcher Alexander von Humboldt as an opportunity to intensively promote the expansion of German-Latin American relations during 2019, which will be celebrated in Germany as the year of Humboldt. In view of the current international challenges, the European External Action Service (EEAS) has also initiated an intensive dialogue with European partners, which is to result in a new EU-Latin America position paper. However, other international players have long since recognised the region's strategic significance.

Latin America and the Return of Geopolitics

The history of Latin America is characterised by domination by external powers. 300 years of European colonial rule were followed by 200 years of US dominance, in the north. The Monroe Doctrine of 1823 clearly formulated the United States' claim to leadership of both Americas, and until the end of the Cold War, many overt and covert interventions were made to retain the Latin American states within the US sphere of influence. At the same time, the US massively expanded its economic clout in the region. The terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001 meant a deep cut in US foreign policy. In

American-Caribbean region's gross domestic product, 57 per cent of its overall trade volume, and 41.5 per cent of its foreign investment. At a meeting in Brussels in July 2018, the foreign ministers of the EU member states and those of the Pacific Alliance agreed to work more closely together and, in a final declaration, emphasised their joint commitment to democracy, human rights, the rule of law, and a rule-based liberal international trade and financial system.

the struggle against international Islamist terrorism and the “Axis of Evil”, Latin America was not particularly important to the US. The phase of socialist governments in Latin America – particularly linked to the presidencies of Hugo Chávez in Venezuela, Lula da Silva in Brazil, and the Kirchners in Argentina – deepened the estrangement on both sides. The ALBA (*Alianza Bolivariana para los Pueblos de Nuestra América*) project, financed by Venezuelan oil, aimed to form a bloc of socialist nations under the leadership of Venezuela and Cuba, opposing US influence and its attempts to create a Pan-American free trade zone (*Area de Libre Comercio de Las Americas*, or ALCA).⁶ Even under the Obama administration, Latin America was not a focus of US foreign relations, despite its relaxing of the restrictive anti-Castro policy and Obama’s celebrated visit to Havana at the end of his presidency. The crude interactions of his successor with Latin American neighbours and the ruthless assertion of American interests that is President Trump’s America First policy are widening the chasm.

While President Trump denigrates all immigrants as “bad hombres” and has declared that the construction of a wall along the Mexican border and a renegotiation of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) are core issues of his Latin American policy, other actors, above all China, are filling the vacuum that has arisen. The economic and political penetration of the continent goes hand in hand. Political commentators are already referring to Latin America’s shift “from America’s back yard to China’s front yard”.⁷ China has become the most important trading partner of Argentina, Brazil, Chile, and Peru, as well as the primary creditor of Brazil, Venezuela, and Ecuador. The volume of trade between Latin America and China in 2017 was almost 260 billion US dollars – more than twenty times as much as at the turn of the millennium. As part of the “New Silk Road”, China has also become one of the most important investors and lenders for Latin America. The most important recipients of large-scale Chinese loans have so far been Venezuela, Argentina, Brazil, and Ecuador. During the 2015

China-CELAC Forum, Chinese President Xi Jinping announced that China would invest 250 billion US dollars in Latin America over the following decade. The primary fields of investment are oil and natural gas extraction; mining; large-scale energy, infrastructure, and transport projects; and, increasingly, the agricultural sector, which is intended to secure China’s supply of raw materials and agricultural goods, especially copper, iron ore, soy, and beef. Another concern is access to and control of trade routes and logistics, as the plans for an interoceanic railway from the Pacific to the Atlantic, or the much-discussed interoceanic canal through Nicaragua show. It is currently uncertain whether a second canal will in fact be built between the Atlantic and the Pacific – this time under Chinese leadership. Even before the protests against the Ortega clan and the crisis in Nicaragua, the major project stagnated shortly after the official start of construction, in 2014. Critics had long doubted its profitability and feasibility because of the immense investments involved and the incalculable environmental damage risked. Nevertheless, it is to be assumed that China will continue to consider the option of a second canal as a strategic option for the future.

The economic partnership of Latin American countries with China comes with dependencies.

