

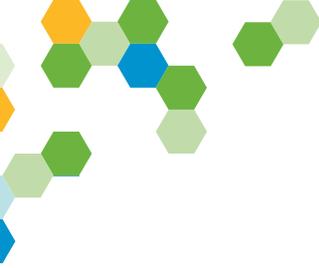


SPECIAL REPORT

# Towards where should the strategic relation between the EU and Latin America and the Caribbean move?

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TOWARDS WHERE SHOULD THE  
STRATEGIC RELATION BETWEEN  
THE EU AND LATIN AMERICA AND  
THE CARIBBEAN MOVE? BY JOSÉ  
ISAÍAS RODRÍGUEZ

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## PRESENTATION

The EU-CELAC Summit will take place in Brussels on 10 and 11 June and will bring together the most senior figures from the 28 Member States of the European Union and from the 33 countries that make up the Community of Caribbean and Latin American States (CELAC).

The relationship between Europe and Latin America is deeply rooted in the history of the two continents which, despite their distance and the great ocean that lies between them, are much closer than they are with others connected by land.

Cultural ties, common languages and, above all, a set of values shared by their respective societies, have woven connections that, even with the dizzying development of the world around them, show the importance of a Western vision of the world of which they form part.

In the game of chess that is played on the board of the planet, Latin America and Europe must play the role that is theirs as a result of being leading players in the development of societies founded on democracy, the rule of law, the social market economy, inter and intra-generational solidarity and that defend a policy of progress and welfare for their citizens.

Economics, that science invented in Europe, also greatly influences European-Latin American relations. The EU is the largest foreign investor in CELAC and its second largest trading partner. This economic relationship is not based on the extraction of the greatest possible profit per se and in the short term, but instead is structured around quality, social responsibility, job creation, technology transfer and the promotion of research and innovation, all of that with an approach seeking continuance over time.

The importance of summits lies in the generation of ties and strategic visions. However, if they are not followed up and the commitments made by the parties in their "Final Declarations and Conclusions" are not implemented, we will be in the interminable territory of the game "snakes and ladders" in which we will be unable to progress up a ladder without being sent back down by a snake.

The history of European-Latin American Summits suggests a certain diminishing marginal utility, or in other words, it is as if one more unit of summit at the margin produces effects contrary to those expected. There is a certain mental fatigue, a lack of ideas and of political will. There is too much rhetoric, complacency, passivity and a lack of the vision required to understand that we need strengthen the ties between Europe and Latin America, if

we really want to occupy the position that corresponds to both regions in a world where "nothing is, everything changes".

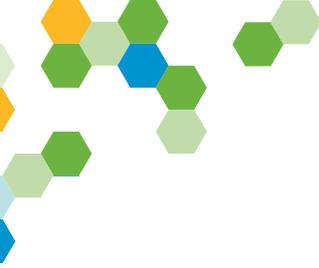
In the Europe-Latin America relationship, expectations were created which, later, clashed with the reality of the disagreements that are to be found in any negotiations involving economic interests. That has left a feeling of scepticism which is enhanced, at the same time, by the mutual impression generated by thinking that both are looking for other dance partners on the international stage.

The crisis, which has been impregnating Europe with its penetrating perfume for longer than, in principle, some imagined, has affected not only the internal EU but also, undoubtedly, its external relations. Latin America has not been unaffected and, in this regard, we have seen a change in direction which, in my opinion, is mutual. Asia and the Pacific area are now top-level trading partners for South America, while the EU has strengthened its position as privileged partner of Mexico, Central America and the Caribbean. Our old and beloved Europe, in addition to continuing to look to its own market, also has its eyes on Asia. This questions the strength of the European-Latin American relationship in the exponential dynamic of globalisation.

Indeed, two major agreements currently occupying the cross-ocean negotiating space are likely to change the balance of world trade. I am referring to the "Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership" (TTIP) between the EU and the USA, and the "TransPacific Partnership" (TPP) between the USA and countries bordering the Pacific. In one way or another, they will affect EU-CELAC relations, as well as the internal processes of regionalisation in Latin America.

We don't have a crystal ball allowing us to clearly see the future impact of the changes arising from these mega-agreements. However, asymmetries must appear as a result of the heterogeneity of what we could call "Latin Americas". Nevertheless, and without needing to be a fortune teller, we can say that we have arrived at a moment to give a new impetus to strengthening the ties between the European Union and Latin America. It is unavoidable to reach an approach offering convergence around the values shared in the bi-regional relationship, in order to find solutions to the challenges facing them both.

There is a need to modernise the language that surrounds the European-Latin American relationship; there is a need to convey more credibility and understanding to the public about what it is intended to achieve and, as the British say, with tangible things;



there is a need to give continuity to the commitments made which should contain elements of ambition, realism and perseverance; there is a need to respect the differences between the two regions, managing them without impositions; there is a need to have a civil society which, in both Europe and Latin America, plays an increasingly important role; there is a need to align our policies on topics debated in international forums.

The philosopher Flavius Philostratus (third century BC) said: “Men know what is happening, the gods what is coming and the wise men what is looming”. Belonging to the first of these groups, I am aware that we have done a lot to construct the ties between Latin America and Europe. However, I am also aware of everything that we still need to do to deepen and develop these. The EU-CELAC Summit in June is the time to strengthen the ties and must represent a turning point in the development of both regions.

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## TOWARDS WHERE SHOULD THE STRATEGIC RELATION BETWEEN THE EU AND LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN MOVE?

### 1. LATIN AMERICA AND EUROPE, A SHARED WESTERN “VIEW”

“The common history  
and those shared values  
are the base of a relation”

The link between Europe and Latin America and the Caribbean is giving signs of fatigue for over a decade. The challenge of the current leaders on both sides of the Atlantic involves reviving and giving it a renewed dynamism. European and Latin American political leaders have the necessary capacity to achieve this. A capacity that makes reference to the historical links that characterize the relation and which have not only survived, and grown, for over 500 years, but which also make reference to the new and multiple common elements that exist currently and which have been emerging over the last half century, especially, since the 1990s.

Undoubtedly, the task is not easy because the world has become, progressively, much more volatile and complex. On this new global stage, where geopolitical, geostrategic and geo-economic balances are changing rapidly, China in particular and Asia in general are already a reality that has come to stay and that unbalances and conditions the Euro-Latin American relation. However, this link contains, in itself, its own strengths that are neither temporary nor artificially created. Against China's emergence with its full commercial and

foreign investments potential, the relation between Europe and Latin America and the Caribbean is supported, firstly, on its belonging to the same cultural area and the identical identity matrix, the Western one. This is one of the most singular aspects of its identity and where its legitimacy is based in order to become an international actor with strong aspirations to have global influence.

As stated once by the former Ibero-American Secretary General, Enrique V. Iglesias, the link dates back to “*whole centuries of intense relations between America and Europe. It is not possible to understand Latin America and the Caribbean without including the heritage of the European tradition. Just as Latin America and the Caribbean cannot be understood without Europe, it is also not possible to understand Europe without the deep flow of resources, ideas and fresh airs that has circulated towards the other side of the Atlantic*”<sup>1</sup>. This link, this culture and this shared western “view”, is a connecting link that does not exist with regard to the emerging Asia.

The common history and those shared values are the base of a relation which has by no means become stagnant, but which has evolved. The English influence in the Caribbean made up the idiosyncrasy

<sup>1</sup> Adrián Bonilla (coordinator): *De Madrid a Santiago: Retos y Oportunidades. Balances y perspectivas de las relaciones entre la Unión Europea y América Latina y el Caribe*. (From Madrid to Santiago: Challenges and Opportunities. Balances and perspectives of the relations between the European Union and Latin America and the Caribbean). Flacso. San José, 2012 downloaded from <http://segib.org/es/node/8329>.

**“A common history  
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of an important part of the Caribbean nations. The French and Spanish culture and political ideas –from the Cadiz Constitution of 1812 to the great Spanish thinkers of the 19th and 20th centuries– nurtured the new nations that were formed in the 19th century in Latin America. Despite the political and cultural predominance of the United States –another vertex of this western tradition– in the 20th century, Latin America and the Caribbean continued to look to Europe in many aspects, even after the Second World War.

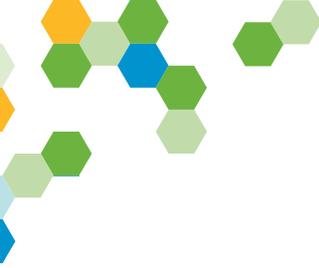
In the words of Enrique V. Iglesias: *“We took from Europe the three great messages where we coincide: first, the western democracy which had its both theoretical and practical roots in the European continent...we were influenced by the welfare state, which was born in Europe (...) and we were influenced by the way of integration”*<sup>2</sup>. Indeed, the successive Euro-Latin American statements, as well as the political and institutional leaders of the bi-regional relations, have constantly stressed their support to that set of values rooted in the Western tradition, in the history and in the Latin American and European identity itself. Values based on democracy –validity of human rights and on the rule of law–, on social cohesion, on

the defense of multilateralism, of peace and of international cooperation.

