

Geopolitical Risks for the European Union in Latin America and the Caribbean

Ignacio Bartesaghi

Natalia De María Calvelo & David Ramiro Troitino*

Summary: The relationship between Europe and Latin America has a long history; a common historical past unites both regions, traditions, culture, migratory flows and, in some cases, language. The bilateral relationship has deepened over the years in different political, economic, commercial and social areas, among others. It has been channelled through various formal instances of dialogue and exchange, including the CELAC-EU Summits. The current international context, characterized by uncertainty, generates competition, cooperation, and interdependence relations. This article addresses the risks faced by the European Union in its relations with Latin America, mainly based on the war in Ukraine and with an approach based on the theory of complex interdependence. In order to identify the EU's reaction to the risks with LAC, a database of legal acts of the European bloc corresponding to the years 2022 and 2024 was assembled. All regulations, directives, and decisions approved by the EU during that period were reviewed, identifying which ones regulate the region or any Latin American and Caribbean country. The conclusion is that, out of the 1,627 legal acts approved during this period, very little of the approved legislation is directly related to Latin America.

Keywords: European Union, Latin America and Caribbean, Geopolitical Risks, Complex Interdependence, War in Ukraine Impact, EU Legislation (2022–2024), CELAC-EU Summits

* *Ignacio Bartesaghi.* Post-doctorate in International Relations from the University of Valencia (Spain), PhD in International Relations from the University of La Plata (Argentina), and Master in Integration and International Trade from the University of Montevideo (Uruguay). Director of the Institute of International Business at the Catholic University of Uruguay (UCU) and professor of high dedication in integration and international trade. He is a member of the National System of Researchers of the National Agency for Research and Innovation (ANII) of Uruguay. Email: ibartesa@ucu.edu.uy

Natalia De María Calvelo. Master's Degree in International Relations from the Universidad de la República - UDELAR (Uruguay). Degree in International Business and Integration from the Catholic University of Uruguay (UCU). PhD candidate in Political Science and International Relations at the Complutense University of Madrid. Professor of high dedication at the UCU in economic integration and international trade subjects. She is a member of Uruguay's National System of Researchers and the National Agency for Research and Innovation (ANII). Email: ndemaria@ucu.edu.uy

David Ramiro Troitino. Jean Monnet Professor in Digital Development of the European Union, Jean Monnet Network on e-governance in the EU coordinator, Senior Researcher on EU politics Tallinn University of Technology. Email: david.troitino@taltech.ee

Citation: BARTESAGHI, I., DE MARÍA CALVELO, N., RAMIRO TROITINO, D. Geopolitical Risks for the European Union in Latin America and the Caribbean. *European Studies – the Review of European law, Economics and Politics*, 2024, vol. 11, no. 1, pp. 200–224, DOI: 10.2478/eustu-2024-0009.

1. Introduction

Uncertainty and complexity define the current world scenario, characterized by the so-called ‘permacrisis’.¹ The different conflicts that occur at the global level have repercussions throughout the world, given the high level of interconnection and interdependence between the different actors in the system. The effects of different conflicts and actors’ decisions have repercussions in various fields, such as the political, economic, commercial, environmental and social spheres. Tensions also generate new alliances or reinforce existing ones, generating various geopolitical and geo-economic strategies.

Given the continuous uncertainty, it is increasingly difficult to carry out prospective or risk analyses. The decisions of the main actors in the international system continually generate new situations of tension and confrontation, in addition to unexpected externalities such as the COVID-19 pandemic. In the same way, constant changes mean that risks are constantly shifting and new ones are being added.

Various international relations theories provide tools for analyzing the international system and its context. Each offers a different, but sometimes complementary, perspective. The complexity of the current international system makes it difficult to analyze it through a single model since it is difficult to apply just one to all cases. According to Keohane and Nye², the secret is to identify which approach or combination of approaches applies to each situation. This article deals with the theory of complex interdependence, whose main referents are Keohane and Nye and their work *Power and Interdependence*, published in 1977. This research aims to identify and analyze the main geopolitical risks faced by the European Union (EU) in Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) from the perspective of the theory of complex interdependence. This theory provides a portrait closer to reality, offering tools to explain the object of study of this research.

Interdependence refers to actions, decisions, and events in one state or region that directly and indirectly affect other countries or regions. This means that a change in

¹ CIDOB. The World in 2023: Ten Issues That Will Shape the International Agenda, in: COLOMIANA, C. (ed.). *Notes Internacionales*. 2022, no. 283, pp. 1–22. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.24241/NotesInt.2022/283/en>

² KEOHANE, R., NYE, J. *Poder e Interdependencia. La política mundial en transición*. Buenos Aires: Grupo Editor Latinoamericano, 1988, p. 17.

one actor has consequences for the others. This affects world politics and the behaviour of actors, and the actions of governments also affect interdependence.

Interdependence generates reciprocal dependence between actors, and external factors, in turn, influence this interconnectedness. In global politics, this interconnectedness generates mutual effects that, in many cases, derive from trade. These implications will depend on the costs involved, i. e. where there are reciprocal cost effects between exchanges, there is interdependence. In contrast, where there are no significant cost effects, there is interconnectedness³. Therefore, the decisions and actions of one actor influence the cost structure of the others; considering that these costs are not equally distributed, it is an asymmetric relationship.

Determining whether relationships marked by interdependence are mutually beneficial for the parties involved is complex. It will depend on several factors, such as values and the nature of the link. Two perspectives can be established to analyze costs and benefits. One focuses on expected gains or losses, while the other focuses on relative gains and the issues' distribution.⁴

The concept of power has always been complex, as have its sources. Early conceptions linked it to military power, but over time, theorists have determined that power goes beyond the military, given that there are states that possess strong political or economic power or that have essential resources for the global economy. The concept is also directly linked to outcomes, i. e., a country can possess power when it influences outcomes.

Two key concepts related to power and interdependence are sensitivity and vulnerability. Sensitivity refers to how much an actor is influenced by the decisions or actions of others. A state is sensitive when it quickly feels the repercussions of another actor's actions, whether in economic, political, social, or security terms. Vulnerability relates to the exposure of that actor or system to risks and threats due to its interconnectedness with other actors or systems in a globally interdependent environment.

About complex interdependence, the capacity of states to communicate and cooperate must be considered. That is linked to the rules governing the interactions and objectives of each state. Domestic politics affect these, so analyzing how states' objectives affect the system process is essential. The theory plays a significant role in institutions, creating the capacity for cooperation between states and benefitting all parties by fulfilling commitments made in agreements.⁵ Institutions also make their contribution in terms of reducing uncertainty.

³ KEOHANE, R., NYE, J. *Poder e Interdependencia. La política mundial en transición*. Buenos Aires: Grupo Editor Latinoamericano, 1988, p. 22.

⁴ KEOHANE, R., NYE, J. *Poder e Interdependencia. La política mundial en transición*. Buenos Aires: Grupo Editor Latinoamericano, 1988, p. 23.

⁵ KEOHANE, R. *International Institutions: Can Interdependence Work? Foreign Policy*. 1998, no. 110, pp. 82–96.

The evolution of theory has also considered globalization, which has led to interdependence and interconnectedness between countries. Globalization has implications for different actors in both their domestic and international decisions.

The topic of study is complex interdependence, which is linked to the relationships and multiple levels of connection between the EU and LAC. The two regions share a common historical past but also have significant commercial, political, and diplomatic links, which can be affected by geopolitical factors. The actions and decisions of Latin American states can affect the EU, for example, as a result of political changes or the increasingly strong foreign presence, mainly of China and Russia.

2. International context and global risks

2.1. Major global trends and risks

The post-World War II period was characterized by the creation of international organizations that regulated relations between states for at least five decades. During this period and until the fall of the Berlin Wall and the disintegration of the Soviet Union, the international system faced significant challenges, especially with conflicts still of a classical nature that indirectly confronted the major powers of the time.

