

Fall 11-2023

## Allies and Partners in Latin American and the Caribbean

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### Recommended Citation

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*Research Publications*. 60.  
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FOR PUBLIC POLICY

# LAC GOES GLOBAL

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ALLIES AND PARTNERS IN LATIN  
AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN

**AUTHORS**

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## NOVEMBER 2023

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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Policymakers and scholars tend to analyze Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) through the lens of U.S.-China strategic competition. However, LAC countries have been diversifying their international partnerships beyond just the two superpowers. Partners from as close as Canada and as far as Taiwan, Japan, South Korea, and Australia have developed long standing relations with LAC countries over decades and have been deepening those partnerships in recent years. For example, the European Union plans to invest €45 billion in renewable energy projects in the region. Taiwan and Japan finance various development projects across Central America. New Zealand prioritizes climate projects supporting Eastern Caribbean Small Island Developing States. African countries are seeking to boost trade with its counterparts across the Atlantic. And a South Korean company has even invested in a \$4 billion lithium mine in Argentina.

This report catalogs LAC countries budding relations with countries in Africa, Asia, Europe, the Middle East, and North America. We then offer the following policy recommendations for the United States to bolster cooperation with its allies and partners:

- Pool resources for both the Americas Partnership for Economic Prosperity and the Global Gateway.
- Encourage Taiwan to work with Panama and Costa Rica on semiconductor supply chain development.
- Convene an annual or biannual international working group where allies and partners share their regional activities.
- Continue to encourage LAC-Africa engagement.
- Encourage India and Australia to boost engagement.
- Partner with New Zealand on projects in the Eastern Caribbean.
- Coordinate with the EU on engagement with the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC).
- Encourage Israel, Saudi Arabia, and other Middle Eastern countries to boost engagement.

The report demonstrates how LAC countries can leverage partnerships with the United States and other international partners in key areas like infrastructure, renewable energy, cybersecurity,

and democracy promotion. Doing so will help ensure long-term growth and prosperity for the region for decades to come.

## INTRODUCTION

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Policymakers and scholars increasingly analyze Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) through the lens of U.S.-China strategic competition. But other countries have also developed long-standing relations with LAC countries for decades and have deepened those partnerships in recent years. In July 2023, the European Union (EU) hosted the Community of Latin America and Caribbean States in Brussels,<sup>1</sup> which followed a June 2023 trip by EU President Ursula von der Leyen to Brazil, Argentina, Chile, and Mexico.<sup>2</sup> In July, South Korean Prime Minister Han Duck-Soo attended the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) summit in Trinidad and Tobago and visited Panama.<sup>3</sup> In May 2023, Colombian Vice President Francia Márquez visited three African countries, calling Africa a “continent of opportunities.”<sup>4</sup>

These visits demonstrate what has been happening for a long time but rarely gets covered in the news: Latin America and Caribbean countries are diversifying their international partners. The core concept in the 2022 U.S. National Defense Strategy is “Integrated Deterrence,” which brings together all allies and partners to deter our adversaries and secure peace and prosperity.<sup>5</sup> U.S. policymakers and scholars mostly discuss integrated deterrence in the context of the Indo-Pacific. Yet, it is also playing out elsewhere, including in LAC, a region whose security challenges are deeply intertwined with the United States. U.S. policymakers and scholars mostly discuss integrated deterrence in the context of the Indo-Pacific. Yet, it is also playing out elsewhere, including in LAC, a region whose security challenges are deeply intertwined with the United States.

Allies and partners from as close as Canada and as far as Taiwan, Japan, South Korea, and Australia serve as “force multipliers,” which the U.S. Department of Defense defines as a “capability that ... significantly increases” the potential of a force and enhances the probability of a successful mission.<sup>6</sup> Allies and

partners are quite active in this region, trading in various products, lending a hand during natural disasters, and strengthening security cooperation.

This report catalogs the various priorities and programs allies and partners implement in LAC. It is divided by regions and their countries, in alphabetical order. Each country section focuses on economics/trade, development assistance, and security cooperation. This report is not meant to be exhaustive. Instead, it is a general overview of each country's priorities and key projects, demonstrating its competitive advantage as a LAC partner. We conclude with recommendations for the United States, allies, and partners to pool resources to improve people's lives across oceans and continents.

## AFRICA

Africa, Latin America, and the Caribbean have a long, intertwined history, chained together by slavery. An estimated 12 to 20 million enslaved Africans were forced to take the "Middle Passage" across the Atlantic.<sup>7</sup> Today, one in four Latin Americans identify themselves as people of African descent.<sup>8</sup> They comprise over 133 million people, mostly in Brazil, Colombia, Cuba, Ecuador, Mexico, and Venezuela.<sup>9</sup> Throughout history, country leaders, nongovernmental organizations, and academic institutions from both continents have sought to form what scholars have called the "New Politics of Regionalism,"<sup>10</sup> using their historical and colonial ties as a foundation to build a more robust Africa-LAC relationship. Several countries, such as Panama, have federal holidays celebrating Afro-descendant culture.<sup>11</sup> The Brazil-Africa Institute, with dual headquarters in Fortaleza, Brazil, and Accra, Ghana, seeks to promote international cooperation between Brazil and the African continent.<sup>12</sup> The African Union hosted the Africa-South America Summit in 2006, 2009, and 2012.<sup>13</sup>

According to the International Trade Centre's (ITC's) TradeMap, Africa's 2022 exports to LAC totaled US\$15.2 million, with products including mineral fuels, mineral oils and products of their distillation, bituminous substances, and mineral waxes; fertilizers; salt; sulfur; earth and stone;

plastering materials; lime, and cement.<sup>14</sup> That's 1 percent of LAC imports. LAC exports to Africa totaled US\$25.2 million, including cereals, sugars and sugar confectionery, and other commodities.<sup>15</sup> Brazil was the top exporter to Africa in LAC, with US\$12,240,839 in 2022.<sup>16</sup> Latin America accounts for 3.86 percent of all Africa's imports. This shows great opportunity to increase trade between the two regions.

In recent years, certain LAC and African leaders have sought to further deepen trade relations with Africa. From May 10-18, 2023, Márquez visited South Africa, Kenya, and Ethiopia.<sup>17</sup> The trip supported Colombia's Africa Strategy 2022-2026 in its National Development Plan, which includes deepening trade relations with the 55 African countries, opening new Colombian embassies, increasing commercial flights, and expanding ties between cultural organizations.<sup>18</sup> Márquez's office stressed that Africa's population is expected to double by 2050, and sales by Colombian companies to Africa have increased by 158 percent in 2022 compared to the prior year.<sup>19</sup> The office also observed that the three African countries Márquez visited have experience with peace and reconciliation, which Colombia could learn from as it continues to negotiate "total peace" with the National Liberation Army (Ejército de Liberación Nacional or ELN).