A common history and shared values are substantial grounds for fighting and striving for keeping the relation alive, as well as for deepening it. But, the truth is that there are many other ingredients that complete this bi-directional relation, especially since the 1980s-1990s, and that have been extended until today. To the institutional relation formalized in 1999 have been added economic and commercial links –European investments in Latin America and the Caribbean and the new ones that arrive in Europe led by Multilaterals– and social links –the European support in the form of development cooperation and the migrations by Latin Americans to Europe and now, since the 2008 crisis, by Europeans to Latin America–.

As Federica Mogherini, High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, recalls, *“here again, deep economic ties bind our peoples on both sides of the Atlantic. The EU is the second trade partner and the first foreign investor in the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC in Spanish) with a considerable stock of investments of 464 million euros, which means a higher figure than the sum of EU investments in China, India and Russia together. I believe that*

<sup>2</sup> Adrián Bonilla (coordinator): *De Madrid a Santiago: Retos y Oportunidades. Balances y perspectivas de las relaciones entre la Unión Europea y América Latina y el Caribe*. (From Madrid to Santiago: Challenges and Opportunities. Balances and perspectives of the relations between the European Union and Latin America and the Caribbean). Flacso. San José, 2012 downloaded from <http://segib.org/es/node/8329>.



**“The link also has to be enlivened by being aware of how the world has changed”**

*it is fair to define EU investments as quality and socially responsible investments, with added value in terms of job creation, technology transfer, research and innovation. Sustainable development and corporate social responsibility are at the core of our trade agreements, which we hope to be able to expand to more countries in the region. But trade and economy are in general two-way streets. Latin American and Caribbean investments in EU countries grow every year and Brazil is now the second investor in EU countries after the United States, which contributes to the creation of our own jobs and grow”<sup>3</sup>.*

The European Union is the second trade partner in the region and since 1999 the trade in goods has more than doubled: it reached the figure of two billion dollars in 2010. The European Union is also the main foreign investor with 385 billion dollars accumulated in foreign direct investment in 2010 (more than 43% of the total direct investment in the region). It has been historically a commitment to promote quality and long-term investments that generate, for their part, quantitatively and qualitatively significant jobs.

All this network is what needs to be preserved and fed now. Not doing it ex novo, but from an already built base (the bi-regional history itself and the experiences during the last years). But the

link also has to be enlivened by being aware of how the world has changed, how the international role of the European Union and Latin America and the Caribbean itself has transformed and how the society, the economy and the international trade are not what they were, not in 1989 or 2001, but since 2008 with the beginning of the sub-prime crisis that has hit the western world: first the United States (2007-2009), then the EU (2009-2014) and now Latin America and the Caribbean with the 2009 crisis and the slowdown of the years 2014-2015.

It is very opportune to think about which path should follow the relations between the EU and the CELAC and, at the same time, propose a specific roadmap to preserve what has been progressed, avoid the deadlock the relation is suffering and find paths along which to walk together, doing it at a faster pace and more efficiently.

## **2. THE RELATION BETWEEN THE EUROPEAN UNION AND LATIN AMERICA IN VIEW OF CHINA'S EMERGENCE AND THE RENEWED PRESENCE OF THE UNITED STATES (TPP AND TTIP)**

### **HISTORY OF A TRANSATLANTIC RELATION (1970-1999)**

The recent history of the relation between the EU

<sup>3</sup> Federica Mogherini, “Un año trascendental” (A momentous year). Published in the newspaper *El Espectador*, on 27 January 2015. Downloaded from <http://www.elespectador.com/noticias/elmundo/un-ano-trascendental-articulo-540403>

“Spain and Portugal  
became the main engines  
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and Latin America and the Caribbean can be divided into three clearly differentiated periods. A period of “prehistory” of the institutionalized relation (1974-1994), a boom time of the transatlantic link (1994-2006) and the current situation of stagnation and deadlock of the relation (since 2006).

- **The prehistory of the institutionalized relation (1984-1994):**

This “prehistory” of the relation begins in the 1970s with meetings in which the objective was to bring relations closer and strengthen commercial ties between Europe and Latin America. It was the meetings between the parliaments of both regions which, in 1974, gave rise to the biannual conferences between the European Parliament and the Parlatino. A much more institutionalized approach between the European Union and Latin America took place already in the 1980s, with the San José Dialogue, in 1984, which contributed to the peacekeeping efforts in Central America and, at the same time, built bridges between the two regions thanks to the political dialogue between the then EEC and the Rio Group.

A long-term strategic vision and mutually beneficial for both parts is the great treasure that the Euro-Latin American relation built up in the 1980s and 1990s, and it is, probably, what is now most at risk. As the professors of the Complutense University of Madrid, Christian Freres and José Antonio Sanahuja, point out, “*the then EU policy towards Latin America responded to a strategic and long-term design; and was relatively well adapted to the Latin American needs while responding to European interests. It was able, therefore, to define an agenda of common interests: in the 1980s, the peaceful resolution of the Central American crisis; in the 1990s, the diversification of external links and the international impact of both regions*”<sup>4</sup>.

Those steps taken in the 1970s, and continued in the 1980s, opened the door to a much more deep and institutional relation in the 1990s. Since then, Spain and Portugal became the main engines for the transatlantic rapprochement as clearly viewed in the “Joint declaration of intent” on the intensification of relations with the countries

<sup>4</sup> Christian Freres and José Antonio Sanahuja, “Hacia una Nueva Estrategia en las Relaciones Unión Europea – América Latina” (Towards a new strategy in the relations European Union – Latin America). Downloaded from <https://www.ucm.es/data/cont/docs/430-2013-10-27-PP%2001-06.pdf>

“A policy of exclusive  
cooperation for Latin  
America and the  
Caribbean was proposed”

of Latin America, attached to the Treaty of Accession of both countries to the then European Community (EC). The Euro-Latin American dialogue became institutionalized with the “Rome Declaration” of December 1990. If until that moment, the EC had signed with those countries non-preferential trade agreements, the so-called “first generation” agreements, from that moment on the “third generation” agreements (advanced cooperation frameworks with political dialogue) were encouraged.

The next strategic step in the relation took place in the mid-1990s (1994) when the EU developed a new relation strategy with regard to Latin America, in which the establishment of a “bi-regional partnership” was regarded as a final objective, based on the existing “third generation” agreements and which looked towards the future, in particular to the new “fourth generation” agreements that were to be signed in the future.

- **The golden time of the relation (1994-2006):** The European Council in 1994 urged the Commission

to start talks with MERCOSUR, Mexico and Chile in order to achieve the signing of fourth generation framework agreements that would allow to lay the ground for the forthcoming signing of partnership agreements. In 1995, the Commission laid down those new general guidelines for the cooperation with Latin America in a Communication to the Council and the European Parliament entitled: “European Union-Latin America. The present situation and prospects for closer partnership (1996-2000)”<sup>5</sup>. There, for the first time, a policy of exclusive cooperation for Latin America and the Caribbean was proposed. The Commission underlined, already then, the strategic interest of the relations with Latin America, based on historical and cultural factors, proposing a strategy for the strengthening of the relations EU-Latin America in the political and economic fields.

The project, in the 1990s, had, therefore, objectives and a clear narrative that had full validity in its pillars. In this regard, José Antonio Sanahuja thinks that “*since the mid-*

<sup>5</sup> European Commission (1995). “European Union-Latin America. The present situation and prospects for closer partnership 1996-2000”. Communication from the Commission to the Council, COM (95) 495 final. Brussels. This document may be consulted at <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:51995DC0495&from=FR>

“Political relations based  
on the peacekeeping  
and stability”

90s, relations between the EU and Latin America and the Caribbean have been shaped by an interregionalist strategy devised by the Commission and the Council, under the leadership of the former Vice-President of the European Commission in charge of the relations with Latin America, Manuel Marín, and the German Presidency of the Council. This strategy was based on the “cartography” of Latin American regionalism and on the redefinition of European regionalism from the mid-90s, and for at least a decade and a half, it has defined a relationship model to be achieved, while providing a narrative, a story and ambitious, long-term and strategic goals for the bi-regional relationship.” ... the aim was to establish a framework of high-level political dialogue and to create a network of partnership agreements, including free trade agreements, which would go beyond the traditional model of “north/south” economic relations between both regions. Although the strategy started with a more limited proposal – the trade agreements would be limited to Mexico, Chile and Mercosur-, the proposal of signing partnership agreements was

subsequently broadened, not without resistance from the EU, to the Andean Community of Nations (CAN) and Central American countries. And the Cotonú Agreement in 2000 included, as part of the redefinition of the EU’s relations with the ACP countries, a possible economic partnership agreement with Caribbean countries”<sup>6</sup>.