Latin American governments view China’s increasing economic influence, and the associated dependencies created, with ambivalence. For instance, the partnership with China is an opportunity to diversify foreign trade and to emancipate from the US, whose traditional political and economic dominance has, in the view of many such governments, grown tiresome. Additionally, Chinese loans offer good alternatives, particularly to those governments denied financing from credit markets dominated by the US and Europe. This was especially true of countries that had committed

themselves to the “Socialism of the 21st century” model propagated by Hugo Chávez. China has loaned more than 60 billion US dollars to Venezuela in the past few years, thus securing itself access to oil reserves. The loans are repaid in oil deliveries. In July 2018, it was discovered that the China Development Bank would grant the Venezuelan state oil company, PDVSA, a loan of five billion US dollars to boost oil production. China has thus become the primary financier of a government that not only transformed the country into a dictatorship, but also plunged it into an economic and humanitarian crisis that has since noticeably destabilised neighbouring states.

While Chinese loans mean breathing space for the Maduro regime before the impending state bankruptcy, other governments are trying to extract themselves from the Chinese grip they have found themselves in since accepting their loans. In Ecuador, the government of President Lenín Moreno is busy reviewing the unfavourable agreements that the previous government, under President Rafael Correa, concluded with China. These agreements pledged most of Ecuadorian oil production to China for the next few years. In Argentina, too, President Mauricio Macri pledged before taking office in 2015 that he would subject the contracts the Kirchner government had concluded with China to a detailed review, and that, among other things, a megaproject to build two dams on the Santa Cruz River in Patagonia would be scrapped. However, when the Chinese lenders threatened to withdraw from other financing pledges should he indeed make good on his word, Macri retracted his announcement.

Dependence on Chinese loans and trading conditions is especially problematic for the region’s smaller countries. The loans can easily lead to political dependence and even threaten national sovereignty. There has so far been no situation in Latin America like that of Sri Lanka, where in 2017, following severe difficulties in repaying Chinese loans, the government, in return for debt relief, ceded the rights to use the port of Hambantota to China for 99 years.⁸ However,

China’s economic pressure and political influence is already clearly visible, for instance in the implementation of the “One China” policy in Central America. Panama ended years of diplomatic relations with Taiwan last year, instead sending a diplomat to Beijing, and El Salvador followed suit this year. Costa Rica had already taken this step in 2007. According to media reports, the expansion of the Pacific port of La Unión played an important role in El Salvador’s decision. After Taiwan declined the extent of financial involvement desired, China is now taking its place. In Panama, too, a railway project supported by Chinese investments in the amount of five billion US dollars is currently being considered. Due to its geographical location and its canal, Panama is of special geopolitical interest. It was the first Latin American country to officially join the Silk Road Initiative, doing so a few months after it established diplomatic relations in mid-2017. Panama has concluded many intergovernmental agreements with China as part of the initiative; a free trade agreement is now also under negotiation. Critics accuse China of granting targeted loans in Central America in a manner calculated to create dependencies, and in the long-run, in order to control critical, geostrategic positions and sea routes. Strategists in the US Defense Department therefore warn that China is not just pursuing trade policy goals, but making long-term plans to establish naval bases in the Western hemisphere.⁹ Currently, however, there are no known security or defence policy cooperation efforts between China and Latin America, apart from support of the UN mission to stabilise Haiti and the sale of military technology on a small scale.¹⁰

What is clearly visible, however, is China’s effort to gain influence by means of soft power, so as to bind in future decision-makers.¹¹ Thousands of students study Chinese language and culture at around 40 Confucius Institutes in the Latin American region. In addition, China provides thousands of scholarships for study and further education in China. Invitations are most often issued to government representatives, members of political parties, and young leaders from all

areas of society. At the second China-CELAC Forum in January 2018 in Santiago de Chile, Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi announced a further 6,000 government scholarships, and 600 invitations for Latin American politicians to come to China.

Russia's geostrategic involvement in Latin America is aimed at the construction of a new military base in the Western hemisphere.