Márquez's visit paid immediate dividends. Ethiopia agreed to reopen a Colombian embassy and an alliance around coffee cultivation.<sup>20</sup> Kenya and Colombia agreed to collaborate on tackling climate change, ecotourism, coffee production, and academic scholarships.<sup>21</sup> And in South Africa, the two countries signed six memorandums of understanding, focusing on trade, visas, biodiversity and climate change, cultural and educational exchanges, and tourism.<sup>22</sup>

Barbados' Prime Minister Mia Mottley is another regional leader forging ties with Africa. On July 21, 2023, Mottley delivered a keynote address at the African Union's Global Africa People to People Forum, highlighting collaborative opportunities such as climate change, youth engagement, trade and investment, and a reparations campaign.<sup>23</sup> Her participation was the latest in a multiyear effort to bring the two continents closer. From September 1-3, 2022,

she hosted the Africa-Caribbean Trade and Investment Forum in Barbados, which helped facilitate a strategic partnership between African business communities and CARICOM in trade, investment, technology transfer, innovation, tourism, and other services.<sup>24</sup> In a 2019 visit to Nairobi, Kenya, Mottley presided over the official opening of the CARICOM office space, where she advocated for the first-ever CARICOM-Africa Summit.<sup>25</sup> That summit finally came to fruition in September 2021.<sup>26</sup>

Other country leaders have also expressed a desire to facilitate closer ties. The former Jamaican Prime Minister P.J. Patterson called for removing all visa restrictions and customs barriers to make Africa-Caribbean travel easier.<sup>27</sup> In July 2023, Rwandan President Paul Kagame visited Trinidad and Tobago for the CARICOM summit, advocating for closer ties in tackling climate, food security, international financial institution reform, and support for Haiti.<sup>28</sup>

The two regions have no joint security cooperation program, apart from occasional forces serving alongside each other during UN peacekeeping missions. But in August 2023, Kenya offered to send 1,000 police officers and lead a multinational effort to help Haiti battle gang violence. The Haitian government welcomed Kenya's offer, calling it an "excellent development."<sup>29</sup>

## ASIA

Despite geographical distance, several Asian countries have developed deep economic, political, and security relationships with Latin American and Caribbean countries. In addition to China, which has become the main trading partner for several South American countries and has expanded its Belt and Road Initiative throughout the region, other Asian countries are also quite active in LAC.

### AUSTRALIA

Australia has developed various programs and partnerships in Latin America and the Caribbean. First is trade and investment. Australia is a member of the 2018 Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP). Canada, Chile, Mexico, and Peru are also CPTPP signatories, meaning they all agreed to reduce

tariffs on several imported goods from Australia and other signatories.<sup>30</sup> For example, under the CPTPP, Mexico's 20 percent to 25 percent tariff on beef will be eliminated within a decade, and the 10 percent tariff on sheep and goat meat will end in 2026, meaning Australian red meat exporters will enjoy better access to the Mexican market in the coming years.<sup>31</sup> Australia has Free Trade Agreements with Chile (2009)<sup>32</sup> and Peru (2020), boosting Australian exports of sugar, dairy, beer, and other products.<sup>33</sup>

Second is mining critical minerals like lithium. Australia is currently the world's largest lithium producer, followed by Chile, China, Argentina, and Brazil.<sup>34</sup> While Australia is a direct competitor for the three LAC lithium producers, it can also share its successes in project sustainability and technological expertise. Australian companies Allkem,<sup>35</sup> Argosy Minerals,<sup>36</sup> Everlight Resources,<sup>37</sup> Galan Lithium, Lake Resources, Latin Resources,<sup>38</sup> Lithium Power International,<sup>39</sup> Lithium Mining International, and Pepinnini Lithium fully or partially own and operate lithium mines in Argentina and Chile.

Latin America's wealth of mineral resources presents many greenfield opportunities for Australian companies. Chile has some of the world's largest reserves of copper and lithium, needed for electric vehicle batteries. Brazil has the world's second-largest iron ore reserves, and in Argentina, Australian companies are leading the way in developing substantial lithium resources. Ecuador, Mexico, and Colombia all have sizeable mineral reserves but remain underexplored. Regional diversification opportunities exist for Australian companies prepared to look to the medium and long term, particularly when they leverage Australia's positive reputation for project sustainability and technological expertise.

Third is shipbuilding. Australian shipbuilders Incat and Austal sold ferry boats to Trinidad and Tobago to link the two islands, and in 2021, Austal dispatched two cape-class Patrol Boats to the Trinidad and Tobago Coast Guard.<sup>40</sup>

Fourth is infrastructure and energy. Australian companies Macquarie Capital and IFM are increasing their infrastructure holdings in Colombia. Macquarie recently acquired a highway near Bogotá, and other Australian

companies are actively looking to invest in hydrogen and distributed energy systems like microgrids in both urban and rural areas in Colombia.<sup>41</sup> Australian companies Fortescue Future Industries and Enegix Energy have both entered arrangements with Brazilian partners to explore green hydrogen, solar, and wind energy.<sup>42</sup>

Fifth is education and health. In Chile, Australian cloud-based education provider Matific provides mathematics tutoring and lessons for students. Australian company CSL, which has a laboratory based in Argentina, produces blood plasma and influenza vaccines and Amcor, which has a large Argentine workforce, packages pharmaceutical products.<sup>43</sup>

Finally, the Australian government formed the Council on Australia Latin America Relations (COALAR) in 2001 to strengthen Australia's economic, political, and social relations with the region. COALAR organizes film festivals highlighting LAC movies in Australia and Australian movies in LAC, facilitates trade delegations to both regions, and disperses grants to organizations fostering people-to-people ties.

There are challenges in the Australia-LAC relationship. An increase in cocaine demand in Australia is helping fuel a drug trade that spans from Ecuador to the Pacific. In recent months, Australian and U.S. law enforcement authorities have intercepted tons of cocaine destined for Australia.<sup>44</sup>

## INDIA

India, the world's most populous country, has developed deep ties and an influential diaspora in LAC, specifically in the Caribbean.<sup>45</sup> The Indian presence in the Caribbean stretches back to the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries when nearly a half-million Indians toiled as indentured servants in the British Caribbean territories of Trinidad and Tobago, Guyana, Grenada, Jamaica, St. Kitts and Nevis, St. Lucia, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, and Belize.<sup>46</sup> There is also a sizable Indian diaspora population in Suriname. Generations later, several Caribbean people of Indian descent have risen and become influential in all facets of local society, especially politics.<sup>47</sup>

India's car exports to LAC account for one-third of global exports, and Mexico is the

second-largest market for Indian cars.<sup>48</sup> Other considerable markets for India's automobiles are Chile, Peru, Colombia, Ecuador, Panama, and Guatemala. Similarly, India exports motorcycles to Latin America, and Colombia is the biggest market in the region for Indian two-wheelers.<sup>49</sup> India imports oil from Brazil, Mexico, Colombia, and Guyana, all worth US\$7 billion in 2022.<sup>50</sup> India has extended 35 lines of credit of nearly US\$900 million to Bolivia, Cuba, Jamaica, Guyana, Honduras, Suriname, and Nicaragua and has completed 21 regional projects to date.<sup>51</sup>

In 2022-2023, trade between India and LAC was nearly US\$50 billion.<sup>52</sup> In April 2023, India's Foreign Minister S. Jaishankar visited Guyana, Panama, Colombia, and the Dominican Republic, where he stressed India's ambition to become a global power and called on the two sides to double trade to US\$100 billion by 2027.<sup>53</sup> Jaishankar also attended the Latin America-India Business Forum in Panama, which brought together business leaders, the Development Bank of Latin America and the Caribbean representatives, and the Confederation of Indian Industry. According to the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry—India's largest and oldest business facilitation agency—LAC is a “potential growth market” for India with “significant complementarities and synergies in trade and business.”<sup>54</sup>