The European Commission proposed this strengthening of the political relations based on the peacekeeping and stability in the region, the support for democratic processes, the promotion and protection of human rights, and the intensification of the economic and free trade integration. As a logical consequence, since the mid-1990s, both sides went a step further and gave an important boost to dialogue, organizing the first Summit between Heads of State and Government of Latin America and the Caribbean and the European Union, held in Rio de Janeiro in June 1999. After that would come the subsequent summits of Madrid (2002), Guadalajara (2004), Vienna (2006), Lima (2008), Madrid (2010) and Santiago de Chile (2013) which became

<sup>6</sup> José A. Sanahuja, “La Unión Europea y CELAC: Balance, perspectivas y opciones de la relación birregional” (The European Union and CELAC: Assessment, prospects and options in the bi-regional relation) in *Adrián Bonilla and Isabel Álvarez* (editors) *Desafíos estratégicos del regionalismo contemporáneo: CELAC e Iberoamérica* (Strategic challenges of the contemporary regionalism: CELAC and Ibero-America). Flacso. San José, 2013.

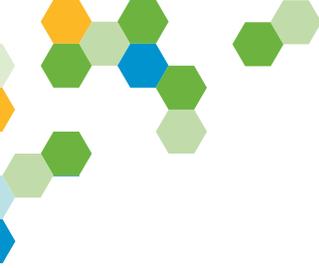
“Seven summits EU-  
Brazil have been held”

the first summit CELAC-EU. As stated by Enrique V. Iglesias *“the importance of the summits lies in the linking capacity, but also in the possibility of thinking about the region strategically (...) a region with the capacity of joining Europe. The appropriateness was mutual since European countries benefit from a very big market”*<sup>7</sup>. In a parallel and complementary way, political dialogue processes were established between the EU and the Andean Community (CAN), MERCOSUR, Chile and Mexico, in addition to a high level dialogue on the drugs problem.

To sum up, by 2004, twenty years after the beginning of the process, a broad network of relations between the two regions was created based on three pillars: political dialogue, intense economic and commercial relations and development cooperation. This period (1994-2004) was the most brilliant of the transatlantic link since some major advances were achieved, among the most important ones were the “Association Agreement with Mexico in 2000” or the “Association Agreement with Chile in 2002”:

- » In 1997, the European Union reached with Mexico its first “Association Agreement” with a Latin American country that institutionalized the political dialogue and expanded cooperation. This agreement came into force in 2000. Since 2009, with the signing of a Strategic Partnership between the EU and Mexico, this country, together with Brazil, became two fundamental references of the relations between the EU and Latin America and the Caribbean.
- » The Union concluded with Chile an Association Agreement in 2002, which is based on three pillars: a chapter on political dialogue, another on cooperation and a third one, in which a free trade area of goods and services is proposed.
- » With Brazil, a Framework Cooperation Agreement was signed in 1992 and in 2007 a Strategic Partnership was established. Since that year, seven summits EU-Brazil have been held.

<sup>7</sup> Adrián Bonilla (coordinator): “De Madrid a Santiago: Retos y Oportunidades. Balances y perspectivas de las relaciones entre la Unión Europea y América Latina y el Caribe”. (From Madrid to Santiago: Challenges and Opportunities. Balances and perspectives of the relations between the European Union and Latin America and the Caribbean). Flacso. San José, 2012 downloaded from <http://segib.org/es/node/8329>.



“A new model to  
strengthen the link”

- » With Central American countries, a Political Dialogue and Cooperation Agreement in 2003 and an Association Agreement in June 2012 were signed –the first one between regions concluded by the Union– which provided as main objectives the creation of “a privileged political partnership based on common values, principles and objectives” and aimed at “strengthening human rights, reducing poverty, fighting inequalities, preventing conflicts and promoting good governance, security, regional integration and sustainable development.
  - » The relations between the European Union and the Caribbean are structured on the Cotonou Agreement, signed in 2000 by 79 countries of Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific, and the Economic Partnership Agreement EU-CARIFOUM, signed in 2008.
  - **Loss of momentum of the relation (2006-2015):**  
However, since 2006, many analysts and authorities on both sides of the Atlantic do not stop insisting on an idea, repeated since then: the one that there exists “certain exhaustion, possibly the result of an excessive rhetoric, given the lack of follow-up of the agreements reached and the overlap and duplication of the frameworks of this dialogue”. The changes at a global level (China’s emergence as a global actor) and inside both regions (the European institutional and economic crisis together with the increase in the autonomy of Latin American countries thanks to the boom time they have experienced), have transformed the relation and can even be regarded as an “end of a cycle”. At least, in the way they established the Euro-Latin American relations since the 1990s.
- Therefore, since 2006, the idea that has been constantly pursued with a very dissimilar success is the one of finding a new model to strengthen the link. Thus, for example, in 2008 the European Union, which historically had opted for negotiating trade agreements bloc by bloc, took on a new strategy opening up the possibility of negotiating with individual countries –the only exceptions until then

**“The traditional strategy,  
bloc by bloc, has not  
been abandoned”**

had been Mexico and Chile because both countries were not included within any sub-regional bloc-. The EU opted for breaking with its traditional policy in the interest of pragmatism as explained by the German chancellor, Angela Merkel: *“In the EU we know from experience that at the beginning we were six members, then 15, today 27, and in the future we will be more. We cannot always wait for the last one, sometimes we must also be able to move forward with a single group of countries being already willing to do it”*<sup>8</sup>. Like this, an era was concluded and since 2008 bilateral agreements with Colombia and Peru or strategic partnership agreements with Brazil have been signed.

Nevertheless, the traditional strategy, bloc by bloc, has not been abandoned. Among the achievements of the Madrid Summit in 2010, the renewed impetus which resulted in subsequent years in the signing of the Association Agreement with Central America (plus Panama), in 2012, stands out and was the first of this kind concluded by the EU in its relation with Latin America. Furthermore, new initiatives were launched such as the EU-LAC Foundation or the Latin

America Investment Facility (LAIF), a fund of 125 million euros aimed at channeling a larger amount of resources for interconnection, energy infrastructure, renewable energies, transport, environment, social cohesion works and promotion of small and medium-sized enterprises.

This change of strategy, which has constantly achieved success, has also been highly controversial for changing one of the pillars of the relation between both actors. In this regard, Jean Grugel, professor of International Development and head of the Department of Geography at the University of Sheffield, points out that *“for years the EU has promoted a cooperation strategy based on the support to the processes of regional integration, contributing with resources and technical assistance to their strengthening. This highly normative approach has given rise in the last years to a more pragmatic vision of the European economic interests in the region. The EU has proceeded to work with those countries more likely to deepen economic relations. This has led to the questioning of what until now was conceived as a differentiated European approach that included*

<sup>8</sup> Quoted by El Mundo newspaper, 16 May 2008, downloaded from <http://www.elmundo.es/mundodinero/2008/05/16/economia/1210920888.html>

“Of developing and  
consolidating the EU-  
LAC mechanism of  
coordination”

*other dimensions in the negotiations. The strategy has designed a complicated and diffuse multi-level scenario of economic relations given that the relations of the EU with other regional blocs, the relations with individual countries and the relations of the member States, in turn, with third Latin American countries have been combined”<sup>9</sup>.*

All this attempt to renew the European general strategy regarding Latin America had its origin in a first trial to renovate the foundations of the link towards Latin America: in 2009 the European Union submitted its proposal of a different model in its relations with Latin America and the Caribbean for the next five years, defined as “a partnership of global actors”, and whose objectives focused on “new political guidelines and recommendations” in the solution of issues like climate change, economic and financial crisis, energy security and migration. The model included four main aims:

» The first one, intensifying and focusing bi-regional dialogue on priority areas –macroeconomic and financial issues,

security and human rights, employment and social affairs, environment, climate change and energy, higher education and technology and innovation–.

It also included the proposal of developing and consolidating the EU-LAC mechanism of coordination and cooperation in the fight against drugs and continuing the structured and global ongoing dialogue on migration “in an open and constructive way”, according to the comprehensive approach of the EU on migration.

- » The second focus aimed at consolidating the regional integration and interconnectivity.
- » Consolidating bilateral relations and taking diversity more into account was the third aim of the new model, which insisted on taking advantage of the existing strategic partnerships, existing Partnerships Agreements (Chile and Mexico) and bilateral Cooperation Agreements.