Russia is another player that is increasing its involvement in Latin America. President Putin made particularly good use of the phase of socialist governments during the 2000s to gain political influence in what is considered “America’s back yard” and to demonstrate Russia’s ability to act globally. Economically, however, Russia plays no significant role in the region as a whole, and lags far behind the US, China, and Europe in foreign trade, lending, and investment. However, targeted cooperation is taking place in the energy and defence sectors. For Venezuela in particular, Russia, alongside China, is an important international ally. Russia supports the Maduro regime with preferential loans and generous debt restructuring in order to secure a strategic position in the country with the world’s largest proven oil reserves. The cooperation between *Rosneft*, a Russian state-controlled energy company, and its Venezuelan counterpart, PDVSA, plays a central role in this. According to media reports, *Rosneft* is said to have granted the state-owned oil company in Caracas advance payments for oil deliveries amounting to six billion US dollars between 2015 and 2017. As security against default, *Rosneft* was apparently promised shares of large-scale production projects and facilities.¹² Given the performance of the Russian economy, investments in Venezuela are a risky bet on the future; they also explain why Russia can have no interest in the fall of

the Maduro regime. Russia has also traditionally maintained close relations with Cuba and Nicaragua, and attracted attention in the last two years with the sale of 50 tanks to the Ortega government, as well as the opening of a training centre in Nicaragua to combat drug trafficking. According to official sources, the centre will train Central American security forces in the fight against drug cartels. Russian arms supplies to the region and the new security cooperation in Central America are a thorn in the side of US security experts. Relations with Cuba have also recently been intensified anew. Moscow abated a large part of Cuba’s debts, modernised the Cuban military, and picks up the tab for ever-smaller oil deliveries from Venezuela. Russian foreign policy projection in Latin America and its demonstrative challenge to the US in the latter’s own sphere of influence serves President Putin’s intention of repositioning Russia as the successor to the Soviet Union and prominent world power. The investment in Venezuela is aimed at enhancing Russia’s own position on the global energy market and securing access to energy resources. The investments also have a geostrategic dimension if they give rise to an opportunity to establish a new military base in the Western hemisphere.

However, since Russia, unlike China and the US, does not have the economic and military means of promoting its interests more prominently throughout the region, it is investing more heavily in other means of influence. The central instrument is the Spanish-language programme of the television channel Russia Today, which is much more professional than other international studios and extremely popular. President Trump’s positions and comments towards the United States’ Latin American neighbours also offer the ideal context in which to discredit the model of liberal democracy and promote Russia’s authoritarian state model as an alternative, or at least to generate understanding and sympathy for Russian interests. Fears of Russian intervention in Latin American political contests, stoked by Putin critics following the 2016 US presidential election, have so far remained unfounded. Opposition to Russia, comparable

to that existent in many European countries, cannot be detected in Latin America because the geographical distances mean that Russia is scarcely perceived as an aggressor, but instead as an important international player that is helpful as a counterbalance to the hegemon in the north. The authoritarian state model, for which Russia and China stand, in their distinct versions, is not intensively scrutinised, either in the Latin American public sphere, or within government circles.

Principles and Fields of Action of a Privileged Partnership

If Latin American democracies are to be won as partners in an alliance of values that champions a liberal world order, German and European decision-makers should abandon outdated concepts and the lip service of the past few years. The declaration of belief in a “European-Latin American family of values”, found in so many papers on Latin America, loses all meaning if it leads to no specific cooperation initiatives. The same can be said of the frequently used term “strategic partnership”¹³ when there is no discernible strategy. The concept of a strategic partnership between the EU and Latin America, introduced by the EU Commission in 2005, still lacks a realistic, sufficiently concrete strategy for the EU’s relations with Latin America. Political dialogue and economic cooperation do not complement each other, but are at times diametrically opposed, as the current example of EU-MERCOSUR negotiations shows. In this case, the interests of the European agricultural lobby stand in the way of declarations of political will for deepened cooperation. There has been no substantial deepening of EU-Latin America relations since 2005.

The responsibility for this state of affairs, however, lies on both sides of the Atlantic. Many Latin American governments still have too little understanding of their own role in international politics, the advantages of regional cooperation, and the need to assume international responsibility. Experience has shown that the young nation states of Latin America have serious difficulties

with substantial regional integration, which would imply giving up national sovereignty in certain policy areas. The history of regional integration in Latin America is therefore also a history of failure, as the large number of regional organisations that exist on paper only, but no longer have any political relevance, shows. Against this background, it would be desirable for organisations such as MERCOSUR and the Pacific Alliance to be further developed and given political added value that exceeds the sum of their members. Coordination among Latin American states in multilateral fora could be improved. For instance, G20 states Argentina, Brazil, and Mexico rarely coordinate their efforts to represent their interests in that forum together. Greater cooperation among Latin American democracies, combined with a more active assumption of their responsibility in global challenges would not only enhance the region’s negotiating power at the global level, but would also help it to be perceived by Europe as an attractive partner to be met on an equal footing.