On June 6, 2023, the Indian Economic Trade Organization inaugurated a Latin American Caribbean Trade Office in Chennai. According to the video's description, “There is a huge interest in India for Latin American products like coffee, rum, tobacco, cigars, mining, and agricultural food-processing products, and there is a great scope for bilateral trading opportunities and industrial development by Indian companies.” India has opened embassies in Paraguay and the Dominican Republic to facilitate further engagement.<sup>55</sup>

## JAPAN

Although separated by the Pacific Ocean, Japan has had close connections with the region. Brazil is home to the world's largest Japanese diaspora, numbering around two million.<sup>56</sup> Many are descendants of migrants who came to Brazil in the late 1800s when the Brazilian government sought cheap foreign labor, and Japanese workers who originally wanted to



work in the United States saw that country strictly limit migration. Japan also has a large diaspora in Peru dating back to the nineteenth century;<sup>57</sup> one of Peru's previous presidents, Alberto Fujimori (1990-2000), was of Japanese descent.<sup>58</sup>

During the height of Japan's global economic growth in the 1980s and 1990s, when it competed with the United States globally in auto and tech innovation, Japan's engagement in the region was quite robust, so much so that professors Barbara Stallings and Gabriel Szekely wrote a book about the "New Trilateralism between Japan, the United States, and LAC."<sup>59</sup> Japanese banks held a significant amount of Latin American debt during the region's debt crisis, making Japan what Stallings called a "Reluctant Giant" in wielding influence in the region.<sup>60</sup>

Over the past decade, Japan's engagement with Latin America and the Caribbean has increased substantially. The late Prime Minister Shinzo Abe rolled out the "*Juntos!*" foreign policy with three guiding principles: progress together, lead together, and inspire together. Since then, Japanese and LAC companies and government agencies have continued to collaborate in a host of areas, mainly economic.<sup>61</sup>

Margaret Myers and Akio Hosono conducted one of the most comprehensive studies of Japanese engagement in the region for the Inter-American Dialogue in 2019. They calculated that trade between Japan and the region amounts to US\$58 billion annually, largely focused on Mexico and South America.<sup>62</sup> Japanese auto companies like Toyota, Honda, Nissan, and Mazda manufacture automobiles in Mexico, and Japan provides technical training to boost Mexico's manufacturing capacity.<sup>63</sup> Several Japanese companies have also focused on South America for its raw materials, agricultural goods, and intermediate goods. For instance, in 2018, Nissan created a business unit in Mexico that services 34 LAC countries.<sup>64</sup> That same year, it announced a US\$1.2 billion expansion of its plant in Brazil's Rio de Janeiro state,<sup>65</sup> and in 2022, it announced it would invest US\$276 million in the Resende plant by 2025.<sup>66</sup>

Toyota is another major Japanese car company in the region, with key plants in Argentina, Brazil,

Mexico, and Venezuela.<sup>67</sup> In March 2019, Toyota completed a US\$800 million expansion of its operations in Argentina, boosting production from 92,000 to 140,000 vehicles.<sup>68</sup> According to Myers and Hosono, Toyota expanded its market across Central and South America to compensate for the dip in demand from Brazil, its primary LAC importer, which was experiencing a protracted economic recession. They also noted that Japanese auto part firms are leveraging the regional Mercosur agreement by investing in Paraguay to supply Japanese producers in Brazil.<sup>69</sup>

In recent years, Japan has sought to expand its focus on Central America and the Caribbean. In an October 26, 2022, online event hosted by the Inter-American Dialogue, various Japanese public and private sector officials shared their many projects and initiatives in those regions.<sup>70</sup> For instance, the Japan International Cooperation Agency's (JICA's) Central America and Caribbean Division Director Kota Sakaguchi stated that JICA currently operates in 23 Central American and Caribbean countries, had 60 technical cooperation activities in place in Central America and the Caribbean as of 2021, and had approved more than US\$350 million in loans and US\$28 million in grant aid. JICA programming in Central America and the Caribbean focuses on technical cooperation, citizen participation, public-private partnership development, disaster relief, grants, and loans and investments.<sup>71</sup> In its 2022 annual report, JICA estimated that it provided more than US\$842 million in projects in fiscal year 2021.<sup>72</sup> Examples of projects include a partnership with the Central American Integration System and CARICOM on renewable energy and energy conservation projects, climate change mitigation projects,<sup>73</sup> development of a regional logistics master plan, conservation of biodiversity, agricultural development, gender mainstreaming, and promoting South-South and triangular cooperation.

Sakaguchi cited other recent examples of JICA's work, such as the "Project for the improvement of mathematics teaching in primary and secondary education" in El Salvador, implemented between 2015 and 2019, with a second phase underway. JICA is also working on a project encouraging the sustainable management of coastal fisheries in Antigua and Barbuda, Dominica, Grenada, St. Kitts and Nevis, St. Lucia, and St. Vincent and the

Grenadines.<sup>74</sup>

The October 2022 meeting also delved into regional Japanese private-sector companies. Nissha Medical Technologies established flagship facilities in San Pedro, Dominican Republic in 2015, and now employs almost 500 Dominican workers. Access to highly skilled labor was a major driver of the company's investment in the Caribbean, in addition to the Dominican Republic's proximity to North American markets.<sup>75</sup>

High-tech automotive components producer Yazaki North America is in Guatemala, El Salvador, and Nicaragua. More than a quarter of the company's North and Central American employees are based in these three countries. In June 2022, Yazaki announced it would invest US\$10 million in a pilot project factory in Guatemala, creating an estimated 1,000 new jobs.<sup>76</sup> Yazaki also plans to invest another US\$110 million by the end of 2026.<sup>77</sup>

Finally, the Japan Bank for International Cooperation (JBIC) is another important player in LAC. In the last three years, JBIC has focused on signing memoranda of understanding (MOUs) and giving millions in loans to renewable energy projects and resilient supply chains. Examples include an MOU with the Chilean Ministry of Energy to develop hydrogen and ammonia-based fuel sources,<sup>78</sup> a US\$2 million loan to support energy-efficient transportation of copper in the Escondida, Caserones, and Los Pelambres mines in Chile,<sup>79</sup> and collaboration with the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) and Inter-American Investment Corporation on supply chain resilience.<sup>80</sup> JBIC projects tend to focus on Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Mexico, and Peru since those countries have the resources or manufacturing capacity that Japanese automakers require.<sup>81</sup>

## NEW ZEALAND

New Zealand shares several commonalities and interests with LAC countries. New Zealand and several Caribbean countries remain in the Commonwealth. They advocate for the needs of Small Island Developing States, and climate change is a core priority. New Zealand exports mostly dairy products and meat to the Caribbean and imports Caribbean spirits.<sup>82</sup> Its climate-focused development assistance is concentrated in Antigua and Barbuda, Belize, Dominica,

Grenada, Guyana, Haiti, Jamaica, St. Lucia, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, and Suriname.<sup>83</sup>

In South America, New Zealand seeks to deepen relations with Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Mexico, and Peru.<sup>84</sup> Its exports to the region were about US\$957 million in 2021.<sup>85</sup> New Zealand and Latin American countries collaborate in various regional and international fora: New Zealand is an observer of the Pacific Alliance (a regional integration initiative between Chile, Colombia, Mexico, and Peru), has a long-standing dialogue with Mercosur (Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay and Uruguay), and shares membership with Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Guatemala, Paraguay, and Uruguay in the Cairns Group, a coalition of 19 agricultural exporting countries.<sup>86</sup>