<sup>9</sup> Jean Grugel, “Entre las expectativas y las posibilidades: las relaciones económicas Unión Europea-América Latina tras treinta años” (Between expectations and possibilities: the economic relations European Union-Latin America thirty years later), downloaded from [http://issuu.com/pensamientoiberoamericano/docs/8\\_03\\_grugel](http://issuu.com/pensamientoiberoamericano/docs/8_03_grugel).

“Since 2001, the  
international  
scenario has changed  
significantly”

- » The fourth aim considered “adapting and adjusting the cooperation programs with Latin America in order to generate sustainable growth with low-carbon emissions, create employment, achieve a better income distribution and mitigate the effects of the economic and financial crisis”.

From the last Summit, held in Santiago de Chile in 2013, two documents emerged: the Santiago Declaration, which reaffirms the political will to work together, and an Action Plan, which includes two new paragraphs focusing on gender issues and investments and undertaking for sustainable development, in addition to the two existing ones, adopted after the Madrid Summit in 2010: science, environment, regional integration, migration, education and employment for social inclusion and the global problem of drugs.

#### CAUSES OF THE CRISIS IN THE RELATION

Beyond the efforts of reactivating the bi-regional relation –which were set in the Action Plan 2010-2012, drawn up in the Madrid Summit– the truth is that the link, six years later, does not seem to have been able to escape from its

stagnation. Especially because of the structural problems the bi-regional relation itself is suffering as well as for the transformations that are taking place at a global level, the changes that have occurred inside both blocs, all of which affects and has an impact on the Euro-Latin American link.

Those changes are different in magnitude and scale and could be summarized in two great transformations: the one of the international scenario in general and the one experienced by the two blocs in particular (the EU and Latin America and the Caribbean):

- **Transformations within the global scenario:**

- » **Change of the international environment:** Since 2001, the international scenario has changed significantly and the world in which Europe and Latin America move has little to do, not only with the one of the start of the institutionalized relation (the Cold War in the 1980s), but it is also very different from the unipolar world of the 1990s. The current international scenario is experiencing a dynamics marked by a profound restructuring of the international balances in the geopolitical, economic and commercial areas due to China’s emergence and

“China is now the main  
trade partner”

some loss of prominence of the United States and the EU –which among academics is referred to as a “transfer of power from the West to the East”–.

Furthermore, Enrique V. Iglesias points out *“three intertwined factors are eroding the strength of the multilateralism, as happened after the Second World War (...) The first factor is the transfer of power of the last years from the West to the East. This also involves moving from the predominance of institutions and regulations which make up the pillar of the West, to conversations and non-written negotiations that have a long tradition within the Eastern life and customs. The second factor is that the WTO has been involved in issues of interest which has not been able to conclude. For instance, it has not been able to conclude the Doha Round. Few believe that its completion will be feasible. The third factor is the profusion of bilateral and regional agreements that are taking place in the world in general and in Latin America in particular”*<sup>10</sup>.

- » **Emergence of new relevant international actors:** All these changes are linked to the emergence of new actors who have affected and altered the global balance and also the relation between Europe and Latin America and the Caribbean. The emergence of the region Asia-Pacific has turned China into the main trade partner for some countries of the area, especially several of the South American ones –for example, Brazil–. China has transformed the global insertion of the region by moving in 20 years from being the seventeenth destination of Latin America and the Caribbean’s exports to becoming currently the third one, receiving around 10% of the total exports of the region.

An illustrative example of this process is that since the 2008 crisis the EU has lost its first place as Chile’s trade partner accounting for only 16% of its trade now. China is now the main trade partner due to the Free Trade

<sup>10</sup> Enrique V. Iglesias, “Nuevos acuerdos regionales: riesgos y oportunidades” en María Salvadora Ortiz (Compiladora), *Las Américas y la Unión Europea ante los nuevos escenarios en las relaciones comerciales y políticas* (New regional agreements: risks and opportunities, in María Salvadora Ortiz (Compiler), *The Americas and the European Union in the face of new scenarios in the commercial and political relations*). Flacso. San José, 2014, downloaded from <http://segib.org/sites/default/files/las-americas-y-la-ue.pdf>.

**“The region can opt for  
a closer relation with its  
traditional partners”**

Agreement signed in 2005, which has been accompanied by an increase in the demand of commodities, especially mineral and agricultural ones, from Asia. However, the EU is still the main investor (accumulated investment), which reflects that commercial relations are stable with improvement prospects in the future.

Susanne Gratius, professor of Political Science and International Relations at the Autonomous University of Madrid and associate researcher at FRIDE, recalls in this regard that *“for Latin America, the new international context, marked by the rise of China and the relative decline of the United States and the EU, new options of global insertion are open. Thus, the region can opt for a closer relation with its traditional partners from the North (US and the EU) and/or intensify the relations with China and other Asian countries whose share in Latin America’s*

*imports have increased from 2% in 2000 to 14% in 2010, exceeding the share of the EU in the region. According to ECLAC data, the United States was the most damaged by the trade diversion towards Asia, since between 2000 and 2010 saw its share in Latin American imports reduced from 49% to 32%, and in sales, from 58% to 40%. Therefore, China has emerged, not only as an alternative to the EU –which has kept its commercial position stable–, but also to the US. This reduces the asymmetric dependences on Washington and, although it creates new risks –the sustained Chinese demand of commodities and the deindustrialization–, increases the region’s autonomy”<sup>11</sup>.*

Furthermore, the boom of the Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) of the EU towards Latin America in the 1990s lost momentum with the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century due to the channeling of these resources towards the new EU member countries and to the

<sup>11</sup> Susanne Gratius, “Europa y América Latina: la necesidad de un nuevo paradigma” (Europe and Latin America: the need for a new paradigm). FRIDE, Madrid, 2013 available at <http://fride.org/publicacion/1104/europa-y-america-latina-la-necesidad-de-un-nuevo-paradigma>.

“The EU’s destination  
of FDI towards Latin  
America is very  
concentrated”

crisis itself Europe is suffering. In addition, the Latin American lack of competitiveness in relation to Asia discourages the arrival of European investments –in the last fifteen years Latin America and the Caribbean is the only region in the world that is losing weight as a receptor of European FDI–. It is estimated that the EU directed around 60% of its FDI towards the Eurozone itself and the one targeted towards developing countries does not go to Latin America and the Caribbean but towards other European countries outside the EU, Asia and Africa. Even the EU’s destination of FDI towards Latin America is very concentrated: Brazil and Mexico absorb three quarters of the total.

- » **Readjustment of the relation between Latin America and the Caribbean and Europe:** China’s rise has coincided with the crisis in the United States (2007-2009) and in the EU which has continued until now. The crisis in the EU – institutional, in the last decade, and economic

since 2008– has caused Europe to lose much of its charm and appeal in the eyes of Latin America as a role model and, for its part, Latin America has gained it during the known as “Golden Decade” (2003-2013), in economic autonomy –the majority are already middle-income countries– and has tried to gain own specific weight in the geopolitical area as well as with the creation of bodies such as CELAC.

In relation to the first factor, the economic crisis in the EU has caused the fall in European investments, in trade, in remittances from the EU and in the Official Development Assistance (ODA). Besides, this has been accompanied by a change of priorities in the EU: the crisis in Ukraine and the Greek crisis have accentuated the period of European introspection. Actually, the alienation between the EU and Latin America is a long process which is rooted in the enlargement of the EU towards the East, countries with little links with Latin America and the Caribbean, region, in addition, which they viewed as a competitor regarding agricultural production.

“The relationship’s  
stagnancy has become  
the norm”

With respect to the second factor, the one of a greater regional autonomy, as stated by Sanahuja, “it is not about, as in the past, a performance of external actors –either the United States and/or the European Union– involving themselves, helping, collaborating –not to use other less politically correct terms–, to resolve the region’s problems. Now the region is very aware of the fact that these problems are of a different nature and, specially, has a very clear will to try to solve them by itself, with a different relation with those external partners”<sup>12</sup>.

- **The structural problems of the relations:** The transatlantic relationship also suffers from internal and structural problems which could be summarized as the excess of expectations regarding what could be achieved thanks to this relation, and the underlying disagreements in economic matters. These are two hindrances which have not been able to be solved

despite all these years of relations, turning it all into a big burden.

The relationship’s stagnancy has become the norm over the last few years, especially because of the widespread feeling that there is a big gap between the expected outcomes and the goals actually achieved during the last thirty years of institutional relations. What these unfulfilled high expectations have eventually brought about is the beginnings of scepticism on both sides. In the words of Julio María Sanguinetti, the former president of Uruguay, “*Europe is right to feel like this towards Latin America, which has always looked divided, sometimes very frustrating, and still quite complex, and to which staying grounded in reality is so difficult (...)* In Latin America, on the other hand, there also exists a kind of skepticism towards Europe because, back in the day, the agrarian policies divided us... Europe never fully understood our needs”<sup>13</sup>.

