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New Americanist Summit for "Economic Cooperation"

The progressive governments of Latin America have the opportunity to evaluate well the new continentalist economic agenda, which will have no limits to be followed by governments identified with business interests, under neoliberal ideology.



December 2 marks the bicentennial of the Monroe Doctrine (1823), formulated by U.S. President [James Monroe](#) (1817-1825). Its purpose was to stop any attempt at colonial reconquest by the European powers on the continent, where the last battles for independence were being fought, which resulted in the birth of the various Latin American states. Monroism was synthesized in the formula "[America for the Americans](#)", which

accompanied the definitive imperialist expansion of the United States in the twentieth century.



Clyde O. DeLand: The Birth of the Monroe Doctrine. 1912. Personalities portrayed: John Quincy Adams, William H. Crawford, William Wirt, James Monroe, John C. Calhoun, Daniel D. Tompkins, and John McLean.

In the heat of *Americanism-Monroism*, the U.S. has been persistent in multiple initiatives to maintain its interests and encourage the subordination of Latin America to them. The first "diplomatic" step was the [First Inter-American Conference of 1890](#), which created the International Union of American [Republics](#), transformed in 1910 into the [Pan American Union](#) and in 1948 converted into the Organization of [American States \(OAS\)](#), which became an instrument of the [Cold War in Latin America](#) as a result of the [Cuban Revolution \(1959\)](#) and which today is a forum that has a generalized discredit.



The Cuban revolution began on January 1, 1959 after the flight of the then de facto ruler, Fulgencio Batista. Leaders: [Liberation Army](#), [Rebel Army](#).

In economic matters, the starting point was the First Pan-American Financial Congress (1915), with the central purpose of "establishing closer and more satisfactory financial relations" between the countries of the continent, among which economic relations with Europe still predominated. The First World War put the brakes on this path, so that in

1939 the First Meeting of Ministers of Finance of the American Republics was held, although it only concluded in projects and recommendations. Decades later, in the 80s and 90s, what was imposed in Latin America was the IMF and the neoliberal conditions of the "Washington Consensus", when transnational globalization flourished.



It was precisely in this situation that the United States convened the First Summit of the Americas ([1994](#)), which emphasized the two traditionally idealized aspects: "free trade" and the "community of democracies" of the Americas, linked to the OAS. Its direct purpose was to establish the "[Free Trade Area of the Americas \(FTAA\)](#)", a project that caused serious resistance in progressive forces and social movements, and that was nipped in the bud by the [People's Summit](#), held in Argentina (2005), in which Presidents Hugo Chávez (Venezuela), Néstor Kirchner (Argentina) and Inácio Lula da Silva (Brazil) discarded the FTAA and promoted [MERCOSUR](#), [UNASUR](#) and [CELAC](#) (Venezuela also [ALBA](#)).



Inácio Lula da Silva (Brazil), Hugo Chávez (Venezuela), Néstor Kirchner (Argentina)
From then on, the Summits of the Americas became forums for confrontation between *Monroism* and *Latin Americanism*. [Rafael Correa, then president of Ecuador, announced that he would not attend the VI Summit \(2012\) if Cuba continued to be excluded,](#) a position that received the support of other countries, which forced [Cuba's presence at the VII Summit \(2015\).](#) That progressive Latin Americanism determined the beginning of talks that led to the diplomatic opening between Cuba and the U.S., including Barack Obama's historic visit to Havana (2016), a process reversed by President Donald Trump ([2017-2021](#)), under another conjuncture of conservative and neoliberal rulers in Latin America.



Barack Obama and Raul Castro at the Palace of the Revolution in Cuba © Reuter

[The IX Summit of the Americas in Los Angeles \(June 2022\)](#) resumed Monroism and attempted to align Latin American countries with the U.S. position in the war in Ukraine. Cuba, Nicaragua and Venezuela were excluded from participating. But Presidents Andrés Manuel López Obrador (Mexico), Xiomara Castro (Honduras) and Luis Arce (Bolivia) did not attend the summit (they sent their foreign ministers), while Johnny Briceño (Belize), Gabriel Boric (Chile) and Alberto Fernández (Argentina) questioned the unilateral decision of Joe Biden's government in their speeches. Alignment with Ukraine was also not achieved, as Latin America was ratified as a region of peace.

The failure of the Summits has led to a new strategy of re-continentalization: last Friday (Oct. 3, 2023) the "First Summit of Leaders of the Alliance for Economic Prosperity of the Americas (APEP)" was held. It implements President Joe Biden's initiative formulated during the [2022 Summit of the Americas](#), in which he announced the creation of the "[Association of the Americas](#)." The new Summit was attended by: Joe Biden (USA), Gustavo Petro (Colombia), Gabriel Boric (Chile), Justin Trudeau (Canada), Dina Boluarte (Peru), Luis Lacalle Pou (Uruguay), Luis Abinader (Dominican Republic), Rodrigo Chaves (Costa Rica) and Guillermo Lasso (Ecuador), in addition to the ministers representing Barbados, Mexico and Panama. A document was agreed that, in essence, expresses the intentions of continental economic coordination, on general themes: strengthening competitiveness and regional integration; fostering shared prosperity and good governance; building sustainable infrastructure; protect the climate and the environment; and promote healthy communities. A simply declarative plan, which is far from [the Alliance for Progress](#) program, promoted by President [J.F. Kennedy \(1961-1963\)](#), the only one to succeed in promoting the definitive capitalist development of Latin America, in the midst of the Cold War and, paradoxically, maintaining coincidences with some of ECLAC's theses, such as agrarian reform, in the <>s.



The leaders of the United States, Canada and ten Latin American countries pledged to make this alliance a lasting forum for economic development in the region and sealed their commitment with a minimum agreement, which does not contain figures but general lines. The enthusiasm, at least in the dissemination of the I-Summit, has corresponded to Guillermo Lasso, a month after being forced to end his government. In order to clean up his image, in successive posts he anticipated that at the meeting he could "see opportunities for solutions to our own short-term problems," spoke of several "achievements" in his mandate, and thanked the IDB for its "ideal measures to promote the development and well-being of Ecuadorians" ([@LassoGuillermo](#)). These are words that contradict the disastrous results of its internal economic and social management, which offer a modern *picture of underdevelopment*.

Beyond the official declarations, the First APEP Summit can be understood in three contexts: first, it returns to the constant proposals for a continental free market, renewed with the idea of "economic cooperation"; second, this open and cooperative market takes place in conditions of inequality, between a giant power and countries with less development; and, third, Monroist re-continentalization has the purpose of putting a front to the unstoppable advance of the interests of China, Russia and the BRICS, in a world that is rapidly configuring a multipolar internationality with a diversity of political regimes. The progressive governments of Latin America have the opportunity to evaluate well the new continentalist economic agenda, which will have no limits to be followed by governments identified with business interests, under neoliberal ideology.

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