In 2005, New Zealand signed the Trans-Pacific Strategic Economic Partnership Agreement (P4) with Chile, Singapore, and Brunei. New Zealand, Chile, Peru, and Mexico are all signatories to the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for the Trans-Pacific Partnership. New Zealand is seeking associate membership of the Pacific Alliance, and the Latin America New Zealand Business Council helps facilitate businesses and individuals interested in doing business in each other's regions.<sup>87</sup>

In 2021, New Zealand released its Four-Year Plan for Latin America and the Caribbean, focusing on two goals: (1) Increased economic, environmental, and social resilience, and (2) Enduring and diverse relationships delivering mutual benefits. In the plan, New Zealand specifically focuses on its desire to work with Eastern Caribbean countries to expand access to low-emissions energy with New Zealand's technical expertise. New Zealand will also assist LAC countries in strengthening their resilience to the slow- and rapid-onset impacts of climate change, including mitigating greenhouse gas emissions and boosting disaster preparedness. New Zealand also seeks to support sustainable and inclusive growth and innovation across the agricultural sector to advance economic, social, environmental, and cultural well-being. This is especially true in the Caribbean, where New Zealand invests in climate-smart agriculture to support economic and climate resilience.<sup>88</sup>

Like Australia, increased cocaine demand in

New Zealand is also exacerbating the drug trade emanating from Ecuador. In 2022, Auckland police intercepted US\$38 million worth of cocaine stashed in boiler pipes coming from Ecuador.<sup>89</sup> New Zealand and LAC law enforcement could work more closely to address the drug trade going forward.

Ultimately, New Zealand's footprint in LAC is small but targeted. New Zealand knows exactly the role it wants to play: a champion for the rights of small island developing states and helping lead the global fight against climate change. With a unique emphasis not just on the Caribbean but the Eastern Caribbean in particular, New Zealand is doing just that.

## **SOUTH KOREA**

South Korea's relations with Latin America and the Caribbean date back to the 1950s Korean War. Colombia sent more than 5,000 troops to defend Korean democracy. Today, a monument to the Colombian lives lost stands in the Korean War Museum in Seoul.<sup>90</sup> Trade reached a record high of US\$57 billion in 2021, and Korean private sector companies have invested US\$26 billion in the region since 2000, according to a 2022 report by the IDB.<sup>91</sup> For years, the IDB and South Korea have hosted forums to discuss deepening economic ties. South Korea buys mostly commodities, including petroleum, copper, and corn, from large LAC economies like Argentina, Brazil, Ecuador, Mexico, and Peru.<sup>92</sup> South Korea has preferential trade agreements with Central America, Chile, Colombia, and Peru that decrease tariffs and more easily facilitate trade. It is currently negotiating trade agreements with MERCOSUR, Mexico, Ecuador, and Guatemala—which, if successful, would cover more than 90 percent of the region's GDP and bilateral trade. Korea is also applying to become an Associated State of the Pacific Alliance, a regional Preferential Trade Agreement that includes Chile, Colombia, Mexico, and Peru.<sup>93</sup>

Several South Korean companies have completed mergers and acquisitions in LAC. The Korea National Oil Corporation purchased a Peruvian oil and gas company in 2009, and Samsung C&T and Korea Resources Corporation acquired a 30 percent stake in a Chilean coal mine, for example.<sup>94</sup> But the company that has made the largest investment is POSCO, which bought the Hombre Muerto lithium mine in Argentina in

2018 and announced it would invest US\$4 billion to expand its mining operations,<sup>95</sup> making South Korea a major player in the lithium field.

The development agency for the South Korean government is the Korean International Cooperation Agency (KOICA), whose stated mission in LAC is to “foster social and economic prosperity, combat crime and violence, and defend universal rights by supporting civil society.” KOICA's core partner countries are Bolivia, Colombia, Paraguay, and Peru, and it has provided US\$53 million to regional projects in Central and South America.<sup>96</sup> In its 2020–2024 Cooperation Plan for Latin America, KOICA specifically focuses on Bolivia, Colombia, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Paraguay, and Peru. Its four goals are people (human-oriented improvement in quality of life), peace (support for a peaceful and safe society), prosperity (strengthened basics for coprosperity and economic growth), and planet (establishment of a sustainable environment).<sup>97</sup> Projects range from assisting rural Colombian communities with agricultural assistance to providing information and communications technology to Salvadoran families to funding renewable energy projects in the Dominican Republic.<sup>98</sup>

Another example of South Korea's increased focus on LAC is Han Duck-Soo's recent visit to Trinidad and Tobago to attend CARICOM 50th anniversary ceremony.<sup>99</sup> In his remarks, Han pledged to hold an annual minister-level Korea-Caribbean dialogue in the Caribbean, increase Korea's contribution to the Korea-CARICOM Cooperation Fund fivefold, and sign various MOUs related to maritime science, ocean research, renewable energy, and infrastructure projects.<sup>100</sup> In addition to Trinidad and Tobago, Han also visited Panama to bolster cooperation in mineral resources, energy, and infrastructure.<sup>101</sup>

## **TAIWAN**

Of the 13 countries in the world that still recognize Taiwan, seven are in Latin America and the Caribbean: Belize, Guatemala, Haiti, Paraguay, St. Kitts and Nevis, St. Lucia, and St. Vincent and the Grenadines. In the past two years, Taiwan lost two LAC allies: Nicaragua in December 2021,<sup>102</sup> and Honduras in March 2023,<sup>103</sup> further stoking concerns that the PRC will continue its goal of

picking off Taiwan's allies one by one.

However, Taiwan still maintains significant trade with both diplomatic allies and non-diplomatic partners. Taiwan has seven embassies and nine economic and cultural offices throughout LAC.<sup>104</sup> In 2021, Taiwan experienced a significant increase in exports to Central and South America, reaching a record high of US\$7.73 billion, which represented growth of 41.3 percent. Mexico and Brazil have emerged as Taiwan's primary export destinations, accounting for nearly 70 percent of total exports to Central and South America. In recent years, Mexico has shown consistent annual growth of almost 3 percent in imports from Taiwan, making Taiwan the seventh-largest source of imports for Mexico. Furthermore, Taiwan's gaming laptops with renowned brand names have gained the largest market share among local products.<sup>105</sup> Taiwan still has Free Trade Agreements (FTAs) with El Salvador, Honduras, Paraguay, Guatemala, Panama, and Belize.<sup>106</sup>

To further enhance economic and trade benefits, Taiwan's Bureau of Foreign Trade (BOFT) has actively pursued FTAs and economic cooperation agreements with its partners. In addition, the BOFT has organized various activities throughout the year to facilitate the expansion of export and business opportunities for Taiwanese manufacturers.<sup>107</sup>

Taiwan's International Cooperation and Development Fund (ICDF) has been active in the region. According to a 2019 report by the Rand Corporation, Taiwan's ICDF has supported 159 projects and provided US\$152 million in development funds over the past 15 years.<sup>108</sup> Its focus areas include lending and investment, technical cooperation, humanitarian assistance, and international education. The ICDF also supports investments in agriculture, microfinance for small and medium-sized businesses, information technology, health care, and disaster relief.