Parallel to these events, the globalization process was accelerating due to technological advances. Mainly from the 1990s, such advances drove structural changes in production, marketing, and consumption patterns, complemented by an explosion of trade agreements and trade in goods and services, with disparate effects on economies.⁶ The early years of the 21st century saw a period of greater openness and interaction between states and individuals, shifting focus from the Atlantic to the Pacific. Referred to by some authors as a new phase of globalization, it led to a so-called flat world, where opportunities expand for all and new global governance begins.⁷

The aforementioned structural changes were centred on the economy and trade, mainly due to China's pragmatism in its insertion into the global economy. A few years later, the phenomenon also encompassed other countries and its scope incorporated geopolitical interests. This situation ushered in a new stage in international relations with tensions that question international stability for the coming decades.

The year 2001 could be seen as the beginning of a new era, which, with the terrorist attacks in the United States, demonstrated the weakness of states in the face of other international actors, such as terrorist organizations, with the emergence of

⁶ RODRIK, D. *Globalization, Structural Change and Productivity Growth*. Working Paper 17143, 2011, DOI: <https://doi.org/10.3386/w17143>

⁷ FRIEDMAN, T. L. *The World is Flat: A Brief History of the Twenty-First Century*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2005.

a clash of civilizations that goes beyond the state level.⁸ In the 21st century, changes accelerated, especially the contagion effect of financial and economic crises. Social discontent and migratory flows increased, causing political crises that challenged the role of the state and international organizations, giving way to a new world order with a new logic in the interaction between states.⁹

Already in the second decade of the new century, the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, the climate emergency, the war in Ukraine, the most recent tensions in the Middle East due to the clashes between Israel and Hamas, the political and security crisis in Africa and the tensions in Asia Pacific (South China Sea; possible confrontation between the United States and China over Taiwan) are visible. In addition to these challenges, there are new challenges posed by technological developments such as artificial intelligence. These situations must be managed in a context marked by the geopolitical confrontation between the United States and China and the weakness of international organizations and the EU.

This stage is perceived by international experts as unstable, as shown by the World Economic Forum survey of 1,500 experts in various areas of knowledge and activity. The global scenario is projected for two to three years, where in both cases, only 1% project a calm scenario, and the outlook for the future worsens as the years go by.¹⁰

Stormy, turbulent and Unsettled		Estable and calm
Short term	84%	16%
Long Term	92%	82%

Source: own elaboration based on WEF

According to the survey results above, the most significant issues are extreme weather, disinformation, political and social polarization, the cost of living, and cyber-attacks, which are issues that could be considered new concerns compared with the challenges faced in the past decades. However, the results continue to include issues related to the economy and armed conflicts.¹¹ Other authors also agree to identify the same risks for the coming years but add confrontations over

⁸ HUNTINGTON, S. P. *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1996.

⁹ ANDERSON, K. Squaring the Circle? Reconciling Sovereignty and Global Governance through Global Government Networks [Review of *A New World Order*, by A.-M. Slaughter], *Harvard Law Review*. 2005, vol. 118, no. 4, pp. 1255–1312. Available at: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4093380>

¹⁰ WORLD ECONOMIC FORUM. *Global Risks Report 2024*. Geneva, 2024. Available at: <https://www.weforum.org/publications/global-risks-report-2024/in-full/>

¹¹ WORLD ECONOMIC FORUM. *Global Risks Report 2024*. Geneva, 2024. Available at: <https://www.weforum.org/publications/global-risks-report-2024/in-full/>

critical minerals. Nevertheless, risks associated with war and geopolitical tensions remain prominent.¹²

The complex reality expected in the coming years could be a perfect storm. This reality will entail enormous cooperation efforts at a time when dialogue between the major powers is not at its best. The channels of interaction between states are conducted through the same institutions created after the Second World War, which are questioned by the leading emerging powers for not reflecting the current economic structure. The impossibility of reforming international organizations has led to the creation of alternative cooperation systems led by the new powers, as in the case of China, which generates additional challenges for the United States.¹³

The international system requires reform, as power groups are no longer exclusively based in the UN Permanent Council or the G7. In recent years, new coalitions such as the G20, the recently enlarged BRICS group, and the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation have become particularly important.

In this sense, some authors understand that international relations are governed by a G0 where no country has the economic and political influence to lead the complex international agenda.¹⁴ Other authors consider that we face a G2 between the United States and China.¹⁵

The emerging economies, especially those of Asia Pacific, already account for a large part of global economic growth, more than 67% in 2023 according to IMF projections¹⁶, and will continue to show economic dynamism two or three times greater than that of Western economies, regardless of the lower growth rates expected in China.¹⁷ This new reality foreshadows the persistence of clashes between China and the United States for international leadership, a systemic competition that is forcing other international actors to review their strategy for positioning themselves, something that the EU itself has recognized. Borrell understands that the US-China rivalry is likely to be the dominant guiding principle in global politics and that, in this context, there is a need to remain calm and devise an EU approach of its own.¹⁸

¹² BREMMER, I.; KUPCHAN, C. *Top Risks 2024*. Eurasia Group, 2024. Available at: <https://www.eurasiagroup.net/issues/top-risks-2024>

¹³ IKENBERRY, G. J. *After Victory: Institutions, Strategic Restraint, and the Rebuilding of Order after Major Wars*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008.

¹⁴ BREMMER, I. *Every Nation for Itself: Winners and Losers in a G-Zero World*. New York: Portfolio/Penguin, 2012.

¹⁵ BERGSTEN, F. *The United States and the World Economy: Foreign Economic Policy for the Next Decade*. Peterson Institute for International Economics, 2005.

¹⁶ IMF. *Perspectivas de la economía mundial. Abordar las divergencias mundiales*. 2023. Available at: <https://www.imf.org/es/Publications/WEO/Issues/2023/10/10/world-economic-outlook-october-2023>

¹⁷ WORLD BANK. *Global Economic Prospects*. 2024. Available at: <https://www.worldbank.org/en/publication/global-economic-prospects#downloads>

¹⁸ WEILER, J. Borrell: Europa debe aprender rápidamente a hablar el lenguaje del poder. *Agenda Pública*. 2020. Available at: <https://agendapublica.es/noticia/16744/borrell-europa-debe-aprender-rapidamente-hablar-lenguaje-poder>

2.2. Context and risks in LAC

Naturally, LAC is familiar with the global challenges outlined above, although in many cases, their effects are indirect, especially as it is territorially far from the focus of international conflicts. In any case, the region faces its challenges, especially if one considers the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on employment levels, poverty, lags in education and infrastructure deficits, among others. LAC countries have faced these situations with very meagre gross domestic product (GDP) growth in 2023 and lower projections for 2024, which is not associated with conjunctural aspects. However, they would be explained by a trend decline in GDP in the region.¹⁹

The challenges facing LAC in economic development demand the expansion of public policies, which require national and regional consensus regarding integration processes that still need to be achieved. In this sense, in 2024, the region faces electoral processes in many countries, some of which are questioned in their institutionality. According to the study *Political Risks for Latin America*²⁰, the region's leading ten risks in 2024 are insecurity, organized crime and drug trafficking, increased corruption and impunity, and democratic disaffection. The advance of populism and authoritarianism; governance under pressure and rapid loss of support for leaders; increase in migratory flows; radicalization of social protests; international instability; deterioration of the business climate; the impact of technology and vulnerability to climate change.²¹

Some of the challenges identified for the global agenda are repeated in LAC; in some cases, these challenges are related to the region's role on the global stage. Others are related to scourges that have not been resolved over the years and, in many cases, show signs of accelerated deterioration. Many of these issues involve cooperation at the intra-regional level (which, due to political crises and governmental characteristics, is becoming increasingly complex) and at the inter-regional level, where relations with the EU take on particular importance.

Expressions from the EU regarding the need to relaunch relations with LAC have been blatant and have even been formalized with the launch of a new policy with the region, investment support programmes and the relaunch of bi-regional dialogue in the framework of meetings between the EU and the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC). All these efforts are taking place in a complex international context marked by systemic competition between China and the United States.

¹⁹ ECLAC; OECD; CAF; EUROPEAN COMMISSION. *Latin American Economic Outlook 2023: Investing in Sustainable Development*, 2024.

