

E  
CENT



U.S-ChinaC

China's financial support to the Organization of the American States (OAS) (2005, 2009, 2015).  
surprisingly

region considering the rising autonomy of the region and more capable external and internal players emerging in the region. Considering the issues in the U.S.-Latin American relationship, China's economic engagement with the region could provide more favorable conditions to solve the issues of illegal immigration, drug trafficking, and energy security<sup>iii</sup>

At the 2019 meeting on The Rise of China and its Impact on Developing Countries, The Carter Center was initially interested in identifying entry points for coordination among U.S., Chinese, and LAC partners. However, the panel conclusion, the international context, as well as the Center's engagement with LAC, U.S., and Chinese actors led to the realization that, today, conducting projects (107)(1)(33) 105.826 id.

From a China-LAC engagement perspective, the relevance of Agenda 2030 as a framework for development cooperation in LAC is acknowledged by the 2018 Declaration of Santiago released by the Second Ministerial Meeting of the CELAC-China Forum. The same document stresses the importance of designing cooperation models with international organizations. It points out that the “declaration requires a solid followup and joint monitoring of initiatives, plans and programs, for which the support of international organizations is fundamental, especially the Caribbean Development Bank (CDB), the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), the Development Bank

they wrote, is that the “Trump Administration is seeking to reduce foreign aid significantly and refocus U.S. assistance efforts in the region to address U.S. domestic concerns, such as irregular migration and transnational crime”<sup>vii</sup> shifting from a broader approach to development aid to a narrower focus on security.

## A CONCRETE PROPOSAL FOR A MULTILATERAL COORDINATION

Both the US and China display ambiguity on the SDGs that involve climate change. They also have diverging interests in the area of peace and security, particularly as it relates to relationships with Venezuela and the Chinese diplomatic expansion in the region at the expense of Taiwan. However, both the US and China seem to be officially aligned with most of the objectives set by the key regional multilateral framework, the Agenda 2030. But how could that alignment lead to constructive interaction to achieve actual cooperation? For the purposes of this discussion, it would be better to narrow the scope of work, moving from the broad objectives of all the SDGs to more specific and/or specific countries. The document *Hacia un nuevo estilo de desarrollo: Plan de Desarrollo Integral El Salvador-Guatemala-Honduras-México. Diagnóstico, áreas de oportunidad y recomendaciones* (Toward a New Development Style: Integral Development Plan El Salvador-Guatemala-Honduras-Mexico. Diagnosis, Areas of Opportunity and Recommendations—referred to as the Plan hereafter) was published in June 2019 by Mexico’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs in collaboration with the ECLAC. It provides a good framework for this exercise by setting a series of development policy recommendations within the framework of Agenda 2030 based on a thorough needs assessment of Mexico’s southern states and the countries of the Northern Triangle of Central America (NCA): Guatemala, El Salvador, and Honduras. It has been promoted by Mexico and undersigned by the NCA countries.

NCA countries are among the most in need of development assistance in the region and at the same time a source of security concerns for the US because of narco-trafficking and migration. In an agreement signed in December 2018, billions of dollars for cooperation for the economic development of the same region were committed by Mexico (\$25 billion) and the US (\$10.6 billion). However, the US strategy in the area has shifted toward support for private entrepreneurship and security. Moreover, the US funding commitments might be hampered by the temperamental relationship the current administration has with its counterparts in the NCA. And Mexico’s ability to comply with its funding commitments remains to be seen. The country must deal with huge challenges of its own, such as the fact that 42% of its population lives below the poverty line<sup>viii</sup> and the ever-rising level of violence. All the above leaves important gaps both thematic and financial, which could be filled by China, together with other donors. Of all the recommendations set by the Plan, some might be particularly relevant for Chinese interests, such as: 1) Enhance electrical infrastructure interconnectivity among NCA countries and between the NCA and Mexico; 2) Develop regional infrastructure to boost natural gas utilization within the NCA; 3) Develop a gradual structural change focused on the transition toward a sustainable economy. Those points alone will require massive investments in infrastructure as well as cooperation in the areas of innovation and high-tech.