In agriculture, the ICDF has funded food processing projects and technology and furnished credits for local cooperatives and farmer associations to produce food. It has supported local entrepreneurs through the Specialized Financial Intermediary Development Fund, a partnership with the IDB. It has also provided Guatemalans training in software

development, scholarships for LAC students to study information technology in Taiwan, and health exchanges with 37 Taiwan hospitals to supply a range of medical services in LAC. The ICDF even set up a "Cash for Work" program in Haiti, providing daily wages for 500 Haitians to clean up after the 2010 earthquake.<sup>109</sup>

In 2022, the ICDF signed an MOU with the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) to collaborate on addressing global issues.<sup>110</sup> Several Taiwan-recognizing countries in LAC will soon benefit. In St. Lucia, the ICDF and USAID are leveraging Taiwan's investments in technology and infrastructure with USAID's professional development and digital training skills to boost digital connectivity across the island and provide job training for local St. Lucians in information and communications technology. In Paraguay, they have established eight small business development centers to support micro, small, and medium-sized businesses to create jobs and bolster the local economy.<sup>111</sup>

Finally, Taiwan and the United States jointly host the Global Cooperation and Training Framework, launched in 2015. The framework is a joint U.S.-Taiwan initiative to expand cooperation in several critical areas, from public health and women's empowerment to law enforcement, humanitarian assistance, and disaster relief.<sup>112</sup> U.S. embassies across the region have organized virtual and in-person framework workshops benefiting local citizens. The most recent one in the region took place in St. Vincent and the Grenadines in June 2023, when U.S. and Taiwanese educators ran a workshop on the importance of technical schools.<sup>113</sup>

## EUROPE

### THE EUROPEAN UNION

Europe arguably has the closest but most complicated relationship with Latin America and the Caribbean. While transatlantic linkages have produced commonalities in culture, language, and political systems, the social and economic consequences of hundreds of years of slavery and colonialism still play an important role in the twenty-first century. This has caused a complex relationship where LAC countries often fluctuate between alienation from Europe and attraction to it; scholar Peter Beardsell called it "an



affirmation of difference and an insistence on shared identity.”<sup>114</sup> All 33 LAC countries would be the fifth-largest trading partner for the EU, according to a July 2023 report by the European Parliamentary Research Service.<sup>115</sup>

The year 2023 has been consequential for EU-LAC relations. It began with an early January 2023 visit by German Chancellor Olaf Scholz to Argentina, Chile, and Brazil, where he sought to drum up LAC support for Ukraine against the Russian invasion.<sup>116</sup> In March 2023, 1,500 Spanish, Portuguese, and LAC businesspeople explored mutual trade opportunities at the annual Ibero-American Summit hosted in the Dominican Republic.<sup>117</sup> In June 2023, EU President Ursula von der Leyen traveled to Brazil, Argentina, Chile, and Mexico to finalize the stalled FTA with Mercosur,<sup>118</sup> which she expects will be completed by the end of 2023.<sup>119</sup> Then, in July 2023, the European Union hosted the Community of Latin America and Caribbean States in Brussels.<sup>120</sup> It was the first formal dialogue since 2015, and it encompassed issues ranging from the war in Ukraine to climate change to supply chains. At the summit, the EU launched its Global Gateway Investment Agenda for LAC, promising over €45 billion (US\$49 billion) in investment.<sup>121</sup> The EU also announced 135 projects, including clean energy, critical minerals, infrastructure, and climate change.<sup>122</sup>

During the EU-CELAC summit in July 2023, Prime Minister of St. Vincent and the Grenadines Ralph Gonsalves and CARICOM members insisted a paragraph in the final statement acknowledge the painful past. The statement also referenced a 10-point reparation plan from CARICOM that includes canceling existing debt LAC countries owe to Europe.<sup>123</sup>

The Development Bank of Latin America also hosts regular meetings with the EU to discuss trade and investment; Spain plays an active role in fostering this mechanism.<sup>124</sup>

On March 2, 2022, ministers and vice ministers from Argentina, Bolivia, Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, and Panama signed a declaration creating the Latin American Committee on Internal Security (CLASI). Operationally oriented, CLASI will be responsible for the political and technical dialogue for security policies in Latin American countries.

The objective of CLASI is for lead partners to meet, develop strategies, and coordinate public policies against transnational organized crime.<sup>125</sup>

In 2023 alone, the EU allocated €11 million (US\$12 million) in humanitarian aid to Central America and Mexico. Since 1994, the EU has provided €322 million (US\$351 million) to support humanitarian actions in Central America and Mexico. Since 2016, the EU has allocated €390 million (US\$425 million) in humanitarian assistance to vulnerable Venezuelans in and outside the country. In 2023, the EU allocated €75 million (US\$82 million) in humanitarian aid to respond to the most urgent needs of Venezuelans. Projects in Venezuela focus on delivering (1) vital health care, (2) water, sanitation, and hygiene, (3) education in emergencies, and (4) nutritional and food support.<sup>126</sup>

Since 1994, the EU has provided €471.5 million (US\$514 million) to Haiti. In 2022, it gave €20.5 million (US\$22 million) overall, with €2.5 million (US\$2.7 million) allotted to “address the needs generated by recent political and gang-related violence, forced displacement, and migration;” €13.65 million (US\$15 million) to support the food and nutrition needs of vulnerable households in rural and urban areas; €2 million (US\$2.2 million) to strengthen capacity to respond to disasters; €1.1 million (US\$2 million) to support safe and quality education for girls and boys in targeted schools, and €1 million (US\$ 1.1 million) to support the emergency response to the cholera epidemic affecting Haiti.<sup>127</sup> Additionally, the EU has provided more than €199 million (US\$217 million) in humanitarian aid to the Caribbean (excluding Haiti). The main priorities for this humanitarian aid are risk-based and anticipatory actions, climate and environmental resilience, and urban preparedness.<sup>128</sup>

Moreover, the EU has provided aid to Colombia for more than two decades. Since 1994, Colombia has received €372 million (US\$406 million). In 2022, the EU allocated €15 million (US\$16 million) in humanitarian assistance to Colombia. In addition, Colombia has received more than €22 million (US\$24 million) as part of regional humanitarian projects to support vulnerable and forcibly displaced Venezuelans and their host communities. From 2020 to 2021, during the COVID-19 pandemic, the EU allocated more than €7.5 million (US\$8.2 million) to Colombia

to provide healthcare services, water sanitation systems, and hygiene promotion.<sup>129</sup> Although not an official EU member, Norway has been deeply involved in the Colombian peace talks as a guarantor country.<sup>130</sup>

Unfortunately, one area of concern is the increasing amount of cocaine flowing from LAC to Europe, which has become one of the most lucrative markets for the drug. Much of the drugs leave the ports of Guayaquil (Ecuador), Santos (Brazil), and Santa Marta (Colombia) and end up in the European ports of Rotterdam, Netherlands and Antwerp, Belgium.<sup>131</sup> EU and LAC law enforcement will need to work in tandem to stem the drug trade flow.

### UNITED KINGDOM

The United Kingdom's (UK)'s relationship with the region is focused on the Caribbean, given its colonial legacy. Several Caribbean countries are still Commonwealth members, led by the UK. But the region accounts for just 2 percent of UK imports and 2.5 percent of UK exports, according to then-UK Foreign Minister James Cleverly. During a May 2023 trip to Brazil, Chile, and Colombia, Cleverly stated, "we need to make sure that ... this is a region which is on the shopping list of British businesses."<sup>132</sup> Yet, one long-standing obstacle to the UK's engagement in the region is Argentina, due to its history of conflict over the Malvinas/Falkland Islands.