²⁰ SAHD, J., ZOVATTO, D., ROJAS, D. *Riesgo Político América Latina*, Santiago: Centro Estudios Internacionales UC, 2024. Available at: http://centroestudiosinternacionales.uc.cl/images/publicaciones/publicaciones-ceiuc/2024/Riesgo-Politico-America-Latina-2024_compressed.pdf

²¹ SAHD, J., ZOVATTO, D., ROJAS, D. *Riesgo Político América Latina*. Santiago: Centro Estudios Internacionales UC, 2024. Available at: http://centroestudiosinternacionales.uc.cl/images/publicaciones/publicaciones-ceiuc/2024/Riesgo-Politico-America-Latina-2024_compressed.pdf

This situation obliges the EU to react swiftly to its historical partners with whom it shares the fundamental values that guarantee global stability.²²

2.3. Context and risks for the European Union

The EU faces a multifaceted array of geopolitical risks that threaten its stability, cohesion, and strategic interests. Foremost among these risks is the ongoing tension with Russia, particularly in light of the protracted conflict in Ukraine, which escalated dramatically with Russia's full-scale invasion in 2022. This conflict has not only disrupted regional security but also jeopardized energy supplies, given the EU's significant reliance on Russian gas. Beyond Russia, the EU is also grappling with the implications of China's expanding global influence.²³ China's strategic investments in critical European infrastructure, including ports and technology sectors, have raised concerns about economic dependencies and political leverage. Additionally, the resurgence of populism and nationalism within EU member states, fuelled by economic disparities and migration issues, poses an internal threat to the Union's unity and its foundational democratic values. Obviously, in terms of LAC-EU relations, China is the main common risk for Europe, but perhaps an opportunity to LAC.

In response to these geopolitical risks, the EU has implemented a range of policies designed to enhance its security, economic resilience, and political cohesion. To counter Russian aggression, the EU has imposed a series of stringent sanctions targeting key sectors of the Russian economy, such as finance, energy, and defence. These sanctions aimed to weaken Russia's economic capacity to sustain its military operations while signalling the EU's commitment to international law and sovereignty. Nevertheless, the current performance of Russian economy does not show much impact of these sanctions as it rapidly readapted to other markets, as China.

To address energy security, the EU has accelerated its transition towards renewable energy sources and diversified its energy imports. Initiatives like the European Green Deal and the REPowerEU plan are central to these efforts, aiming to reduce carbon emissions, increase energy efficiency, and enhance the EU's energy independence. The efficiency of these options were surprisingly effective, even if energy prizes grew much, affecting the lower part of the society. Nevertheless, there are concerns about a new wave of growing consumption of Russian gas in 2024 that could reverse the process, or at least affect it partially.

In dealing with China's influence, the EU has adopted a more assertive stance. A key component of this strategy is the implementation of investment screening

²² BARTESAGHI, I. La importancia del acuerdo Mercosur-Unión Europea en la relación de Europa con América Latina y el Caribe. In: *Los desafíos globales de la Unión Europea: Transformación digital, participación ciudadana y relaciones con América Latina*. Colección GRIDALE, 2023. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.16925/9789587604603>

²³ TROITIÑO, D. R. The European Union Facing the 21st Century: The Digital Revolution. *TalTech. Journal of European Studies*. 2022, vol. 12, no. 1, pp. 60–78.

mechanisms, which aim to protect critical sectors and infrastructure from undue foreign influence by scrutinizing foreign direct investments, particularly those from China. Additionally, the EU has been working to enhance its technological sovereignty, reducing dependency on Chinese technology by investing in homegrown innovations and fostering digital resilience through initiatives like the Digital Compass. The EU's strategy also includes efforts to diversify trade partnerships and supply chains, reducing vulnerabilities that arise from over-reliance on Chinese markets and manufacturers. These policies are complemented by diplomatic measures, such as the EU-China Comprehensive Agreement on Investment (CAI), which aims to ensure a level playing field and fair competition while promoting sustainable development and labour rights. Collectively, these measures reflect the EU's commitment to balancing economic cooperation with strategic autonomy and protecting its long-term economic and security interests.

The impact of these policies addressing the geopolitical risks for the EU has been significant and multifaceted. The sanctions on Russia have led to substantial economic costs for EU member states, particularly those heavily dependent on Russian energy. These are the states that were previously under communist regimes, and consequently more willing to make sacrifices to keep their independence from any Russian interference. In addition, these sanctions have also fostered greater solidarity and unity within the EU, reinforcing the bloc's commitment to collective security and shared values. The shift towards renewable energy and diversification of energy sources has spurred innovation and investment in sustainable technologies, positioning the EU as a global leader in the green transition. This transition, while necessary for long-term sustainability and security, also poses immediate challenges, such as the economic strain on industries adjusting to new energy norms and the need for substantial investment in new infrastructure and technologies. Additionally, the EU's more assertive policies towards China aim to balance economic cooperation with strategic autonomy, ensuring that critical assets and technologies remain under European control.

Furthermore, the EU has enhanced its strategic autonomy through initiatives like the Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO), which strengthens defence collaboration among member states and builds collective military capabilities. These measures are designed to ensure that the EU remains a cohesive and resilient political entity, capable of navigating the complex geopolitical landscape of the 21st century. After BREXIT, France has been leading a position to create a European army linked with the European Union, but not mandatory to all its members, to increase the independence of Europe and its capabilities to address commonly common external threats. Nevertheless, the Russian threat has decreased the support to a common European defence, as many of the member states feel that just NATO and USA can stop Russian modern imperialism.²⁴

²⁴ OLIEVSKA, N., TROITIÑO, D. R., KERIKMÄE, T. Internal Security: Terrorism and Criminality Fostering Integration in the EU. In: *The EU in the 21st Century: Challenges and Opportunities for the European Integration Process*. 2020, pp. 85–100.

The EU faces significant geopolitical risks stemming from external threats such as Russian aggression and Chinese economic influence. The policies adopted by the EU, ranging from sanctions and energy diversification to investment screening and rule of law mechanisms, reflect a comprehensive strategy to enhance security, resilience, and unity.²⁵ While these policies have had substantial impacts, fostering innovation and solidarity, they also pose challenges that require ongoing adjustment and investment. Ultimately, the EU's ability to navigate these geopolitical risks will depend on its capacity to maintain internal cohesion and adapt to the evolving global landscape, ensuring its long-term stability and prosperity.

3. The bilateral relationship between the European Union and Latin America

LAC has a strong link with Europe dating back to colonial times. The arrival of European powers in the Americas, mainly Spain and Portugal, marked Latin American and Caribbean history, uniting both continents. Common historical ties were created, considering the large European migratory flows to LAC that brought their customs, traditions, and, in many cases, language. In addition to the links generated by their historical past, migrations and cultural exchange, the relationship has extended to diplomatic, political, economic, commercial and cooperation spheres, among others. Likewise, since the creation of the European Economic Community in 1957, European integration has been an inspiring model for Latin American integration processes.

From 1991 onwards, Ibero-American summits began to be held, instances of dialogue and cooperation which, together with Spain and Portugal, have strengthened relations with the EU, with 28 summits taking place by 2023.²⁶ In 1997, the presidents of France and Spain, Chirac and Aznar, proposed holding meetings with LAC countries, driven by the region's economic development and political stability at that time. Under this initiative, the first Summit of LAC and EU Heads of State and Government was held in Rio de Janeiro in June 1999. On that occasion, the institutional dialogue defined the Bi-regional Strategic Partnership as the path to follow for the deepening of relations between the two regions under the premise of the exchange of shared

²⁵ KERIKMÄE, T., TROITIÑO, D. R. El mercado digital europeo y los acuerdos comerciales con Iberoamérica: Problemas y oportunidades de seguridad. In: *La Integración Europea e Iberoamericana II: Las relaciones de la Unión Europea (UE) y el Mercado Común del Sur (MERCOSUR) con el Sistema de Integración Centroamericano (SICA)*, pp. 139–155. Thomson Reuters Aranzadi, 2021.