This can be seen, for example, in the economic and commercial fields, in which Latin America is far

<sup>12</sup> José Antonio Sanahuja, “La UE y la CELAC: revitalización de una relación estratégica” (The EU and the CELAC: revitalization of a strategic relation). *EU-LAC Foundation*. Hamburg, 2015, consulted at [http://eulacfoundation.org/sites/eulacfoundation.org/files/Published%20version\\_ES.pdf](http://eulacfoundation.org/sites/eulacfoundation.org/files/Published%20version_ES.pdf).

<sup>13</sup> Julio María Sanguinetti, “Ni escepticismo ni utopía” (Not skepticism nor utopy) Adrián Bonilla y María Salvadora Ortiz (Compilators) at *Balances y perspectivas de las relaciones entre la Unión Europea y América Latina y el Caribe* (Balances and perspectives of the relations between the European Union, Latin America and the Caribbean). Flacso. San José, 2012, consulted at <http://eulacfoundation.org/sites/eulacfoundation.org/files/pdf/De%20Madrid%20a%20Santiago.pdf>.

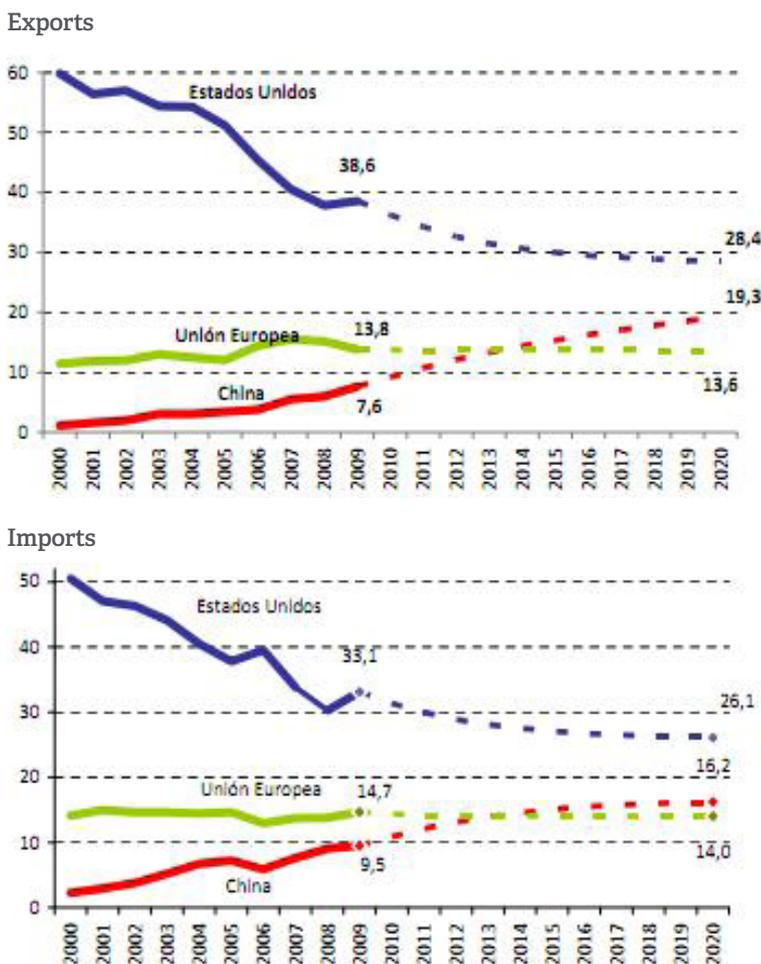
from becoming the strategic partner for the EU, as it was contemplated in 1999. This did not happen for three reasons:

- » **Low commercial exchanges:** In the field of trade, the exchange levels between both regions are low: in 2009, they barely

reached 5.9% of the European commerce with the rest of the world. This situation has deteriorated with the Eurozone crisis and the emergence of China, all of which has further weakened the dialogue of Europe as a trade partner for Latin America and the Caribbean. As the UNECLAC remarks, the EU is far from reaching the commercial importance of the United States, Latin America's main trade partner, which accounts for about 35% of the foreign trade of the region. Moreover, the relationship between Europe and Latin America is extremely unbalanced: over 90% of the European products which the region imports are industrial goods, half of those with a high technological content. On the other hand, 60% of what Latin America and the Caribbean sell to Europe are commodities or manufactured products with a low level of elaboration.

Therefore, the crisis of the EU and its reorientation towards the East, as well as the changes in Latin America during this decade, have caused a

Graphic 1 Latin America and the Caribbean (16 countries): participation of the main destinations in the total of transactions, 2000-2020 (in percentage)



Source: ECLAC

“Only 5 out of 33 Latin American countries are big partners for Europe”

change of the mutual priorities. Europe is not as important for Latin America anymore, even though the EU is still its main investor. Their relations have branched out, and now Asia and the Pacific region lead the commerce with Brazil, Chile, Colombia and Peru, while Central America and the Caribbean have increased their interdependence with the United States. The external economic relations of the EU – dominated by Germany – are increasingly focused towards Asia. In 2011, 40% of the EU imports came from this continent, while Latin America did not even reach 6% trade, according to data from that same year.

Jean Grugel points out that, in this sense, *“bi-regional negotiations always run aground at the same point: economic aspects. They have become the Gordian knot of the bi-regional relationship, and the modest advances in the economic relations have always entailed strong critics about how small their relevance*

*was in comparison to the economical bonds that both regions have with other areas of the world. This has led to questioning the relationship, in a period of growing economic globalization, where inter-regional agreements are seen with suspicion in terms of the World Trade Organization (WTO) rounds of negotiation”<sup>14</sup>.*

- » **A very focused relationship:** Only 5 out of 33 Latin American countries are big partners for Europe. Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia and Mexico represent 75% of the commerce from and to the EU. Meanwhile, 5 European nations (Germany, Spain, France, Great Britain and Italy) take up almost 60% of the Latin American sales.

Besides, the relationship has historically been burdened by the Latin American heterogeneity, which has never (not even after the creation of the UNECLAC) managed to speak in unison. The EU, having so much trouble in finding a spokesperson

<sup>14</sup> Jean Grugel y Borja Guijarro, “Entre las expectativas y las posibilidades: las relaciones económicas Unión Europea-América Latina tras treinta años” (Between expectations and possibilities: the economic relations European Union-Latin America thirty years later). *University of Sheffield*, 2011.

“What number should  
I dial if I want to speak  
with Latin America?”

to channel the relationship, has progressively lost interest in Latin America, focusing more in its relations with USA and China, while expanding to the East. Andrés Malamud, assistant researcher in the Institute of Social Sciences of the University of Lisbon, points out that in this sense the old maxim still applies: “What number should I dial if I want to speak with Latin America?” This Henry Kissinger clever joke about Europe could be perfectly applied to the New World. Latin America is purportedly linked by its language, history and culture on top of its geography, and so a coherent international behavior is expected by some. This is what the European leaders must have anticipated when they summoned the first summit between the EU, Latin America and the Caribbean in Río de Janeiro in 1999. This was followed by five others, and yet today Latin America is just as far from having a common phone number as it was 12 years ago –even less so, if you count the Caribbean as part of the region–. The careful observers

realized this at the very beginning, but it is only recently that the EU authorities seem to have acknowledged it. Ever since, it has decided to keep on with the routine of the biannual summits”.

» **The next commercial mega-agreements:**

The outlook we have analyzed so far faces a new challenge in the second half of this decade due to the reconfiguration of global commerce. The two biggest transoceanic commercial agreements being negotiated right now –the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) between USA and Europe, and the Trans Pacific Partnership (TPP) between USA and the Pacific countries– are not only going to transform the commercial layout of the world, but their effects are also going to reach Latin America and affect the relations between the UNECLAC and the EU.

As Enrique V. Iglesias points out, “*in the last years two new initiatives have started up with the aim of promoting two big commerce and investment agreements which may change*

**“The region does not  
fall within the TTIP”**

*the global layout of commercial relations. One of them is the TTIP agreement, which would link the United States to the European Union, and the other has been built around the Pacific area for the last years. It is not possible to ignore the huge repercussions that these changes in international relations will have over global commerce and the investment in Latin America”<sup>15</sup>.*

Thus, the biggest mystery now is how these two mega-agreements will affect Latin America, especially given that the region does not fall within the TTIP. Opinions are divided in this respect. Some analysts see the glass half full. This is the case of José Ignacio Salafranca, former Spanish deputy at the European Parliament, for whom *“the European Union has agreements with Mexico and Central America, and because of this the region will not suffer a negative impact from the negotiations of this agreement between the European Union*

*and the United States. Quite the opposite: this agreement will probably favor the demand of commodities from other regions and will benefit the export of products from Latin America towards this greater transatlantic market. The European Commission analysts assure that, independently from the beneficial effects that both parts will experience, other areas of the world will also be positively affected, with an impact of over 100 billion euros per year”<sup>16</sup>.*

Other analysts remain more cautious regarding the potential effects of these agreements on Latin America. Such is the case of Federico Steinberg, analyst and researcher at the Elcano Royal Institute, who describes these results as “uncertain”, since they may stimulate global commerce on the one hand, but they may also disarticulate the regional markets on the other, shattering the integration processes even further.