In 2018, the UK opened nine diplomatic posts in the Caribbean.<sup>133</sup> In 2020, the UK allocated £5 million (US\$6.2 million) in aid to assist the Caribbean in combating COVID-19. Of this amount, £3 million (US\$3.7 million) was provided to the Pan-American Health Organization to supply essential medical resources and offer management support to bolster the LAC public health systems. An additional £2 million (US\$2.5 million) was allocated to address the needs of vulnerable households and combat domestic violence against women and children.<sup>134</sup>

In 2021, the UK's aid to the Caribbean amounted to £55 million (US\$68.5 million), with various sectors benefiting from this support. Approximately 36 percent of the assistance was dedicated to programs supporting the government and civil society, while 18 percent went toward economic infrastructure and services. A further 10 percent was for humanitarian aid, and education and

health each received 8 percent.<sup>135</sup>

In October 2022, the UK responded to an upsurge in gang violence in the Turks and Caicos Islands by dispatching a Royal Fleet Auxiliary ship. This vessel was accompanied by a detachment of 24 highly-trained specialist firearms officers from The Bahamas. The objective of this deployment was to enhance regional safety and security. The United States concurrently provided maritime surveillance to support this effort.<sup>136</sup>

On June 8, 2023, U.S. Vice President Kamala Harris announced the U.S.-UK Eastern Caribbean Criminal Justice Advisor Program. Through this initiative, the Department of State will deploy a senior criminal justice advisor to the Caribbean in collaboration with the United Kingdom. The advisor's role will involve mentoring local prosecutors and judges, improving the experiences of victims and witnesses within the criminal justice system, and enhancing public legal education. The program's primary aim is to develop more efficient criminal justice systems that facilitate effective prosecutions of firearms-related crimes across the Eastern Caribbean.<sup>137</sup>

The UK government has undertaken several projects to assist the Caribbean region. One was supporting the Caribbean Financial Action Task Force from April 2018 to March 2021 with £195,000 (US\$243,000) in funding. This initiative aimed to counter money laundering and terrorism financing by implementing anti-money laundering (AML) and counterterrorism financing (CTF) standards in Caribbean Financial Action Task Force member countries. The funding supported country assessments, timely and robust reporting, and improved AML/CTF supervision.<sup>138</sup>

The Youth Skills for Economic Growth project, which began in March 2016 and concluded in August 2023, received £1 billion (US\$1.2 billion) in funding. The project focused on providing skills training and targeted assistance to disadvantaged groups, including disabled and young individuals, in Dominica, Grenada, St. Lucia, and St. Vincent and the Grenadines. The aim was to equip them with the necessary skills to contribute to economic growth. The project has already certified thousands of trainees under its various components.<sup>139</sup>

Another significant project aims to increase renewable energy and energy efficiency in the Eastern Caribbean. This initiative began in June 2015 and will conclude by December 2023, receiving £19.3 million (US\$24 million) in funding. Its objective is to enhance the use of renewable energy sources and improve energy efficiency measures, ultimately promoting energy security in the region.<sup>140</sup>

Furthermore, the UK Caribbean Infrastructure Fund, launched in January 2016 and scheduled to run until March 2026 with a budget of £349 million (US\$435 million) aims to develop critical infrastructure such as bridges, renewable energy systems, ports, water facilities, and sea defenses. With a focus on promoting productivity and resilience to natural disasters and climate change, this fund contributes to economic development, growth, and job creation across the region.<sup>141</sup>

Other projects include strengthening health facilities, supporting public financial management systems, strengthening disaster recovery and resilience, and combating organized crime and anti-corruption efforts. These initiatives address various challenges faced by the Caribbean, including improving healthcare infrastructure, enhancing financial management, and mitigating the impacts of disasters and climate change while promoting security and justice.

Specific examples of the UK's disaster relief efforts include the response to a volcanic eruption in St. Vincent in 2021. The Royal Navy played a crucial role by delivering 139 pallets of essential supplies such as food, water, and toiletries to assist the displaced residents.<sup>142</sup>

Another notable instance was the UK's response to Hurricane Irma in 2017. The British government provided £32 million (US\$40 million) in relief funds and was the first to arrive on the scene. The Royal Fleet Auxiliary Mounts Bay deployed for a six-month patrol of Caribbean waters during the hurricane season, delivered emergency aid, rebuilt, and secured the Emergency Operations Center, restored power to the hospital, and cleared debris from roads in Anguilla. Additionally, H.M.S. Ocean was deployed to assist in reconstruction efforts following the hurricane.<sup>143</sup>

## MIDDLE EAST

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### ISRAEL

Israel's relations with Latin America and the Caribbean date back to the beginning of the Jewish state in 1948. Many of the existing Jewish diaspora in LAC sought to strengthen ties with the new Jewish state. For instance, Barbados has the oldest Jewish synagogue in the Western Hemisphere, established in 1654.<sup>144</sup> In 1947, when UN member states were considering the creation of Israel, more than half of LAC countries voted in favor of its creation.<sup>145</sup> Some of the earliest engagements between Israel and the region were agricultural and medical technical exchanges.

The relationship has matured substantially. Israel signed an FTA with Mexico in 2000 and joined a MERCOSUR framework agreement with Argentina, Brazil, Uruguay, and Paraguay. Israel became an observer state to the Pacific Alliance in 2014.<sup>146</sup> Since then, it has exported more than US\$900 million of goods to the alliance. Israel exports chemicals, high-tech software, agricultural produce, machinery and electronics, and imports mainly meat, grain, corn, sugar, cocoa, coffee, and metals. Israeli banks, construction firms, and agricultural planning and development companies are expanding operations in Central and South America.<sup>147</sup>

Some Israeli companies have been active in water and telecommunication projects in the region. Fluence, for example, won a contract to develop a US\$48 million desalination plant in Mexico in 2014<sup>148</sup> and another US\$3.5 million plant in Argentina in 2018.<sup>149</sup> Also in 2018, Gilat Satellite Networks was awarded US\$153 million from the Peruvian Telecommunications Investment Fund to build two regional telecommunication infrastructure projects.<sup>150</sup>

Security is a key area for Israel. In 2016, Colombia sought expertise from the Israeli Defense Ministry on mitigating explosive devices put down by the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia or FARC).<sup>151</sup> In 2022, the Israeli government made a US\$2 million contribution to the IDB to boost regional cybersecurity, an expansion of existing cybersecurity capacity building Israel has been doing in the region since 2016.<sup>152</sup>

Despite this engagement, Israel has taken some reputational hits in recent years. The New York Times and Reuters reported that the Mexican military<sup>153</sup> and El Salvador government<sup>154</sup> used the Pegasus surveillance tool—created by Israeli company NSO Group—to spy on dissidents, journalists, and political opponents. In addition, various LAC governments have responded differently to the current Israel-Hamas war. While most LAC countries condemned the Hamas's October 7th terrorist attack against Israel (except Cuba, Venezuela, and Nicaragua), left-leaning governments in Chile, Colombia, and Honduras have openly criticized Israel for the mounting civilian death toll in Gaza.<sup>155</sup> Bolivia even went as far as severed diplomatic ties with Israel.<sup>156</sup> In short, Israel will need to improve its image over the next months and years if it wants to deepen relations in the region further.