²⁶ SEGIB. *Cumbres Iberoamericanas*. 2024. Available at: <https://www.segib.org/cumbres-iberoamericanas/30-anios-de-cumbres/>

values such as democracy and respect for human rights.²⁷ Since the Rio de Janeiro Summit, LAC and the EU have worked together to achieve the established objectives.

Over the years and with the deepening of trade exchange since 1999, the link has been formalized by holding summits between the European Union and Latin America and the Caribbean (EULAC). Other instances of exchange have taken place through dialogue with the Rio Group, meetings with the Southern Common Market (Mercosur), the Andean Community (CAN) and Central America, and the EU/LA Parliamentary Assembly.

From the merger between the Rio Group and the LAC Summits on Development and Cooperation (CALC), CELAC was created in 2011. Since then, inter-regional dialogue has been channelled through the CELAC-EU Summits. Together, the EU and CELAC account for 14% of the world's population and 21% of global GDP²⁸, demonstrating the importance of the partnership between the two regions.

The first CELAC-EU Summit, held in 2013, focused on promoting investments with a sustainable development perspective. The second summit, held in 2015, was under the theme 'Shaping our common future: working towards prosperous, cohesive and sustainable societies for our citizens'. The exchange focused on bi-regional and global issues and cooperation. As a result, a political declaration entitled 'A Partnership for the Next Generation' and the 'Brussels Declaration' on aspects of the bilateral relationship were adopted.

The summit also approved the EU-CELAC Action Plan 2015, which defined the guidelines for the interregional relationship. The document sets out tools and activities to strengthen the relationship and exchange in the following areas: science, research, innovation and technology; sustainable development, environment, climate change; biodiversity; energy; regional integration and interconnectivity; migration; education and employment to promote social integration and cohesion; the drug problem; gender; investment; sustainable development; higher education; and citizen security.²⁹

In June 2023, eight years after the second meeting, the third EU-CELAC summit took place. Leaders committed to renewing the partnership based on shared values and interests and strong economic, social, and cultural ties. In addition to the joint declaration, the Roadmap 2023–2025 was issued.

Another area of exchange between Latin American countries and the EU is the 150-member Euro-Latin American Parliamentary Assembly, where half of the

²⁷ SALAFRANCA SÁNCHEZ-NEYRA, J. Nuevas Perspectivas para la UE y América Latina: La Asamblea Parlamentaria Euro-Latinoamericana. In: WAHLERS, G. (ed.). *América Latina y la Unión Europea*. Fundación Konrad Adenauer, 2007. Available at: https://www.kas.de/c/document_library/get_file?uuid=27f59d65-76ae-5eaa-c76a-569995547c30&groupId=252038

²⁸ EUROPEAN COMMISSION. Joint Communication to the European Parliament and the Council: A New Agenda for Relations between the EU and Latin America and the Caribbean. 2023. Available at: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/HTML/?uri=CELEX:52023JC0017>

²⁹ EU-CELAC. *EU-CELAC Action Plan*. 2015. Available at: <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/23757/eu-celac-action-plan.pdf>

participants are members of the European Parliament and the other half come from Latin American regional parliaments, including Parlatino (Latin American Parliament), Parlandino (Andean Parliament), Parlacen (Central American Parliament), Parlasur (Mercosur Parliament) and the Congresses of Chile and Mexico.³⁰ The main objective is to be a forum for exchange, monitoring and reviewing issues related to the Bi-regional Strategic Partnership.

Relations between the EU and South America began to have their frameworks for relations only in the 1990s, which had to do with the creation of Mercosur in 1991. The establishment of Mercosur and its rapprochement with the United States in the early 1990s prompted European countries to react to the region. In 1995, the Interregional Framework Agreement was approved and came into force in 1998. This instrument aimed to define strategic policies beyond the commercial sphere.³¹ The signing of this agreement, which enabled the start of negotiations to reach an Association Agreement, was preceded by the signing of the inter-institutional cooperation agreement in 1992, in addition to a series of declarations, including the declaration of the Mercosur presidents about the EU and the Joint Solemn Declaration between the Council of the European Union and the European Commission and the Mercosur States, both in 1994.³²

At the same time, the European Commission raised the possibility of advancing towards a free trade area between the two regions at a meeting of foreign ministers held in Sao Paulo in 1994. This proposal by the Vice-President of the Commission was taken up again at the European Council held in Corfu in 1994 and ratified by the Mercosur presidents at the August meeting of the same year in Buenos Aires and later in Ouro Preto. This meeting gave the bloc international legal personality once the transition process marked by the Treaty of Asunción had been completed.³³

Europe's backing was sealed at the Essen European Council in December 1994, where the considerations of several documents drafted by various EU bodies on Mercosur were considered. At the same time, the EU was already deploying the pillars of a strategy with LAC in its speeches in various spheres. An example is the speeches made in those years by the Vice-President of the European Commission, Manuel Marin, in which he spoke of a new strategy with the region. Its pillars were closer political ties, free trade and integration support, and more focused cooperation.

³⁰ EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT. *EuroLat*. 2024. Available at: <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/euroat/en/about/introduction>

³¹ BIZZOZERO, L. „*El acuerdo marco interregional Unión Europea-Mercosur: dificultades y perspectivas de una asociación estratégica.*“ In *Los Rostros del Mercosur. El difícil camino de lo comercial a lo societal*, pp. 373–390. Buenos Aires: CLACSO, 2001.

³² MERCOSUR. *MERCOSUR/CMC. DEC. 05/95*. 1995. Available at: https://normas.mercosur.int/simfiles/normativas/25849_DEC_005-1995_ES_ConsolMCS.pdf

³³ BIZZOZERO, L. *El acuerdo marco interregional Unión Europea-Mercosur: dificultades y perspectivas de una asociación estratégica.* In: *Los Rostros del Mercosur. El difícil camino de lo comercial a lo societal*, pp. 373–390. Buenos Aires: CLACSO, 2001.

Finally, in 1999, negotiations between Mercosur and the EU were launched at the First Meeting of Heads of State and Government between the EU and Mercosur. In 2000, the First Meeting of the Bi-regional Negotiations Committee was held in Buenos Aires. The long process of negotiations can be divided into four stages: a first stage from 2000 to 2004, where although the negotiations were close to being concluded, an agreement was not reached; a second stage began in 2010 and lasted until 2013; and a final stage began in 2016 and culminated in the conclusion of the agreement in 2019.³⁴ A fourth stage had to be opened due to the EU's environmental demands set out in the Green Pact approved after the negotiations were closed, which reopened the exchanges, not only in terms of the environmental commitments proposed by the European Commission but also in other chapters that were closed in 2019.

Negotiations between the EU and Mercosur have faced various changes in the context, some of which have already been detailed above. To these must be added the challenges faced by the EU and Mercosur members and the international scenario. The latter is forcing the EU to deploy a new strategy with Latin America, which is reflected in the approval of a series of policies that can be framed within a relaunch of bi-regional relations.³⁵

The first policy impacting relations with the entire region, but especially with Latin America, is the Green Pact. This is an ambitious plan in which the EU aims to reduce net greenhouse gas emissions by 55 per cent by 2030 to achieve climate neutrality in the EU by 2050.³⁶ This policy has a direct impact on Latin America, not only because of the renegotiation of the Association Agreement concluded in 2019 with Mercosur but also because of the obstacles to access to the European market for South American exports due to the conditions imposed in Regulation 2023/1115 of the European Parliament and of the Council, approved in 2023, which would begin to apply in 2024.³⁷

Due to the measures imposed, a list of products of great importance for the region's exports would find it difficult to access the European market, such as livestock, cocoa,

³⁴ MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF URUGUAY. *Acuerdo de Asociación Mercosur-Unión Europea: síntesis y textos del acuerdo en negociación*. 2019. Available at: <https://www.gub.uy/mi-nisterio-relaciones-exteriores/comunicacion/publicaciones/acuerdo-asociacion-mercosur-union-europea-sintesis-textos-del-acuerdo>

