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Latin Americanist ideals are reborn



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The vision of Latin America and the Caribbean reaffirming its own approaches confronts the neo-monroist geostrategy of the US for the twenty-first century.

Two events have special significance for the contemporary history of Latin America: the VII CELAC summit held in Argentina on January 24 (2023) and the statements of the head of the US Southern Command, General Laura Richardson, released on January 19 (<https://bit.ly/3HmP9MD>), about which some references have circulated with Spanish translation.

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CELAC was born in 2010 as a forum for Latin American and Caribbean countries, excluding the US and Canada, to try to become an alternative to the discredited OAS, which is an instrument of Monroist Americanism. CELAC has never been liked by the U.S. But its weakness also comes from not having constituted itself as an independent body, with its own administration and resources. In any case, the VII-CELAC recovered a path stalled by the right-wing rulers, after the first cycle of progressive governments: in 2017 the "Lima Group" was formed to isolate Venezuela; in 2020 Jair Bolsonaro separated Brazil from CELAC arguing that it "gave prominence to non-democratic regimes"; and the foreign policy of Donald Trump (2017-2021) subordinated rulers of the Latin American right to the vision and strategies of the US in the continent, as happened with Lenin Moreno (2017-2021) in Ecuador.

The VII-CELAC, with the presence of the 33 member countries – including a delegate from the US government – was present. Under a new cycle of governments that identify with progressive policies, it has renewed the path of Latin Americanism. The *Declaration of Buenos Aires* (<https://bit.ly/3JBxy5d>) ratifies the region as a Zone of Peace resolved at the II Summit (2014); commitment to democracy, human rights, international cooperation, multilateralism, territorial integrity, sovereignty, non-intervention in the internal affairs of States, the promotion of justice and the maintenance of international peace and security; highlights fundamental principles for a social economy, health strategy, addressing the world drug problem, cooperation in environmental matters, comprehensive disaster risk management; on science, technology and innovation, digital transformation, infrastructure; situation of women, youth and girls, youth; Afro-descendants, indigenous languages, migration, disability; education, culture, cooperation between diplomatic, space and nuclear academies; public integrity, prevention and fight against corruption, intervention in multilateral forums and coordination with regional bodies; Dialogue with extra-regional partners. Specifically, it speaks out against the blockade of Cuba, rejects unilateral lists and certifications, supports dialogue in Venezuela, vindicates the Malvinas and Puerto Rico's Latin American position. However, there was no pronouncement on the atrocities that are occurring in Peru.

Of particular relevance has been the reincorporation of Brazil, the indisputable leadership taken by President Lula da Silva, the condemnation of some presidents to the repression unleashed in Peru, the announcement of Argentina and Brazil for a common currency (proposal also raised some time ago by Ecuadorian economists – <https://bit.ly/3HAPIYA>).

But the subject of Commander Ric's statements did not come up. Hardson. They openly consider as part of the "national security" of the U.S. a set of explicit natural resources: the lithium triangle in Argentina, Bolivia and Chile; reserves of oil, gas, copper, gold, food resources, fresh water, Amazon; it is noted that China has become the first place in the trade of some countries and its investments are growing; refers to the presence of military equipment from Russia in 9 countries (it names Cuba, Nicaragua and Venezuela, but Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, Mexico and Peru also have it) and ensures that work is being done to replace them with American equipment, asking the countries involved to "donate" Russian equipment to Ukraine. The statement considers Russia and especially China as "adversaries" and is clear in pointing out that it seeks to "box" them out of the region.

Commander Richardson's vision challenges and contradicts the CELAC Declaration. Colombian President Gustavo Petro has had to come out and confirmed that the US proposed to deliver Russian-made military equipment to Ukraine, which was rejected, because "our Constitution has peace as its order in the international arena. It will remain as scrap metal in Colombia," clarifying: "We are not on anyone's side. We are on the side of peace. Therefore, not a unit of Russian military equipment, whatever the conditions it is on our territory, will be used in that conflict" (<https://bit.ly/3Y0nd6v>). Mexican President Andrés Manuel López Obrador has also had clear concepts about the condemnable war in Ukraine and the independence of Latin America from the powers in conflict. Last year his government proposed at the UN (<https://bit.ly/3WH0aN2>) a path to peace, which was immediately branded as unfeasible, trying to minimize the project and even considering it "pro-Russian". Within the framework of CELAC, these positions were able to acquire international relevance. Although President López Obrador did not participate in the VII-CELAC (Foreign Minister Marcelo Ebrand attended), he sent a warm message of support for the summit and its conclusions and also believes that continental integration should not exclude the US or Canada (<https://bit.ly/3JBQ7Gr>). In any case, there is a contrast to the absence of Ecuadorian President Guillermo Lasso, who simply sent his Foreign Minister, while preferring to attend the meeting of the billionaires at the World Economic Forum (WEF), where he was among his own and in which perspectives are not offered according to the development needs of the economies and peoples of Latin America and the Caribbean. but to its business elites (<https://bit.ly/3H72QxM>).

Once again, the long-term trend in the continent is noticeable: the vision of Latin America

and the Caribbean, which emphasizes its own approaches, confronts the *neo-monroist geostrategy* of the US for the twenty-first century. The pronouncements are reiterated: in May 2022, Antony J. Blinken, US Secretary of State, gave a forceful speech on "The administration's approach to the People's Republic of China" (<https://bit.ly/3tbVDGE>); Commander Richardson herself appeared before the Senate Armed Services Committee (March, 2022), where she warned that China is the "primary threat" and Russia a "secondary" threat; whereas China is 'expanding', while Russia is 'intensifying instability' through its links with Venezuela, Cuba and Nicaragua; and that "integrated deterrence" will be carried out to counter these "negative" influences, which challenge the influence of the US (<https://bit.ly/3PwMrzA>). And at the "South American Defense Conference" held in Ecuador (Southdec, September 2022), with the presence of senior military commanders of America (<https://bit.ly/3DsMpeP>), although the general theme was security, the central issue dealt with the "transversal challenges" to democracy and freedoms of the continent, as well as the "threat" posed by China and Russia (<https://bit.ly/3dfaMIB>). This is the call for a new *Monroism* (<https://bit.ly/3qX9yyD>), which does not rule out the politicization of the armed forces. The region already has enough historical experience with the irrational era of the Cold War, which implanted military dictatorships such as those of the Southern Cone, which placed themselves above the Constitutions, democracy, civilian governments and human rights, to combat "communism" by committing crimes against humanity. So the principles of CELAC, with the limitations and even contradictions that are still present, are called to guide Latin American integration for a new era, based on peace, rights, social economies and real democracies, in a multipolar world.

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