### SAUDI ARABIA

Saudi Arabia is arguably the newest country to engage with the LAC region. It has a longstanding relationship with Brazil and is the largest oil supplier to that country.<sup>157</sup> Bilateral trade with Brazil in 2018 was US\$4.4 billion. Saudi Arabia is also branching out to Guyana, which has become the world's fastest-growing oil producer.<sup>158</sup> In May 2023, Guyana's Senior Finance Minister Ashni Singh and CEO of the Saudi Fund for Development Sultan Al-Marshad signed a US\$150 million MOU to support housing and construction around the Wismar Bridge in Guyana.<sup>159</sup> In recent months, Energy Minister Abdulaziz bin Salman and Haitham al-Ghais, secretary-general of the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), invited Guyana to join OPEC. Thus far, Guyana has declined to join so that it has more flexibility in maximizing oil production and profits in the short term.<sup>160</sup>

From July 31 to August 9, 2023, Saudi Arabia's Investment Minister Khalid Al-Falih and a trade delegation visited Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Costa Rica, Panama, Paraguay, and Uruguay. The stated goal of the visit was to explore opportunities in mining, food processing, agriculture, transport, logistics, healthcare, entertainment, and pharmaceuticals.<sup>161</sup>

## NORTH AMERICA

### CANADA

Canada has a robust and multifaceted presence in the region. In addition to the U.S.-Mexico-Canada trade agreement, which has boosted trilateral trade by 6 percent since it was signed in 2020,<sup>162</sup> Canada has free trade agreements with Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Honduras, Panama, and Peru. Canada also has Foreign Investment Promotion and Protection Agreements with Argentina, Barbados, Costa Rica, Panama, Peru, Trinidad and Tobago, Uruguay, and Venezuela, as well as 30 air transport agreements in the region.<sup>163</sup> The Royal Bank of Canada, Scotiabank, and the Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce have traditionally had a large presence in the Caribbean but have been withdrawing due to the high risks associated with banking compliance and the threat of natural disasters.<sup>164</sup>

Several Canadian companies own, operate, or have a stake in various South American mines. For instance, 15 Canadian companies own lithium mines in Argentina and Chile.<sup>165</sup> One of the biggest companies is Lithium Americas, which co-owns the Argentine Cauchari-Olaroz lithium mine with the Chinese company Ganfeng.<sup>166</sup> Chinese investors have stakes in more than two dozen Canadian mining companies, giving China stakes in Canadian-owned mines in South America.<sup>167</sup> In 2022, the Canadian government required that Chinese investors divest from many of these Canadian mining projects out of national security concerns. However, it has since walked back this requirement for at least two Canadian companies.<sup>168</sup>

Moreover, Canada is laser-focused on collaborating with LAC partners on cybersecurity. These projects aim to enhance cybersecurity capacities, promote gender inclusion, and combat cybercrime. One ongoing project is the Women in International Security and Cyberspace Fellowship. It seeks to ensure equal representation of women diplomats in UN cyber negotiations. The program provides training, workshops, and support for the fellows' participation in UN committees. Several countries from Latin America and the Caribbean participate in this initiative, along with other countries worldwide.<sup>169</sup>



Another ongoing project is “Addressing the Gender Gap in the Cybersecurity Agenda – Latin America and the Caribbean.” Its main objective is to raise awareness about the need for gender perspectives in cybersecurity policies, creating a safe and inclusive online environment. This project commenced in August 2022 and will conclude in March 2026.<sup>170</sup>

Canada also supports the Organization of American States (OAS) in preventing and combating cybersecurity threats. This involves international cooperation, implementation of national cybersecurity strategies, and active participation in international cybercrime and cybersecurity negotiations. The project supports target training and travel support for state representatives to increase their involvement in UN cybercrime and cybersecurity negotiations, with funding from the Women in Cyber Fellowship.<sup>171</sup>

From August 2019 to March 2023, Canada conducted a regional training to strengthen Central America’s justice and security sector capacities to prevent, identify, and prosecute cybercrime. It aimed to address the needs of Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras, and Belize in establishing a legal framework to prosecute and judge cyber-enabled and cyber-dependent crimes, ensuring effective investigation, prosecution, and adjudication of cybercrime and cyber-enabled offenses by authorities through special investigation techniques, increasing citizens’ awareness of cybercrime threats and promoting prevention and reporting of related infractions.<sup>172</sup>

Another completed project, the “Cybercrime Capacity Building in the Americas Phase II,” focused on enhancing the capacity of 35 LAC countries to tackle cybercrime comprehensively. The project used a combination of assessment, mentoring, training, operations, and public awareness activities to prevent, detect, and investigate cybercrime. The project’s outcomes included increasing cybercrime investigative knowledge and capacity in beneficiary states, enhancing their digital forensic capability through certifying training initiatives, improving cybercrime enforcement and prevention capacity through targeted awareness-raising mechanisms, and promoting sustainability of cyber capacity-building efforts across the

region.<sup>173</sup>

The project involved several noteworthy activities, including missions to selected countries to assess and monitor their cybercrime capabilities and effectively target initiatives. Regional mentoring programs were implemented in which law enforcement officers from beneficiary countries with emerging cybercrime capabilities worked alongside colleagues in countries with well-established capacities to learn from their experience and implement best practices. Training courses covered a range of areas, including INTERPOL policing capabilities, digital forensics, open-source intelligence, cryptocurrencies, and dark web investigations, as well as human rights and gender dimensions of cybercrime. An e-evidence boot camp offered an interactive online course on digital forensics and using digital evidence in prosecutions. Cybercrime operations aim to enhance regional cooperation on investigations related to hacking activities, compromised credit card information, and online child sexual exploitation. A public awareness campaign was also conducted to improve digital hygiene among the public.<sup>174</sup>

These initiatives have contributed to strengthening cybersecurity capacities, fostering international cooperation, and addressing gender disparities in the field of cybersecurity in LAC.

Canada has been the second-largest provider of development aid to Haiti. Since the 2010 earthquake, the Government of Canada has provided Haiti with CAD\$1.87 billion (US\$1.3 billion) worth of funding.<sup>175</sup> As of May 4, 2023, Canada has spent more than CAD\$150 million (US\$109 million) over the past 20 years on the Haitian National Police (HNP).<sup>176</sup> Canada provided CAD\$10 million (US\$7.3 million) in Emergency Support to the HNP, established in March 2022 as part of the UN Multi-Donor Basket Fund for Security.<sup>177</sup> Since the fund’s establishment, seven other donor nations have joined, contributing US\$19 million of the target US\$28 million. Specific goals of this program are to uphold the definition of more feminized profiles in recruitment, rehabilitate 15 to 20 police and sub-police stations in the West Department, support the design of specialized training for the anti-kidnapping unit, and help establish a cybercrime unit.