³⁵ BARTESAGHI, I. La importancia del acuerdo Mercosur-Unión Europea en la relación de Europa con América Latina y el Caribe. In: *Los desafíos globales de la Unión Europea: Transformación digital, participación ciudadana y relaciones con América Latina*, Colección GRIDALE, 2023. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.16925/9789587604603>

³⁶ EUROPEAN COMMISSION. *Green Deal*. 2019. Available at: https://eur-lex.europa.eu/resource.html?uri=cellar:b828d165-1c22-11ea-8c1f-01aa75ed71a1.0004.02/DOC_1&format=PDF

³⁷ EUROPEAN UNION. *Regulation (EU) 2023/1115 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 31 May 2023 on the Making Available on the Union Market and the Export from the Union of Certain Commodities and Products Associated with Deforestation and Forest Degradation and Repealing Regulation (EU) No. 995/2010*. 2023. Available at: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A32023R1115>

coffee, palm oil, soya and timber. Not only Mercosur has rejected these new measures, but ten other LAC governments, including Brazil, Mexico, Argentina and Colombia, along with countries from other regions of the global South, such as Indonesia, Nigeria and Thailand, have lodged a formal complaint with the European Commission, considering that the measures have a trade-distorting impact and could be challenged before the World Trade Organisation.³⁸

Another EU policy implemented that impacts Latin America is the Global Gateway strategy approved in 2021. This strategy aims to promote international cooperation links in infrastructure with key regions for the EU abroad, such as Africa and LAC. Three hundred billion euros for 2021–2027, implementing its investments outside the EU through the European Investment Bank (EIB) and the EIB Group, partners of the European Commission and the European External Action Service in implementing this programme.³⁹

Through this mechanism, the EU aims to broaden the channels of cooperation with other regions by considering projects that have economic, social and environmental impacts. Some areas identified as strategic to be developed would be health, the digital sector, research and education, transport and energy. Specific sectors have already been identified for the case of Latin American countries, highlighting investments related to climate and energy, the digital sector, education and research, health and sustainable transport. Some of the projects under the programme with countries in the region are related to solar energy, green hydrogen, electricity grids and bioeconomy, among others.⁴⁰ Global Gateway seeks to link the public and private sectors of the EU and LAC to generate investments that contribute to the benefit of all. The EU-LAC Global Gateway Investment Agenda (GGIA) is the roadmap of strategic priorities in which the EU has decided to invest with its LAC partners. The agenda includes a just green transition, an inclusive digital transformation, human development and resilience in health and vaccines.⁴¹

In addition to the new EU policies mentioned above, which, although they have a more general scope, have a direct or indirect impact on Latin America, the EU

³⁸ BARTESAGHI, I. La importancia del acuerdo Mercosur-Unión Europea en la relación de Europa con América Latina y el Caribe. In: *Los desafíos globales de la Unión Europea: Transformación digital, participación ciudadana y relaciones con América Latina*, Colección GRIDALE. 2023. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.16925/9789587604603>

³⁹ EUROPEAN COMMISSION. *Joint Communication to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee, the Committee of the Regions and the European Investment Bank: The Global Gateway*. 2021. Available at: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/HTML/?uri=CELEX:52021JC0030>

⁴⁰ BANCO EUROPEO DE INVERSIONES. *Global Gateway en América Latina y el Caribe*. 2023. Available at: https://www.eib.org/attachments/lucalli/2023-0171_global-gateway-en-america-latina-y-el-caribe.pdf

⁴¹ EUROPEAN COMMISSION. *EU-LAC Global Gateway Investment Agenda*. 2024. Available at: https://international-partnerships.ec.europa.eu/policies/global-gateway/eu-lac-global-gateway-investment-agenda_en

(Parliament and Council) has recently launched a new document with a new agenda with LAC, which it presented prior to the EU and CELAC Summit held in July 2023 in Brussels.⁴²

This new agenda aims to strengthen regional political, economic and cultural ties. It mentions shared values such as democracy, human rights, social justice, and sustainable development to identify similarities between peoples and face the new challenges of the global agenda mentioned above. The importance given to LAC has been reflected in the recent visits to the region by the President of the European Commission, Ursula von der Leyen, and the EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Josep Borrell.

The latter has sent several messages both within and outside the EU bloc, confirming that LAC is a fundamental region in the fight against climate change, as it is a powerhouse in terms of biodiversity, renewable energies and strategic raw materials for the ecological transition. Borrell mentioned that it is necessary to move from being ‘natural partners’ to ‘partners of choice’.⁴³ More specifically, Borrell has highlighted the role of Argentina and Uruguay in bringing the EU and LAC as a whole closer together, again highlighting the importance of European investments in these countries, shared democratic values, renewable energies and lithium, which he links to the new international context given Russia’s invasion of Ukraine. In this respect, Borrell expressly states that Russia’s war of aggression reinforces the urgency of strengthening ties between the EU and LAC in order to preserve an international order based on international law.⁴⁴

4. European policies towards Latin America

Article 288 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU) establishes that EU legal acts are regulations, directives, decisions, recommendations, and opinions. At the same time, as seen in the table below, secondary legislation exists in the case of regulations and directives. The European Central Bank also adopts binding guidelines for euro area members.

⁴² EUROPEAN COMMISSION. *Joint Communication to the European Parliament and the Council: A New Agenda for Relations between the EU and Latin America and the Caribbean*. 2023. Available at: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/HTML/?uri=CELEX:52023JC0017>

⁴³ EUROPEAN UNION EXTERNAL ACTION. *Uruguay and Argentina, Key Partners to Bring the EU and Latin America Closer*. 2023. Available at: https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/uruguay-and-argentina-key-partners-bring-eu-and-latin-america-closer_en

⁴⁴ BORRELL, J. *Uruguay and Argentina, Key Partners to Bring the EU and Latin America Closer*. 2022. Available at: https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/uruguay-and-argentina-key-partners-bring-eu-and-latin-america-closer_en

Overview of the legal acts of the European Union

Type of act	Binding force	Adopted by
Regulation	Legally binding	Council and Parliament Council Parliament European Central Bank
Delegated Regulation	Legally binding	Commission
Implementing Regulation	Legally binding	Commission Council
Directive	Legally binding	Council and Parliament Council
Delegated Directive	Legally binding	Commission
Implementing Directive	Legally binding	Commission Council
Decision	Legally binding	Council and Parliament Council Parliament Commission European Council European Central Bank
Delegated Decision	Legally binding	Commission
Implementing Decision	Legally binding	Commission Council
Recommendation	Non-binding	Council Commission European Central Bank
Guideline	Legally binding	European Central Bank
Opinion*	Non-binding	Commission Parliament Council Court of Auditors European Central Bank

Source: Euro-lex of the European Union

Regulations are binding on all parties and directly applicable in each Member State, while directives are also binding, but in this case, the Member States choose the most appropriate way to implement them. Decisions, the third binding legal act, are specific, so they are binding only on the addressee specified in the rule. Finally, there are recommendations and opinions that are not legally binding.

In addition to legal acts, Article 288 defines legislative acts, which are procedures adopted by one or more legislative procedures. On the other hand, there are so-called delegated acts, which are not legislative acts but are adopted to supplement certain essential parts of a legislative act and are issued by the Commission by explicit delegation of a legislative act and in consultation with groups of experts. Finally, there are implementing acts, which are non-legislative acts guaranteeing conditions for implementing a legally binding act. Again, they are adopted by the Commission and, in particular, by the Council after consultation with committees composed of experts from the EU Member States.

In order to identify the EU's reaction to the risks with LA, a database of the bloc's legal acts was assembled for the years 2022 and 2024, a period in which, due to the

war in Ukraine, the EU has been forced to relaunch some of its strategic relations, such as its ties with LAC and in particular with the members of Mercosur. There were 759 regulations in 2022, 758 in 2023 and 110 in 2024 (up to 8 March). Of the 1,627 legal acts adopted in that period (amending acts were excluded in the analysis), very little of the legislation adopted relates to any LAC country.