From a multilateral framework perspective, the Plan might provide a great opportunity to engage with the NCA and Mexico in areas where China is gradually taking the lead in LAC. Some of that support could even be delivered by aligning Belt & Road Initiative efforts with the Plan objectives in the area of infrastructure. By doing so, China would be supporting southern Mexico and NCA development needs that are regional priorities, as established by the development target



utilized. The SDGs and Agenda 2030 present the main framework under which several other multilateral policy instruments, such as the Plan for Mexico and the NCA, have been created and agreed upon. Those frameworks are so complex and broad that both the US and China can contribute to their achievement by engaging the areas of their own interest, contributing to the greater objective of fostering sustainable development in the region. To follow up on Dussel Pires and Ray, and Niu's analyses, those frameworks should be leveraged by LAC governments to upgrade their relationships with China and the US. At the same time, they can also provide a safe setting to carry out a reciprocal learning process that could eventually lead to the development of trilateral dialogue and even cooperations such as in security efforts against organized crime or in humanitarian relief and health. The creation of CIDCA could be a game changer, allowing Chinese engagement with counterparts focusing strictly on technical development policy issues, which would offer more insulation from bilateral political fluctuations.

This policy paper provides a macro analysis and a general recommendation for constructive interaction through multilateral frameworks, based on a comparative analysis of US and Chinese strategy

(to be revised for LAC 3rd Action Agenda 7/2018) (revised 4/2019) (revised 5/16/2019) (revised 6/16/2019) (revised 7/29/2019) (revised 10/2/2019) (revised 11/10/2019)



---

<sup>i</sup> Dussel Peters E., China's Recent Engagement in Latin America and the Caribbean: Current Conditions and Challenges, The Carter Center 0.006 Tc u Tc .3gp1 Tf. (e) 6 73T 72 711.0 60.725T 72 711.6 144<</AtBDC 6.48 30 0 6.483 Tw 7.44 0 Td7d ( 72 700.4

---

## REFERENCES

Aboaf C. U.S.-China Collaboration in Combating the 2014 Ebola Outbreak in West Africa, U.S.-China Trilateral Cooperation Research Series No. 3, The Carter Center 2019

Aboaf C. U.S.-China Collaboration in Creating and Supporting the Africa Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Africa U.S.-China Trilateral Cooperation Research Series No. 4, The Carter Center 2019

Cheng C. China and U.S. Anti-piracy Engagement in the Gulf of Aden and Western Indian Ocean Region, Africa-U.S.-China Trilateral Cooperation Research Series No. 5, The Carter Center 2019

Comisión Económica para América Latina y el Caribe (CEPAL), un nuevo estilo de desarrollo. Plan de Desarrollo Integral El Salvador-Guatemala-Honduras-México. Diagnóstico, áreas de oportunidad y recomendaciones de la CERAC/MEX/TS.2019/6), Ciudad de México, 2019.

Consejo Nacional de Evaluación de la Política de Desarrollo Social (CONEVAL), POBREZA EN MÉXICO De pobreza en México 2018 a nivel nacional y por entidades federativas. he.229 Ta4.1 ( C)7.9 (obbean:)0.7 ( baTc 0 -0.001 k)(

---

United Nations, The 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals: An opportunity for Latin America and the Caribbean (LC/G.26/P/Rev.3), Santiago, 2018.

II Ministerial Meeting of the CELAC-China Forum, DECLARATION OF SANTIAGO: "CELAC Working for more development, innovation and cooperation for our peoples", Santiago de Chile, January 2018.

II Ministerial Meeting of the CELAC-China Forum, CELAC AND CHINA JOINT PLAN OF ACTION FOR COOPERATION ON PRIORITY AREAS (2019), Santiago de Chile, January 2018.