Canada has completed numerous projects involving the HNP. Of note, particular projects include “Improving the Integration of Women in the Haitian National Police,” which provided CAD\$3 million (US\$2 million) to the HNP and ran for just over two years. The program aimed to increase the number of female police officers in the HNP, who were mainly recruited from at-risk areas with prevailing violence and insecurity. Results from that program included three training and awareness sessions on policing for 100 young women, 81 female police recruits receiving pedagogical and psychological support in preparation for the entrance exam to the National Police Academy, development of training modules for female police recruits, development of a distance learning platform, and conducting a recruitment campaign for young female police recruits.<sup>178</sup>

Canada has also supported the professionalism of the HNP through its “Initial Training and Professional Development for the Haitian National Police’s Managerial Staff” project, providing training and professional development for inspectors and commissioners and supporting the development of a new training curriculum and implementation of organizational and administrative structure for a training institution. This project ran from July 2010 through September 2021 and provided CAD\$23 million (US\$16.7 million) to the HNP. The program has graduated 483 (33 female) police officers, 249 commissioners (12 female) and 233 inspectors (21 female). Other program results included rehabilitation of the academy’s buildings, building sanitary blocks and dormitories for female officers, and integrating gender equity in all courses.<sup>179</sup>

## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR U.S. POLICY MAKERS

This summary of countries and their priorities in Latin America and the Caribbean confirms that allies and partners are quite active in the region. Yet, all too often, U.S. government agencies are unaware of what other countries are doing in LAC or do not regularly coordinate with allies and partners on shared initiatives. Below is a list of recommendations based on the comparative advantages identified for each country:

•**Pool resources for the Americas Partnership for Economic Prosperity (APEP) and the Global Gateway.** Both initiatives are committed to digital connectivity, renewable energy, health, and climate resilience. Therefore, the U.S. APEP and EU Global Gateway should fund complementary projects. Both should also leverage the G7’s Partnership for Global Infrastructure and Investment, and jointly bid on key regional environmental and infrastructure projects with blended financing. Indeed, such projects are already underway in the Indo-Pacific. In 2023, the U.S. Development Finance Corporation (DFC) joined forces with the Japan Bank of International Cooperation (JBIC) and the Australia Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade to finance climate projects in Vietnam,<sup>180</sup> and worked with its Japanese and Australian partners to provide high-quality telecommunications services to several Pacific Island nations.<sup>181</sup>

On August 18, at the first-ever U.S.-Japan-Republic of Korea summit at Camp David, the DFC, JBIC, and South Korea’s Export-Import Bank signed an MOU to cooperate on financing infrastructure, information technology, supply chain resilience, and climate projects in the Indo-Pacific and beyond.<sup>182</sup> In LAC, the DFC has invested US\$11 billion in women’s economic empowerment, healthcare, agriculture, and climate resilience.<sup>183</sup> One recent example is a DFC-IDB project to help Ecuador convert its debt to resources to protect its maritime ecosystem around the Galapagos Islands.<sup>184</sup> Another important example is the November 2, 2023 commitment by the United States, Canada, South Korea, Spain, and the IDB to provide US\$89 million in grants to support LAC countries impacted by irregular migration.<sup>185</sup> This is precisely the kind of multinational cooperation the United States and its allies and partners can continue leveraging in the future.

•**Encourage Taiwan to help establish the LAC Digital Center of Excellence, and work with Panama and Costa Rica on semiconductor supply chain development.** On November 2nd, 2023, President Biden and various LAC leaders agreed to establish a Digital Center of Excellence in Costa Rica, which will provide training in semiconductor supply chains, 5G, cybersecurity, and other emerging technology.<sup>186</sup> In July 2023, the U.S. announced

Manufacturing Company could provide technical assistance in establishing the Center of Excellence, and help Panama, Costa Rica and others to develop semiconductor supply chains. Doing so will further boost Taiwan's global reputation and provide a counterweight to the People's Republic of China.

**•Convene an annual or biannual international working group where allies and partners share their activities in the region.**

The OAS, State Department Assistant Secretary of State for Western Hemisphere Affairs, or U.S. Southern Command Commander could chair this conference. Each country would have representatives from their respective ministries of foreign affairs, trade, defense, and development. Conveners should also develop a one-stop-shop database to manage all the projects allies and partners are doing in the region and identify synergies. U.S. ambassadors across the region should consider hosting periodic convenings in their countries to boost country-level coordination between allies and partners.

**•Continue to encourage LAC-Africa engagement.**

African counterparts can share important lessons learned with their LAC partners about pitfalls to avoid in dealing with China. Kenya's offer to lead the multinational effort in Haiti is another example of an emerging country's eagerness to lead on the world stage. U.S. policymakers should also follow the ongoing EU-CELAC negotiations on reparations, as it may help inform the U.S. domestic debate about reparations for Black Americans.

**•Encourage India and Australia to boost engagement in the region.**

India is already the world's most populous nation and has enormous growth potential. As it continues to develop, India can play an even larger role in trade, lithium, space, science, and technology in LAC. Australia, whose economy shares some similarities with large LAC commodity exporters like Brazil, could share best practices on mitigating economic coercion from China.

**•Partner with New Zealand on projects in the Eastern Caribbean.**

Eastern Caribbean countries have long felt neglected by U.S. policymakers. The United States can leverage New Zealand's focus on the Eastern Caribbean to

carry out joint projects on climate, concessional financing, and other issues affecting small island developing states.

**•Coordinate with the EU on Engagement with CELAC.**

The EU has diverged from the United States about the importance of CELAC as an official international forum. The United States is unlikely to engage with CELAC, as it is an alternative to the OAS. But it should consider asking the EU to engage with LAC partners when they meet in CELAC.

**•Encourage Israel, Saudi Arabia, and other Middle Eastern countries to boost engagement.**

Saudi Arabia can provide technical assistance and know-how to Guyana as that country builds its oil production infrastructure. Saudi Arabia is also looking to diversify its economy to be less reliant on oil and is seeking to finance green initiatives.<sup>189</sup> In this endeavor, the Saudis will find willing partners in LAC.

## CONCLUSION

The persistent narrative in the region is U.S. and partner engagement in Latin America and the Caribbean pale in comparison to China. But as this paper demonstrates, the United States and China are not the only countries seeking to engage with Latin America and the Caribbean. Other countries worldwide are seeking to boost their relations with the region.

Some already have robust trade and programs, like Japan, while others, like the UK, want to encourage their companies to do more business in LAC. New Zealand has decided its priorities are strictly climate change and small island developing states and will prioritize the Eastern Caribbean. The EU, African countries, and South Korea want to increase their engagement in trade, investments in critical minerals, and democracy promotion. Most surprisingly, several countries have invested in key infrastructure projects, such as South Korea's POSCO buying a lithium mine in Argentina or the Japanese financing copper mines in Chile.

This report provides a baseline of each country's priorities and regional projects. Future researchers can build on this further. Below are further questions for consideration:

- How can we quantify these companies' investments, development aid, and other activities and compare them with U.S. and Chinese engagement in the region?
- In which areas are allies and partners competing with U.S. interests? For example, the EU's Global Gateway and lithium agenda in Chile could be considered a counterweight to APEP. Future scholars could delve deeper into areas of potential competition between the U.S. and its partners and offer ways to mitigate those issues proactively.
- How are countries within the region developing dynamic relationships with each other? How do large countries like Brazil and Argentina influence their neighbors politically, economically, and socially? How are regional economic and political blocs like Mercosur, the Pacific Alliance, the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States, and the Central American Integration System influencing regional issues and engaging with international partners?

The good news is that the United States has several allies and partners in the region to collaborate and pool resources with on joint infrastructure, renewable energy, cybersecurity, and democracy promotion, among others. To truly put integrated deterrence into action in this region—and every region—U.S. policymakers in Washington and officials in Latin America and the Caribbean need to have a broader understanding of our allies and partners' priorities and projects, and how we can all unite to be force multipliers.



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