Considering the three legislative acts already mentioned, in 2022, the EU adopted ten pieces of legislation that refer to LAC countries (out of a total of 759), representing 1.3% of the total. The rules concern the following issues:

- Visa waiver; Brazil (two rules).
- Trade in spirits; Chile.
- Trade in wines; Chile.
- Amendment of Association Agreement; Central America.
- Modification of Association Agreement; Colombia and Ecuador Peru.
- Funds are needed to address the food security crisis caused by the war in Ukraine and in African, Caribbean, and Pacific countries.
- Scientific cooperation; Brazil.
- Adoption of restrictive measures; Haiti (two standards).

Replicating the exercise for 2023, only six legal acts referred to the region or a Latin American country, i. e. 0.8% of the total. In this case, the rules refer to the following matters:

- Modification of concessions in tariff quotas; Chile.
- Authorization to start negotiations for a personal data agreement: Ecuador and Peru (two regulations).
- Signature of Interim Trade Agreement; Chile.
- Provisional application of the Partnership Agreement; African, Caribbean and Pacific countries.
- Authorization to start negotiations for Partnership and Cooperation Agreement; Colombia.

In the first months of 2024, the EU institutions adopted nine legal acts concerning Latin American countries, representing 8.2% of the total, almost the same number (as of 8 March) as in 2022 and three more acts than in 2023. In this case, the acts regulated the following topics:

- Restrictive measures: Guatemala (two regulations).
- Restrictive measures; Haiti (two regulations).
- Closure of Chilean horse mackerel fisheries in the RFMO Convention Area for vessels flying the flag of a Member State of the European Union, Chile.
- Restrictive measures: Guatemala (two regulations).
- Use of digital proofs of origin; Brazil.
- Biosafety and biosecurity in line with the implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1540 (2004) on the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery in Latin America.

Regarding the legal acts analysed, EU institutions' adoption of regulations, directives and decisions is shallow, at least in the period under consideration. Out of 1,627 rules reviewed, only 25 referred to FTAs, 1.5% of the total.

On the other hand, apart from the number, in terms of the objectives set out in the article, there are very few legal acts adopted by the European institutions that could be identified with an EU reaction to FTAs in the context of the risks identified and which have increased since Russia invaded Ukraine in February 2022. In contrast, several of the norms identified, although they refer to the importance given by the EU to democratic issues (one of the risks identified in the region and a historical pillar of the relationship), the norms have to do with restrictions and sanctions, which could make ties with that country more difficult, amplifying the risk as a result.

Beyond the results, due to the new international scenario that strains the EU's policies with its strategic partners, it is to be expected that in the coming months, a more significant number of legal acts related to LAC countries will be approved, especially if one takes into account general policies that have specific actions for LAC, such as the Gateway, the Green Pact, the new EU-LAC policy, the EU-CELAC declaration and the 2023–2025 roadmap approved at the EU-CELAC summit held in Brussels in July 2023.

The international agreements approved by the EU referring to the region in the same period (2022–2024) were identified to complement the analysis carried out with the legal acts. These agreements are legally binding pacts between the EU and one or more countries or international organizations. The procedure for negotiating and adopting international agreements is laid down in Articles 207 and 218 of the TFEU.

The result at the level of agreements is similar to that obtained in the case of legal acts (regulations, directives and decisions), as the importance given by the EU to the region in terms of signing these types of instruments is low. Indeed, in the period considered, out of a total of 60 agreements signed by the EU, only three referred to LAC (5% of the total) considering the category of external relations, foreign policy and common security (classification presented by the EUY-Lex International Agreements database), which are not related to a reaction of the bloc in terms of the risks identified for the EU in LAC.

Indeed, the agreements signed refer to modifying the concessions of all tariff quotas in the EU's CLXXV list with Brazil and Chile due to the UK's withdrawal from the EU. Another agreement identified that can be categorized as a possible reaction of the EU with the region is the one signed with the Organisation of African, Caribbean, and Pacific States, which includes some LAC countries and where the EU defines other instruments for relations that are more hierarchical, permanent, and adjusted to multilateral regulations.

Because the methodology defined to measure the EU's level of response to the risks it faces in LAC could be somewhat restrictive (review of legal acts and international agreements), the analysis was expanded by reviewing the 3,372 declarations

made by the European Union External Action, taking only those that allude to LAC (including only those with specific mentions of the countries of the region). In 2022–2024, according to the European Diplomatic Foreign Service website classifier by topic, the institution made 38 statements on LAC, which implies 1.1% of the total number of statements for the period. This share is similar to that recorded in the case of Legal Acts.

Statements of the European Union External Action		
Date	Country of LAC	Issue
February 24	Cuba	Statement on behalf of High Representative/Vice-President Josep Borrell at the EP debate on the critical situation in the country
February 24	El Salvador	Statement by the Spokesperson on the elections
February 24	Guatemala	Statements by the High Representative and Vice President Josep Borrell after the signing ceremony of the Memorandum of Understanding
January 24	Guatemala	HRVP Josep Borrell travels to the country to attend transition of power, strengthen bilateral and regional relations
January 24	Venezuela	Statement by the Spokesperson on banning opposition politicians
December 23	Chile	Statement by High Representative Josep Borrell after the signature of the Advanced Framework Agreement
December 23	Guatemala	Statement by High Representative Josep Borrell on the latest developments in Guatemala
December 23	Suriname	Suriname: Statement by the Spokesperson on the December Trials
November 23	Argentina	Statement by HRVP Josep Borrell on the presidential election
November 23	Guatemala	Statement by the Spokesperson on continued efforts to undermine election results
November 23	Venezuela	Joint Statement on Venezuela Negotiations in Mexico
October 23	Venezuela	Joint Statement of the EU, US, Canada and UK on political negotiations
September 23	Guatemala	Statement by the Spokesperson on developments after the elections
August 23	Guatemala	Statement by the High Representative Josep Borrell on developments after the Presidential elections
July 23	Guatemala	Statement by the Spokesperson on the electoral process
July 23	Guatemala	Statement by the Spokesperson on the electoral process
July 23	Venezuela	Statement by the High Representative on the latest electoral decisions
July 23	EU - CELAC	Declaration of the EU-CELAC Summit 2023
July 23	EU - CELAC	EU-CELAC Roadmap 2023 to 2025
June 23	Haiti	EU Statement – ECOSOC Special Meeting on Saving Lives: Urgent Food Security Needs of Haiti
June 23	Guatemala	Statement by the Spokesperson as EU Election Observation Mission presents its preliminary statement
May 23	Guatemala	Statement by the Spokesperson on the suspension of electoral candidates
May 23	Paraguay	Statement by the High Representative on the presidential and general elections
April 23	Nicaragua	Statement by the Spokesperson on the 5th anniversary of the nationwide protests
March 23	Colombia	Joint Press Statement on the 14th EU-Colombia Human Rights Dialogue
February 23	Nicaragua	Statement by the Spokesperson on revoking citizenship of political opponents
February 23	Nicaragua	Statement by the Spokesperson on the release of political prisoners
January 23	Brazil	Statement by the High Representative on behalf of the EU on the attack on democratic institutions
January 23	Brazil	Statement by High Representative Josep Borrell on the anti-democratic storming of government quarters
January 23	Peru	Statement by the Spokesperson on the ongoing protests in the country
December 22	Chile	Joint statement by the President of the European Commission, Ursula von der Leyen, and the President of Chile, Gabriel Boric
December 22	Peru	Statement by the Spokesperson on latest political developments
June 22	Colombia	Release of the preliminary statement following the first round of the presidential election on May 29, 2022
March 22	Colombia	Statement by the Spokesperson on the legislative elections
March 22	Guatemala	Statement by the Spokesperson on the deterioration of rule of law in the country
March 22	Nicaragua	Statement by the Spokesperson on the sentencing of political prisoners
February 22	Colombia	The European Union deploys an Electoral Observation Mission
February 22	Guatemala	Statement by the Spokesperson on the rule of law situation

Source: own elaboration based on European Union External Action

The declarations mainly refer to election processes in LAC, aspects related to human rights, other freedoms, and political crises. The declarations (to a lesser extent in the legal acts where the political situation determines restrictions) reflect the importance of democratic values in the EU’s links with LAC.