<sup>15</sup> Enrique V. Iglesias, “Nuevos acuerdos regionales: riesgos y oportunidades” (New regional agreements: risks and opportunities) at María Salvadora Ortiz (Compiler), *Las Américas y la Unión Europea ante los nuevos escenarios en las relaciones comerciales y políticas* (The Americas and the European Union facing new settings in the trade and political relations) Flacso. San José, 2014. At <http://segib.org/sites/default/files/las-americas-y-la-ue.pdf>

<sup>16</sup> Ibidem.

“The time has come  
to reactivate, rethink  
and reconsider the  
bonds between Europe,  
Latin America and the  
Caribbean”

Following Steinberg, it may be concluded that Latin America as a whole could experience an increase in its exports, since it mainly exports commodities, where an eventual diversion of trade would be low. Even so, it could damage the countries which hold bilateral agreements with USA and the EU but which are not big commodity exporters, such as Mexico or the Central American countries.

From a geopolitical perspective, the effects are even more difficult to predict: while the countries that constitute the Pacific Alliance are partly integrated in the TTP –three out of the four member countries (Mexico, Chile and Peru) are participating in the TTP negotiations–, others like Brazil could become isolated. According to Steinberg, *“Latin American countries could lose policy space, which would create flexibility problems in their development and export diversification strategies. In order for*

*Latin America to really be able to take advantage of this new commercial situation, a higher degree of integration would be needed in the Latin American market, so that the region can benefit from the economies of scale and be integrated in the global supply chains beyond the exportation of commodities”<sup>17</sup>.*

Something does look clear: the effect will not be even, given how heterogeneous the region is, and also given the heterogeneous nature of the relations and commercial bonds that the different countries from this region keep with USA and the EU.

### 3. THE MAJOR AXES OF THE REACTIVATION OF THE NEW TRANSATLANTIC LINK

In this way almost forty years from the beginning of institutionalised relations and with a history of five hundred years the time has come to reactivate, rethink and reconsider the bonds between Europe, Latin America and the Caribbean. On the whole, there is an academic consensus –and a political one– on the need for such changes.

<sup>17</sup> Federico Steinberg, “América Latina ante el TPP y el TTIP” (Latin America facing TPP and TTIP). Elcano Royal Institute. Madrid, 2014. File 44/2014 - 30/6/2014, consulted at [http://www.realinstitutoelcano.org/wps/portal/rielcano/contenido?WCM\\_GLOBAL\\_CONTEXT=/elcano/elcano\\_es/zonas\\_es/comentario-steinberg-america-latina-ante-tpp-y-ttip](http://www.realinstitutoelcano.org/wps/portal/rielcano/contenido?WCM_GLOBAL_CONTEXT=/elcano/elcano_es/zonas_es/comentario-steinberg-america-latina-ante-tpp-y-ttip)

“The aim is that the European Union-CELAC meetings have a more efficient format”

To reactivate that relationship it is necessary to address it from a pragmatic point of view and start gaining ground in the short-term to achieve the main goal. This final goal –the philosophy that should permeate all the project and the changes undertaken– is none other than managing to re-launch the bi-regional association sustained on shared, perceived and heartfelt values, both by the EU and by Latin America and the Caribbean, as useful elements to find solutions to the main problems and challenges that both parts currently face.

For this reason, in this reflection developed here, the following measures and reforms are proposed in a comprehensive manner to motivate the relationship. Reform measures that refer on the one hand, to the change of the relationship format and, on the other hand, to the development of an agenda which, dealing with the challenges that both societies face and are affected by, give more legitimacy to such relationship:

- Changes in the format of the relation EU-CELAC
- Gaining social legitimacy

#### CAMBIOS EN EL FORMATO DE LA RELACIÓN UE-CELAC

The summits EU-CELAC should gain effectiveness and their results must have not only continuity over time but also a specific weight regarding

its societies. For this reason, it is necessary:

- **Transform the format of the summits:** The aim is that the European Union-CELAC meetings have a more efficient format, with less protocol, more depth in contents and give rise to short and concise documents on a specific topic relevant for both parts. Meetings that allow a direct and honest dialogue between the main leaders.

So that the summits gain credibility and legitimacy amongst the population it is necessary to turn these meetings into something closer to the citizens, with tangible achievements, follow-up mechanisms between the summits and conclusions far removed from unattainable utopias and excessively ambitious agendas.

- **Design a new plan and a renewed narrative:** The Summits came into being in 1999 with a clear aim and a spirit which, over time, has disappeared. In the words of the former president of Uruguay, Julio María Sanguinetti: *“We have been swinging between utopia, the idealisms of the foundational meetings and the pessimism that that has installed itself progressively”*.

In the face of this situation the rhetoric that sustains

“Continuity requires  
a solid institutional  
framework”

this relation and the objectives to be achieved have to be renewed. Objectives that should not be so ambitious that their non-attainment lead to despondency –as has occurred recently-but that, at the same time, should not be so short-sighted and narrow-minded that they make the relation something pointless– which is the risk that exists nowadays.

As José Antonio Sanahuja points out there is a *“fatigue in the relation that is only possible to renew recreating the narrative and renewing the plan and the objectives. A plan and objectives that are based on the premise that the relationship should be between equals, mutually beneficial and contribute to the sustainable development in diversity”*.

- **Building with political commitment a relationship based on clarity and with a strong leadership:** The former should be provided by the leaders of both sides of the Atlantic. The former president Sanguinetti himself points out that *“it is necessary to provide the crisis with a dose of willingness not to turn this into a utopia, but to move forward on those matters*

*that are achievable. The point is to focus on what we can do and move forward”<sup>18</sup>.*

The latter, continuity requires a solid institutional framework. Work is needed, a lot of continuity work between summits. For this reason there is a team of civil servants, led by a strong political leadership, so that each summit is not an eternal return, but a chance for continuity and effective monitoring of those agreements reached in each meeting.

In that sense, more than ever, the problem of the relationship between the EU and Latin America and the Caribbean is a doubly political problem:

- » **Of leadership on both sides:** In Europe, on the one hand, because it has moved its attention towards the East and towards Asia, and because it is currently concerned about the situation in Ukraine and Greece, and its implications for the viability of the European project. On the other hand, in Latin America, the heterogeneity, the

<sup>18</sup> Julio María Sanguinetti, “Ni escepticismo ni utopía” (Not skepticism nor utopy) Adrián Bonilla y María Salvadora Ortiz (Compilators) at *Balances y perspectivas de las relaciones entre la Unión Europea y América Latina y el Caribe* (Balances and perspectives of the relations between the European Union, Latin America and the Caribbean). Flacso. San José, 2012, consulted at <http://eulacfoundation.org/sites/eulacfoundation.org/files/pdf/De%20Madrid%20a%20Santiago.pdf>

“Latin America is much more than a competitor in commercial and agricultural matters”

internal divisions (the axis of the Atlantic and the Pacific) and the geopolitical confrontations (Mexico-Brazil) have made it impossible for this region to speak with one voice.

The Latin American project should be resumed with force in Europe together with, not only Spain and Portugal, but also with the important European hubs which in the United Kingdom, France and Germany have strong political and economic interests in Latin America and believe that this transatlantic link should be reinforced. Moreover, there is a challenge that must not be avoided: to convince the countries from Eastern Europe inside the EU that Latin America is much more than a competitor in commercial and agricultural matters.

On the Latin American side, the leadership can only be the result of the concerted action of the two main regional powers, Mexico and Brazil, as articulators of the region and of the transatlantic relationship.

The serious problem is that these leaderships are far from being reached: the Mexico-Brazil axis does not exist and, what it is worse, it would be far from the possibility of being achieved, as they do not even coordinate their initiatives in the G-20 Summits. And in Europe, with the influence of Spain and Portugal reduced, it is Germany who should see this relationship in a more global way without just being focussed on its important relations with Brazil.

- » **Of lack of political imagination:** “Politics are important” and the politicians on both sides are those that should recreate the project, filling it with new life and finding new paths through which the relationship should be channelled, avoiding the dead-end road, only in appearance dead-end, in which they are at present. The relationship currently has an important deficit of “political capital” and that is where investment should go in the short-term.