In this context, the term “privileged partnership”¹⁴ could help make relations with Latin American partner states more realistic and more concrete. The basis for the privilege of reciprocal preferential treatment that the term implies would be a joint declaration of commitment to a democratic and free economic and social order in the respective countries, and an obligation to jointly defend such an order at the international level. The content and goals of a European-Latin American community of values and interests would have to be defined and negotiated on equal footing. An appropriation of Latin America for European interests under the guise of a community of values, such as has happened in the past, would be counterproductive. This also applies to the international roles of China and Russia, which are not nearly as negatively judged in Latin America as they are in Europe. While most of the region’s countries feel a deep bond to the democratic European state model and reject the authoritarian counter-model, they still view states such as China, Russia, Iran, and Turkey under Erdoğan’s government as trade and investment partners that make an

important contribution to the diversification of Latin America's own foreign trade relations. The demonstrative restraint of Latin American countries towards the sanctions imposed by the US and the EU on Russia clearly showed that these governments are not willing to automatically make European and US interests and conflicts their own.

The most important premise of a privileged partnership must be the recognition of the sovereignty and the equal consideration of the interests of the Latin American countries.

The term “West” is also unhelpful in this context because its most prominent representatives – the US and Europe – are viewed in Latin America as themselves perpetrators of oppression and paternalism. Secondly, the term continues the logic of the Cold War, in which Latin America was more an arena and a political football in and with which geopolitical conflicts were carried out rather than a true partner. And thirdly, the term implies a demarcation of the West from the East, which Latin American Pacific states in particular are quite open to. Nor does the concept of “the West” help involve democratic partner states in the Asian-Pacific area, such as Japan and South Korea, which are urgently needed as partners in a democratic and free alliance of values.

The most important premise of a privileged partnership must therefore be the recognition of the sovereignty and an equal consideration of the interests of Latin American countries. Many in Latin America would certainly be sympathetic to the concept of an alliance championing the values of freedom and democracy, which would also be open for partners in the Asia-Pacific area. The idea of a return to a Western, Atlantic world order, dominated by the US and Europe is, on the other hand, far less attractive from a Latin American perspective.

A privileged partnership would also mean that the challenges to democracy and freedom in the countries of both regions would be addressed openly, and without moral finger-pointing. Social inequality, corruption, and impunity are well-known deficits in many Latin American countries and thus important fields for cooperation. Europe also finds itself increasingly





Real socialism: Despite Russian investments, the situation in Venezuela is disastrous. Source: © Carlos Garcia Rawlins, Reuters.

confronted with populist and authoritarian tendencies that involve the curtailment of democratic institutions and the rule of law. An open dialogue about common challenges and existing deficits in the free democratic order in both regions, as well as cooperation in developing responses, is an important element of the European-Latin American partnership. The political,

economic, and humanitarian crisis in Venezuela has special significance here, since it has come to threaten the stability of the entire region. The repression of authoritarian tendencies and containment of existing dictatorships is a joint Latin American-European task.

The German membership in the 2019 / 2020 UN Security Council should be used to advance the interests of its Latin American partners.

A central field of action is European-Latin American cooperation in multilateral fora. The close cooperation between Germany and Argentina during the handover of the G20 presidency was a good example of what is possible. Coordination and cooperation in UN bodies should be further expanded. A positive example of such coordination is the joint involvement in the United Nations Climate Change conferences, in which Europe and Latin America are pulling in the same direction. Without the commitment of Mexico, and its then Secretary of Foreign Affairs, Patricia Espinosa – now Secretary General of the UN Climate Secretariat –, the Paris Climate Agreement would scarcely have been conceivable. Germany's membership of the UN Security Council in 2019 / 2020 should be used to advance the interests of its Latin American partners. The same is true of the reform debate on the UN Security Council, in which Germany and Europe should support greater consideration being given to Latin America. In the UN Human Rights Council, US disengagement makes close cooperation between Latin American and European democracies especially important, so as to effectively counter the practiced interplay of authoritarian countries in that body. International financial institutions, especially the IMF and the World Bank, also play a special role, since several Latin American partner countries view them sceptically due to their American-European dominance. Enhancing the Latin American role in both organisations could increase the acceptance and effectiveness of both institutions in the region and balance out the role of alternative creditors. An organisation that is given little attention in the debate over multilateral fora is the OECD, which has global significance because of its focus on market-oriented democracy. Following Mexico and

Chile, Columbia is now also a member of the club. Costa Rica is still in accession negotiations, and Brazil, Argentina, and Peru have initiated reform processes as part of a cooperation programme intended to bring them closer to the Organisation. The accession efforts on the part of Latin American countries and the associated internal reform processes should be supported by Germany and Europe.