Finally, reference is made to Josep Borrell’s views expressed in his regular blogs, many of which refer to LAC. Considering the same time frame used for legal acts, international agreements and declarations, out of a total of 118 published in that period, 10 have direct references to LAC, 8% of the total, the highest share of all the prosecutions carried out. This result is not surprising considering Borrell’s nationality (Spanish) and his marked interest in relaunching relations with LAC in a new

international context. Some of his statements in the different blogs reviewed confirm that in the case of the EU's high authority, there is a very marked reaction, as can be seen in the following sentences:

- *'Latin America and the Caribbean are central in the fight against climate change and represent a global power in terms of biodiversity, renewable energies and strategic raw materials for the green transition.'*
- *'Chile and the EU share common values that must be defended.'*
- *'In Uruguay, and more broadly in Latin America, there are major opportunities for developing green energy to advance the global green transition.'*
- *'The Russian war of aggression reinforces the urgency of strengthening the links between the EU and Latin America to preserve an international order based on international law.'*
- *'Next year, Argentina will celebrate the 40th anniversary of its return to democracy, a reminder of how fragile democracy remains and how high the price is when it is overturned.'*
- *'The political violence developing in Ecuador makes it urgent to restore public confidence in its institutions and democratic system.'*
- *'Strengthening our cooperation in the fight against organized crime must be a key part of the EU-LAC agenda.'*

5. The role of LAC in EU geopolitical repositioning

The research has identified the ten main risks facing the EU in its repositioning strategy in LAC and has related them to the EU's policies towards LAC.

Latin America is a historical partner for the EU; however, the European bloc has lost influence in the region, mainly to the influence of China, which in recent decades has implemented a strategy of rapprochement with LAC and Africa, both of which are natural partners for the EU. The US is another actor trying to reposition itself politically in both LAC and Africa, creating new strategies to reposition itself in both regions.

Other risks are linked to the EU's energy dependence and the alternatives that LAC offers as a region rich in natural resources and critical raw materials. LAC is also a food-producing and exporting region, which contributes to major global food security problems.

Beyond being a continent rich in natural resources and minerals, LAC faces severe political problems, mainly linked to the democratic crises in several countries. This constitutes a severe problem for the EU as it attempts to approach and reposition itself in LAC.

As seen in the table below and as discussed above, policies beyond the declarations of interest in deepening bilateral relations are still scarce and need to be made available. Although there are initiatives beyond the declarations, such as the Global

Gateway initiative and its investment agenda towards LAC, which constitute essential advances in the bilateral relationship and represent important LAC cooperation sources, the bilateral link still needs to reach its potential.

Risks facing the EU in the relationship with LAC	Main implications for the EU	Type of identified EU policies affecting the relationship with LAC
1. Increasing Chinese influence in LAC	Loss of EU influence in LAC countries.	--
2. US Policies and Actions at the Summit of the Americas	The actions and policies promoted by the US at the Summit of the Americas demonstrate the difference in needs and aspirations between the US and the other members. This situation distances the US from the region, allowing other actors to increase their influence, which could be an opportunity for the EU.	--
3. Energy dependence	LAC can become an alternative to EU energy supply.	EU-LAC Global Gateway Investment Agenda
4. Critical raw material supply needs	LAC could be a supplier of critical raw materials needed for European production.	EU-LAC Global Gateway Investment Agenda
5. Crisis of democracies, shared values	Democratic crises in several LAC countries could be an impediment to the deepening of the relationship.	28 Statements
6. Food security	Food security is an important issue for the EU, as Latin American countries are an important source of food for the world's population, but at the same time they are also a source of competition for European producers.	1 Statement
7. Changes in the international system	Given the importance of the EU as an actor in the international system and the strategies of other actors to increase its influence in other regions such as Africa or Europe, LAC, due to its historical and cultural affinity as well as economic and political ties, constitutes an important and potential partner for the European Union.	1 Legislative Act
8. Migration crisis	LAC countries are the origin and transit countries for a large part of the migration received by the European Union, as well as an important destination for their remittances. The coordination of policies to regulate migration is a significant point in the relationship between LAC and the EU.	--
9. Technology and politics	Governments influence technology and technology changes governance. Differences in regulations and standards could hinder cooperation and integration between LAC and the EU, increasing exposure to external risks, as well as discouraging innovation and development.	EU-LAC Global Gateway Investment Agenda
10. Climate change	The positions and actions of LAC governments differ in many cases from those of the EU, which generates friction in the bilateral relationship.	Green Deal / Global Gateway

Source: Prepared by the authors

Suppose the relationship is analysed from the perspective of complex interdependence. In that case, the link between the two regions is not limited to traditional relations of power and competition but rather due to a critical interdependence, which, in this case, even has historical origins. The two regions are interdependent in several areas: trade, investment, cooperation, climate change and migration. As a historical and natural partner, the relationship should be more collaborative and deepen spaces for dialogue and exchange. Regarding the critical aspects of complex interdependence, sensitivity implies recognizing mutual realities and contributing to cooperation. Vulnerability would imply recognizing the areas where both regions are vulnerable and addressing them collaboratively and cooperatively to face shared challenges.

Undoubtedly, the complex dynamics of the current international system, as well as the objectives and strategies of its various actors, have increased political risks in all regions of the world. However, the relationship between the EU and LAC has yet to escape this reality. Beyond the fact that there is no definite strategy at the legislative

level, it is worth highlighting the revitalization of the EU-CELAC summits, a natural space for dialogue and exchange between the two regions.

6. Conclusions

The EU faces significant geopolitical risks in Latin America and the Caribbean, primarily stemming from the increasing presence and influence of external powers such as China and Russia. China's strategic investments in the region, These investments encompass critical infrastructure projects, resource extraction, and technological partnerships, potentially undermining EU interests and reducing its influence in the region. Additionally, Russia's engagement in the region, through military cooperation and energy projects, further complicates the geopolitical landscape, posing a challenge to the EU's strategic interests. These developments could lead to a realignment of alliances and diminish the EU's role as a key partner in promoting democracy, human rights, and sustainable development. Russian influence is significant in terms of politics, and somehow a remembrance from the Cold War. Chinese, on the other hand is mainly economic.

To mitigate these risks and strengthen its position in LAC, the EU has several future options. Firstly, it can deepen economic and trade relations with the region by finalizing and implementing trade agreements, such as the EU-Mercosur Agreement, which aims to create a comprehensive and balanced trade partnership. Strengthening economic ties would not only enhance market access but also promote sustainable development and democratic governance. The problem is how much the EU is willing to provide to reach an agreement, in terms of climate objectives, and internal balance with local European farmers who clearly reject any agreement. There reasons are clear, they cannot follow rules to produce farming products that international farmers and competitors in the EU market (If the agreement is signed) do not have to follow. The agreement is clearly a necessity, but the obstacles are formidable.

Secondly, the EU can increase development aid and investment in critical sectors such as renewable energy, education, and healthcare in LAC. By aligning its support with the developmental priorities of LAC nations, the EU can reinforce its role as a partner in progress and counterbalance the influence of other external powers. Furthermore, the EU can foster political dialogue and cooperation on global issues, such as climate change and migration, which are of mutual interest and require coordinated action.

Additionally, the EU can enhance its cultural and educational exchanges to build long-term people-to-people connections and mutual understanding. University programs can be expanded to include more LAC students, creating a foundation for stronger bilateral relationships. Furthermore, the EU can leverage its expertise in governance and institution-building to support democratic processes and strengthen civil society

in the region. This involves collaborating with local governments, NGOs, and other stakeholders to promote transparency, accountability, and inclusive governance. Nevertheless, LAC governments can see it as an external interference in their domestic affairs.

By adopting a comprehensive approach that integrates economic, political, and cultural dimensions, the EU can effectively address the geopolitical risks posed by external powers in LAC, while fostering a resilient and mutually beneficial partnership with the region.