In fact, as Félix Peña, professor at the

**“This new narrative  
should strengthen the  
relationship within itself”**

National University of Tres de Febrero (UNTREF) of Buenos Aires, points out, *“the possibility of demonstrating the validity and efficiency of the system of the interregional Summits will depend, to a great extent, on the interest that the political leaders of the EU show in reaffirming the idea and in updating the goals”*. In reality the intention to build a strategic relation between the EU and Latin America and the Caribbean has existed since 1999, which at the moment of truth, has never been fully developed, nor given a real content, nor a global vision.

In 1999 the bi-regional relation acquired a new narrative based on linking these two regions trying to build a socio-economic sustainable model, with a fluent political dialogue within a framework of intensified commercial relations through a network of association agreements with sub-regional entities. One of the roots of the current deadlock in the relationship is the fact that the narrative

of 1999 is no longer sufficient to explain the bi-regional relationship. The evolution of international trade makes that narrative of 1999 still necessary but not sufficient: an important part of the agreements are already endorsed with Central America, the Caribbean, Colombia, Ecuador and Peru; and will be signed sooner or later with MERCOSUR.

This new narrative should strengthen the relationship within itself: have more confidence, a more honest, direct and very political dialogue with very fluent, open and transparent communication channels that help understand the concerns of each of the parts. A dialogue on a political level with a more strategic vision to which political capital must be added. A political capital that should come from both parts and not only from the EU. The agenda must be fine-tuned and should not aspire to all-inclusive proposals, but learn how to manage those matters on which they disagree on the basis of an agile and fluent communication.

“Open the relationship  
to the new actors of the  
civil society”

The most evident case of that lack of communication between both parts (EU-CELAC) is found in the negotiations between the EU and the USA. As Rafael Estrella, vice-president of the Real Instituto Elcano and president of the Ibero-American Network for International Studies (RIBEI), points out *“an effort will be required to explain to these countries and, in particular, to Mexico, but also to the other countries, that this is not a northern bloc that is strengthened in order to weaken the southern bloc, quite the opposite. That is why it will be important that the European Union give credit to this message, this speech, with practical facts and with a wider vision not only of the political dialogue, but even beyond this, updating and deepening the existing relations and closing agreements with Brazil and the other members of MERCOSUR”*.

- **Encourage a greater participation of civil society:** The relationship between Latin America and the Caribbean and Europe goes beyond economic, commercial, historical and cultural matters. Nowadays,

it is a crossroad of relations and networks on both sides of the ocean. These professional and academic organizations, NGO, etc. have a lot to say and a lot to give opinions about, and it is necessary to take them into account to enliven the relation and give it a useful content for the societies on which they operate.

It is necessary to open the relationship to the new actors of the civil society and to build the appropriate mechanisms so that a direct dialogue with official levels can exist. This new relationship should, also, base itself on specific and tangible results which be understood by society, rather than on impossible, long and pompous declarations of intentions or ambitious agendas out of touch with reality which, moreover, never end up materializing themselves in the way that they were planned from the beginning.

**GAINING SOCIAL LEGITIMACY**

It is not just necessary to change the philosophy that permeates the summits or even the actual dynamics and functioning of them, but, in addition, the link should gain in social legitimacy.

To progress in that legitimacy and for this relationship to take roots in both societies it is

“The interchange of  
experiences between  
both areas is vital”

necessary to promote projects which are important for the population of both regions. To tackle in a coordinated way cross-cutting problems which affect both societies and which refer to institutional matters –deepening of democracy–, change and transformation of the productive matrix and impulse to social development (fight against poverty and inequality).

- **Improvement of the quality of democracy:** The EU and Latin America and the Caribbean suffer, in different degrees, a crisis of their democratic models especially because of the increasing disaffection of the citizenship towards the political parties, their representatives and the institutions. In Latin America, the new agenda of the emerging middle classes is not being channelled in a proper way by the different States of the region, or by the political parties. The lack of response to the requests for better public services –transport, health service, education and public safety– and for greater inclusion and equality of opportunities is behind the surge of social mobilizations and protests which the region has experienced in the current decade (Chile, Brazil, Argentina, Mexico, etc.).

In Europe, meanwhile, the long economic crisis has

had social and economic consequences and also political ones: the party systems, on which the different democracies of the area were based, until now very solid, are suffering profound changes –in Greece and, according to surveys, in Spain–. The old forces that dominated the political panorama enter into crisis in the presence of the rise of radical and even populist forces which pick up the social discomfort towards politics and politicians –the cases of France and Greece are paradigmatic in that respect–. In addition, in different degrees and in various ways, corruption is an important element present on both sides of the Atlantic. A phenomenon which has a very strong element of corrosion and illegitimacy for the system and which encourages disbelief and disregard towards the democratic model.

Thus, it consists in a challenge shared by the EU and by Latin American and the Caribbean. The interchange of experiences between both areas is vital for the mutual learning of what should and what should not be done. The European Union has been capable of building efficient, autonomous

“The rise of  
commodities makes the  
region very exposed to  
economic fluctuations”

and solid institutions –at least in comparison with what occurs in Latin America–. In addition, it has a Welfare State model that, although with problems and questioned, continues to work and respond, on the whole, to the demands of the society on issues concerning public services and the fight against delinquency. The contribution in both fields of the EU would be very important and would provide the region with a distinguished role in the Latin American scenario. In matters of security, the European experience in the fight against the lack of public safety and against organized crime is vital for Latin America where 12 of the 18 Latin American countries consider that insecurity is the main problem.

In addition the European experience can be very valuable when it comes to creating an efficient bureaucracy for the management of public affairs, just when social demands and those of the emerging middle classes require better public services and a transparent and non-corrupt management. The strengthening of institutionalism depends on improving the capacities of the State –broadening the fiscal basis– in order to

make public expenditures and social politics more efficient and effective so as to boost public services –education, health care, transport and public safety– which the emerging middle classes demand.

- **Change in the productive matrix:** Latin America and the Caribbean have a serious deficit in their current productive matrix which is not based on innovation and has not gained in productivity, efficiency and competitiveness. In addition, it has not diversified either its markets or its export products (except cases like those of Mexico and Brazil). The rise of commodities makes the region very exposed to economic fluctuations.

The road to avoid this situation, with the consequent risk of vulnerability, depends on opting for productive modernisation that allows the region to diversify its productive structure and its exportations to move towards a productive model with greater added value and technological content. As Santiago Mourao, who was managing director of the European Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Brazil, points out, *“our relationships have to be structured in a relation whose main vector is science, technology,*

“Latin America is facing  
an economic cycle  
change”

innovation and education. With clear goals (...) the clear goal here is to improve competitiveness as it is what we need, this is the biggest challenge that we face”<sup>19</sup>.

The increase in productivity, especially of the SME´s, is a common deficit in Europe and Latin America. Europe can learn from Latin America in respect of ability for entrepreneurship and has a lot to offer in innovation, development, competitiveness and productivity in the promotion of the role of the SME´s as growth engines, as well as in higher education.

In that sense, the EU is a partner for Latin America and the Caribbean of great relevance for:

- » Promoting investment, quality employment creation and technology transfer.
- » Promoting an economic cooperation focussed on higher education and on R&D programmes.
- » Supporting small and medium-sized

enterprises with exporting ability.

- **To fight against inequality:** Inequality is a historical problem in Latin America and emerging in Europe, thus itself becoming a space in which both regions can collaborate. An inequality which is social but also generational –youth unemployment is a serious problem on both sides of the Atlantic– as well as of gender –worse employability of women implies worse salaries and fewer possibilities to access decent jobs–.

Once the cycle of super prices of commodities within the so-called “Golden Decade” (2003-2013) is finished, Latin America is facing an economic cycle change. To avoid the slowdown it is necessary to start a new period of changes which try to build a more competitive, productive and innovative economy. The great challenge on both sides of the Atlantic is that of social inequality and that of promoting politics which support social cohesion. The central axes which should establish the social cohesion strategy in Latin America, and where the

<sup>19</sup> Santiago Mourão, “La integración UE-CELAC en el marco de un escenario cambiante” (EU-CELAC integration in the framework of a changeable scenario), in Adrián Bonilla (coord.): *De Madrid a Santiago: Retos y Oportunidades. Balances y perspectivas de las relaciones entre la Unión Europea y América Latina y el Caribe* (From Madrid to Santiago: Challenges and Opportunities. Balances and perspectives of the relationship between the European Union and Latin America and the Caribbean). Flacso. San José, 2012 downloaded from <http://segib.org/es/node/8329>.

“China is a reality; Asia,  
in reality, is the future”

EU can play an important role, are three, which are focussed on building a system of universal social protection based on two strong pillars: solid institutions and a progressive fiscal system. In this sense, the European experience can be an example when building in Latin America a universal Social Protection System, sustainable from a political and fiscal stance.