Another central field of action remains economic integration with and in Latin America; this should continue to be a top priority for the EU-Latin America agenda. The updating of association agreements with Chile and Mexico is on the right track. The association agreement negotiations with MERCOSUR (Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay, and Uruguay) are well-advanced, but have stalled on what had been thought to be the home stretch, partly because of concerns on the part of individual EU countries about the impact on the domestic agricultural sector. Given the protectionist tendencies in world trade, a breakthrough in the negotiations would be an important political signal for free and fair trade, and should absolutely be supported by Germany.

Trade and investment relations show Germany and Europe to be in competition with China and other players. References to the authoritarian character of Chinese state capitalism and unfair practices in implementing large-scale infrastructure projects and lending are often accurate, but not very helpful. Rather, it is a question of turning words into deeds, proving that economic relations with Europe are in fact more sustainable and can be designed to produce long-term win-win situations. The fact that a German consortium was able to win a large-scale project to extract lithium¹⁵, the raw material of the future, in Bolivia in 2018 was also because the investment agreement provided for the establishment of local industry and a value-added chain, training programmes, jobs, and high environmental and social standards. Many Latin American countries have come to be critical of the frequent violations of just such standards during the course of large-scale Chinese raw material extraction and infrastructure projects. Europeans should aggressively

promote the model of sustainable raw material partnerships and cooperation in building local industry and service economies. European support for the sustainable further development of Latin American commodity economies would enhance both Europe's competitive position and its political credibility in Latin America. Germany could assume an important role here, especially in the fields of renewable energies and environmental technology.

An important and inadequately addressed field of action is the entire area of digitalisation, including the debate about artificial intelligence, cyber security, big data and data protection, electronic trade, and Industry 4.0. China's digital Silk Road extends to Europe and Latin America. While the standards of the digital world order for search engines (Google and Baidu), social networks (Facebook and Tencent), and marketplaces (Amazon and Alibaba) are being set by Chinese and American internet giants, Europe and Latin America largely find themselves watching from the sidelines. Europe and Latin America should thus urgently develop and defend common positions during negotiations concerning global regulations for digital trade, taxation of digital corporations, and cyber security in such venues as the WTO, the G20, and the UN's Internet Governance Forum (IGF). However, this debate is still in its infancy in European-Latin American relations.

Ignoring the world's most democratic region after Europe and North America would be a disastrous miscalculation.

Conclusion

The world order is in a state of turmoil characterised by contrary tendencies. The model of liberal democracy is being challenged by authoritarian state models. China and Russia

are only the most visible players. The world trade order is marked by the conflict between protectionism and free trade. The codifying of international policy by multilateral institutions is being challenged by increasingly unilateral action on the part of important international players. Against this backdrop, Germany and Europe should therefore work towards an international alliance of values that supports a world order based on freedom and democracy. The "alliance for multilateralism"¹⁶ initiative, proposed by German Foreign Minister Heiko Maas, is therefore a move in the right direction, but has two decisive weaknesses. The first is that, despite all the challenges and irritations that President Trump brings to the transatlantic relationship, such an alliance must not be directed against the US, but must do everything in its power to retain the US as a central partner. The second is that the democracies of Latin America must be more prominently involved in the alliance as elementary components and equal partners. When Canadian Foreign Affairs Minister Chrystia Freeland emphasises that it is time for liberal democracies to oppose the increasingly authoritarian tendencies in the world,¹⁷ it would be a fatal miscalculation to leave Latin America out of this mission, since, despite all the shortcomings of the democracies there, the region remains the most democratic in the world after Europe and North America. The 250th anniversary of the birth of Alexander von Humboldt in 2019 – a man celebrated as a "second Columbus", responsible for the "rediscovery of Latin America"¹⁸ – is thus coming just at the right time. The path from a careful rediscovery of Latin America for German and European foreign policy to a privileged partnership worthy of the name can do with every motivation available.