List of references

- ANDERSON, K. Squaring the Circle? Reconciling Sovereignty and Global Governance through Global Government Networks [Review of *A New World Order*, by A.-M. Slaughter]. *Harvard Law Review*. 2005, vol. 118, no. 4, pp. 1255–1312 [online]. Available at: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4093380>
- BANCO EUROPEO DE INVERSIONES. *Global Gateway en América Latina y el Caribe*. 2023 [online]. Available at: https://www.eib.org/attachments/lucalli/2023-0171_global-gateway-en-america-latina-y-el-caribe.pdf
- BARTESAGHI, I. La importancia del acuerdo Mercosur-Unión Europea en la relación de Europa con América Latina y el Caribe. In *Los desafíos globales de la Unión Europea: Transformación digital, participación ciudadana y relaciones con América Latina*, Colección GRIDALE. 2023 [online]. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.16925/9789587604603>
- BARTESAGHI, I. *The European Union and Latin America and the Caribbean: Food Security Projections for Bi-regional Relations*. CIDOB, 2023 [online]. Available at: https://www.cidob.org/en/articulos/monografias/seguridad_alimentaria/the_european_union_and_latam_america_and_the_caribbean_food_security_projections_for_bi_regional_relations
- BERGSTEN, F. *The United States and the World Economy: Foreign Economic Policy for the Next Decade*. Peterson Institute for International Economics, 2005.
- BIZZOZERO, L. El acuerdo marco interregional Unión Europea-Mercosur: dificultades y perspectivas de una asociación estratégica. In: *Los Rostros del Mercosur. El difícil camino de lo comercial a lo societal*, pp. 373–390. Buenos Aires: CLACSO, 2001.
- BORRELL, J. *Uruguay and Argentina, Key Partners to Bring the EU and Latin America Closer*. 2022 [online]. Available at: https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/uruguay-and-argentina-key-partners-bring-eu-and-latin-america-closer_en
- BREMMER, I. *Every Nation for Itself: Winners and Losers in a G-Zero World*. New York: Portfolio/Penguin, 2012.
- BREMMER, I., KUPCHAN, C. *Top Risks 2024*. Eurasia Group, 2024 [online]. Available at: <https://www.eurasiagroup.net/issues/top-risks-2024>
- CEPAL; OECD; CAF; EUROPEAN COMMISSION. *Latin American Economic Outlook 2023: Investing in Sustainable Development*. 2024.
- CIDOB. The World in 2023: Ten Issues That Will Shape the International Agenda. In COLOMINA, C. (ed.). *Notes Internationals*. 2022, no. 283, pp. 1–22. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.24241/NotesInt.2022/283/en>

- EU-CELAC. *EU-CELAC Action Plan*. 2015 [online]. Available at: <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/23757/eu-celac-action-plan.pdf>
- EUROPEAN COMMISSION. *Joint Communication to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee, the Committee of the Regions and the European Investment Bank: The Global Gateway*. 2021 [online]. Available at: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/HTML/?uri=CELEX:52021JC0030>.
- EUROPEAN COMMISSION. *Joint Communication to the European Parliament and the Council: A New Agenda for Relations between the EU and Latin America and the Caribbean*. 2023 [online]. Available at: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/HTML/?uri=CELEX:52023JC0017>
- EUROPEAN COMMISSION. *EU-CELAC: A Strategic Partnership*. 2023 [online]. Available at: <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/infographics/eu-celac-relations/>
- EUROPEAN COMMISSION. *EU-LAC Global Gateway Investment Agenda*. 2024 [online]. Available at: https://international-partnerships.ec.europa.eu/policies/global-gateway/eu-lac-global-gateway-investment-agenda_en
- EUROPEAN COMMISSION. *Green Deal*. 2019 [online]. Available at: https://eur-lex.europa.eu/resource.html?uri=cellar:b828d165-1c22-11ea-8c1f-01aa75ed71a1.0004.02/DOC_1&format=PDF
- EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT. *EuroLat*. 2024 [online]. Available at: <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/eurolat/en/about/introduction>
- EUROPEAN UNION. *Regulation (EU) 2023/1115 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 31 May 2023 on the Making Available on the Union Market and the Export from the Union of Certain Commodities and Products Associated with Deforestation and Forest Degradation and Repealing Regulation (EU) No 995/2010*. 2023 [online]. Available at: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A32023R1115>
- FMI. *Perspectivas de la economía mundial. Abordar las divergencias mundiales*. 2023 [online]. Available at: <https://www.imf.org/es/Publications/WEO/Issues/2023/10/10/world-economic-outlook-october-2023>
- KEOHANE, R. International Institutions: Can Interdependence Work? *Foreign Policy*. 1998, no. 110, pp. 82–96.
- KEOHANE, R., NYE, J. *Poder e Interdependencia. La política mundial en transición*. Buenos Aires: Grupo Editor Latinoamericano, 1988.
- KERIKMAE, T., TROITIÑO, D. R. El mercado digital europeo y los acuerdos comerciales con Iberoamérica: Problemas y oportunidades de seguridad. In *La Integración Europea e Iberoamericana II: Las relaciones de la Unión Europea (UE) y el Mercado Común del Sur (MERCOSUR) con el Sistema de Integración Centroamericano (SICA)*, pp. 139–155. Thomson Reuters Aranzadi, 2021.
- MCMILLAN, M., RODRIK, D. *Globalization, Structural Change and Productivity Growth*. Working Paper 17143, 2011. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.3386/w17143>
- MERCOSUR. MERCOSUR/CMC. DEC. 05/95. 1995 [online]. Available at: https://normas.mercosur.int/simfiles/normativas/25849_DEC_005-1995_ES_ConsolMCS.pdf
- MINISTERIO DE RELACIONES EXTERIORES DE URUGUAY. *Acuerdo de Asociación Mercosur-Unión Europea: síntesis y textos del acuerdo en negociación*. 2019 [online]. Available

- at: <https://www.gub.uy/ministerio-relaciones-exteriores/comunicacion/publicaciones/acuerdo-asociacion-mercosur-union-europea-sintesis-textos-del-acuerdo>
- OLIIEVSKA, N., TROITIÑO, D. R., KERIKMÄE, T. Internal Security: Terrorism and Criminality Fostering Integration in the EU. In: *The EU in the 21st Century: Challenges and Opportunities for the European Integration Process*. 2020, pp. 85–100.
- SAHD, J., ZOVATTO, D., ROJAS, D. *Riesgo Político América Latina*. Santiago: Centro Estudios Internacionales UC, 2024 [online]. Available at: http://centroestudiosinternacionales.uc.cl/images/publicaciones/publicaciones-ceiuc/2024/Riesgo-Politico-America-Latina-2024_compressed.pdf
- SALAFRANCA SÁNCHEZ-NEYRA, J. Nuevas Perspectivas para la UE y América Latina: La Asamblea Parlamentaria Euro-Latinoamericana. In: WAHLERS, G. (ed.). *América Latina y la Unión Europea*. Fundación Konrad Adenauer, 2007 [online]. Available at: https://www.kas.de/c/document_library/get_file?uuid=27f59d65-76ae-5eaa-c76a-569995547c30&groupId=252038
- SEGIB. *Cumbres Iberoamericanas*. 2024 [online]. Available at: <https://www.segib.org/cumbres-iberoamericanas/30-anios-de-cumbres/>
- TROITIÑO, D. R. The European Union Facing the 21st Century: The Digital Revolution. *TalTech Journal of European Studies*. 2022, vol. 12, no. 1, pp. 60–78.
- WEILER, J. Borrell: ‘Europa debe aprender rápidamente a hablar el lenguaje del poder’. *Agenda Pública*, 2020 [online]. Available at: <https://agendapublica.es/noticia/16744/borrell-europa-debe-aprender-rapidamente-hablar-lenguaje-poder>
- WORLD BANK. *Global Economic Prospects*. 2024 [online]. Available at: <https://www.worldbank.org/en/publication/global-economic-prospects#downloads>
- WORLD ECONOMIC FORUM. *Global Risks Report 2024*. Geneva, 2024 [online]. Available at: <https://www.weforum.org/publications/global-risks-report-2024/in-full/>