–translated from German–

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- 1 Fukuyama, Francis 1992: *The End of History and the Last Man*, Free Press, New York.
- 2 Freedom House 2018: *Freedom in The World 2018: Highlights from Freedom House's annual report on political rights and civil liberties, Democracy in Crisis*.
- 3 Huntington, Samuel 1996: *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*, Simon & Schuster, New York.
- 4 *Comunidad de Estados Latinoamericanos y Caribeños* (Community of Latin American and Caribbean States, CELAC).
- 5 The EU was MERCOSUR's most important trade partner in 2016 with 21.8% MERCOSUR's foreign trade, but was overtaken by China in 2017 (2017: China 21.8%, the EU 20.3%). Cf. European Commission 2018: *Countries and regions. Mercosur*, in: <http://bit.ly/2G7HIR1> [21 Aug 2018].
- 6 Cf. Sangmeister, Hartmut 2003: *Der ALCA-Prozess: James Monroe versus Simón Bolívar*, in: *Ibero-Analysen 14*, Ibero-Amerikanisches Institut, Berlin.
- 7 Strausfeld, Michi 2018: *Lateinamerika - Vom Hinterhof der USA zum Vorhof Chinas*, *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, 17 Feb 2018, in: <https://nzz.ch/ld.1356801> [11 Dec 2018].
- 8 Pakistan, which overburdened itself with debt from Chinese loans for large-scale projects, is also considering allowing China to use elements of its infrastructure in return for debt relief. Cf. Peer, Mathias 2018: *Chinas neue Seidenstraße: Der Widerstand wächst*, *Handelsblatt*, 17 Aug 2018, p. 11.
- 9 In 2017, China opened its first foreign naval base in Djibouti on the Horn of Africa. According to the 2015 Chinese military manual, the navy will operate globally in the future, and protect Chinese interests overseas.
- 10 Cf. Pastrana, Eduardo / Vera Piñero, Diego 2017: *Transición de poder y orden mundial: el ascenso global de China y su proyección creciente en América Latina y el Caribe*, in: Pastrana, Eduardo / Gehring, Hubert (eds.): *La proyección de China en América Latina y el Caribe*, Bogotá, p. 64.
- 11 Cf. Nolte, Detlef 2018: *China fordert Europa in Lateinamerika heraus - aber verdrängt es (noch) nicht*, *GIGA Focus No. 1*, Feb 2018, p. 5 f., in: <http://bit.ly/2L9vukj> [11 Dec 2018].
- 12 Triebe, Benjamin 2017: *Moskau pokert in Venezuela um mehr als Cash*, *Neue Zürcher Zeitung Digital*, 17 Nov 2017, in: <https://nzz.ch/ld.1329391> [23 Aug 2018].
- 13 Brazil is the only country in Latin America to which Germany has been connected since 2008 by a "strategic partnership". A visible expression of this partnership was the 2015 governmental consultation in which Angela Merkel and twelve members of her cabinet participated. The domestic crisis in Brazil and the many international sources of crises that have consumed the attention of German foreign policy pushed Germany's partnership with Brazil into the background; it urgently needs to be revived.
- 14 The term was used in the early 2000s in the political debate about alternatives to Turkey entering the EU. Here, it refers to a close partnership in which each partner literally grants privileges to the other that are clearly different in quality from those that would be included in a standard free trade agreement with other countries or regions.
- 15 A large part of the known lithium reserves is in the so-called lithium triangle in Chile, Argentina, and Bolivia. Two Latin American countries, Chile and Argentina, are responsible for more than half of global lithium production. Cf. Bardt, Hubertus / Hübner, Christian 2017: *Vom Öl zum Lithium: Perspektiven neuer Rohstoffkooperationen*, 14 Nov 2017, in: <http://bit.ly/2RR8ZDp> [11 Dec 2018].
- 16 Cf. Leithäuser, Johannes 2018: *Maas erläutert „balancierte Partnerschaft“*, *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 28 Feb 2018.
- 17 Ibid.
- 18 According to the title of a television programme: *3sat / SWR 2010*, in: <http://bit.ly/2EoAOeo> [11 Dec 2018].