Moreover, the cooperation policy of the EU should be adapted to the challenges of those middle-income countries that at present are most of the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean, creating a wider agenda that contemplates not only the fight against poverty and destitution – typical in Central America and the Caribbean, as well as in areas of the Andean region– but also development and social cohesion. The challenge for most Latin American countries resides in finding solutions to the vulnerabilities inherent to the “trap of those middle-income countries”. A trap that can be summarized in the fall of productivity and competitiveness with regards to other emerging economies and with regards to the most developed countries.

- **Greater international prominence:** It is necessary to build a relationship in which both parts are seen as strategic partners on the basis of shared values on global matters. That the EU-CELAC be, in the international sphere, an actor that works in a coordinated way in subjects such as the protection of Human Rights and democratic principles –a value of the Western world–.

Both regions face a changing world with new challenges. Together they will be stronger to face all those challenges. Separately, divided and fractioned, they will be able to propose very little in comparison with the dynamic emerging powers. As Jorge Valdez, executive director of EU-LAC Foundation, points out, “*China is a reality; Asia, in reality, is the future. The challenge hereto is: are we going to face that challenge together or separately. And I believe that this is what can lead to this development of a shared global vision between Latin America and the European Union*”<sup>20</sup>.

#### 4. PROPOSALS TO STRENGTHEN A STRATEGIC ALLIANCE

For the sake of clarity and with a desire to be very specific

<sup>20</sup> Jorge Valdez, Introduction, in “Bases renovadas para la relación Unión Europea, América Latina y El Caribe” (Renewed basis for the European Union, Latin America and the Caribbean relationship). *Actas del Seminario EU-LAC/GIGA*, 17 & 18 September 2012, Hamburg consulted at [http://eulacfoundation.org/sites/eulacfoundation.org/files/actas\\_seminario\\_eu-lac-giga\\_2012\\_0.pdf](http://eulacfoundation.org/sites/eulacfoundation.org/files/actas_seminario_eu-lac-giga_2012_0.pdf)

“The new design of the  
relation diversifies the  
types of links”

and direct, in this report five proposals are made to give a new boost to the Euro-Latin American relation.

#### CHANGES IN THE STRUCTURE OF THE RELATIONSHIP

- **The creation of a permanent forum of chancellors with annual meetings to provide political content and strategic approach to this relationship:** The main goal is to maintain an open, constant and transparent dialogue between both partners with a constant communication. In the present situation to rebuild confidence between the two sides of the Atlantic makes reference to “putting one’s cards on the table” in anything affecting the negotiations that the EU maintains with the USA and those which are conducted by different countries of Latin America, especially in what refers to how these new alliances and agreements can affect the bi-regional relation.

Without mutual confidence, nowadays very weakened and undermined, any effort to promote this relationship again would lack content and would end up being unfeasible.

- **Promotion of the EULAC Foundation not only as a centre of academic reflexion but also as a tool to give continuity to the initiatives of the summits during the period between**

**summits:** The need for an effective and autonomous bi-regional executive structure of the Summits is more and more evident; a Euro-Latin American request to develop the approved declarations.

The role that the Ibero-American General Secretariat (SEGIB) plays in the Ibero-American Community of Nations is the one that should be played by an organization like the EULAC Foundation not only as a forum of reflection but also as a coordination tool between actors to give follow-up, continuity and strategic meaning to the relationship.

- **Diversification of the relationship:** Even though the dialogue and the bi-regional link have to continue, the relation must diversify and structure itself in different levels that some experts define as “variable geometry”.

The new design of the relation diversifies the types of links between the two regions. As professor Sanahuja points out “the bi-regional Association has to be based on the combination of common strategic frameworks and an architecture of “variable geometrics” with universal vocation –open to all–, which according to the subject allows changing groups of countries to be made to cooperate more

“Cooperation for  
development in both  
ways”

*intensely and make progress in different matters of the bi-regional agenda, or, given the case, for a political dialogue which in the wider bi-regional framework is not feasible”<sup>21</sup>.*

A relationship that should be developed in three differentiated levels to gain flexibility and agility and to adapt itself to the Latin-American and Caribbean reality:

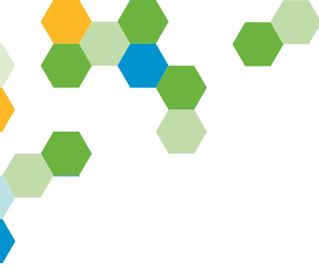
- » Strategic alliances with the two big regional powers – Mexico and Brazil– and with three countries with strong specific weight –Argentina as member of the G-20; Chile as the most developed economy of South America and as member of the OECD; and Colombia as fifth regional economy–.
- » Privileged dialogue with small and medium sized powers –Venezuela, Ecuador, Bolivia, Peru and Uruguay–.
- » Maintenance of the traditional North-South cooperation with the two big regional blocs that include

those countries with lower development levels: the Caribbean and Central America.

Susanne Gratius, professor of Political Sciences and International Relations in the Autonomous University of Madrid and associate researcher in the Foundation for International Relations and Foreign Dialogue (FRIDE), points out that *“the tools of cooperation should adjust themselves to these three groups of countries instead of this current practice of “coffee for everyone”. Cooperation for development in both ways. With regards to the future, it does not make much sense to expect the Latin American countries with a medium and high income to maintain an important position in the European official development assistance flows. Although under the umbrella of the “South-South cooperation”, Brazil and other Latin American powers belong to a group of new donors. The triangular cooperation between the EU and the new Latin American powers in third countries inside and outside the region will be the future cooperation formula. In a near future, Brazil could also*

<sup>21</sup> José Antonio Sanahuja, *La UE y la CELAC: revitalización de una relación estratégica* (The EU and the CELAC: revitalization of a strategic relation). EU-LAC Foundation, Hamburg, 2015, consulted at [http://eulacfoundation.org/sites/eulacfoundation.org/files/Published%20version\\_ES.pdf](http://eulacfoundation.org/sites/eulacfoundation.org/files/Published%20version_ES.pdf).

<sup>22</sup> Susanne Gratius, “Europa y América Latina: la necesidad de un nuevo paradigma” (Europe and Latin America: the need for a new paradigm). FRIDE, Madrid, 2013 available at <http://fride.org/publicacion/1104/europa-y-america-latina-la-necesidad-de-un-nuevo-paradigma>.



“This new agenda should be more focussed on social cohesion policies”

*be an important investor in European countries”<sup>22</sup>.*

**NEW PILLARS OF THE RELATION**

- **A new agenda of cooperation with middle-income countries:** The world has changed profoundly in the last fifteen years and the cooperation policies of the EU have not done so at the same rhythm, as they have not been sufficiently flexible and agile. The EU lacks an agenda and a strategy to carry out the cooperation relations with these middle-income countries as are most of the Latin American nations now. European cooperation has been historically focussed on cooperation with the poorest countries, but has not managed to adapt itself to the changes in the region. Middle-income countries need another type of cooperation especially to avoid the so-called “trap of the middle-income countries”.

This new agenda should be more focussed on social cohesion policies –quality employment– and on the development of competitiveness and productivity through innovation –support to technological transference and promotion of the creation of a common space of higher education–. It is not about abandoning the North-South Cooperation

with the areas of highest poverty levels –Central America and the Caribbean– but about diversifying cooperation, adapting it to the needs of middle-income countries which need to be more competitive and productive by means of a decisive commitment towards innovation and investment in physical and human capital.

In this sense the strengthening of the Latin America Investment Facility (LAIF) is considered one of the most useful tools as the investments that it promotes are directed towards strategic sectors such as energy, environment and transport, all of them key sectors for improving the quality of development. .It depends on a commitment to unblock several of the bottlenecks of the regional economy: both the social and physical structure at the same time, and encourage the creation of SME´s. Instruments such as LAIF adapt themselves better to the new challenges that the majority of the countries of the region face up to, more characteristic of middle-income countries. This type of investment also looks for sustainable development and the preservation of the environment with regards to climate change. The environmental

“The construction of a  
governance at a global  
level”

objectives are very present in the LAIF since European investment is a world leader in subjects related to protection of the environment, climate change and corporate social responsibility.

As a recent report of the EULAC Foundation points out *“cooperation policies cannot be limited to classic international help and to the North-South relation pattern in which, to a large extent, they are based on, and they go beyond the simple transfer of resources of the North-South official development assistance and its efficiency agendas. They consist more in global development policies than in help policies, and the latter, to be effective, will have to be replaced in wider international cooperation frameworks, capable of mobilising the collective action and ensuring the provision of global and/or regional public goods. The same can be said about the emerging South-South cooperation of Latin America and the Caribbean, which should be placed in a multilateral framework, and not only answer the national or regional agendas, so that they play a more relevant role in global development governance and in the definition and achievement*

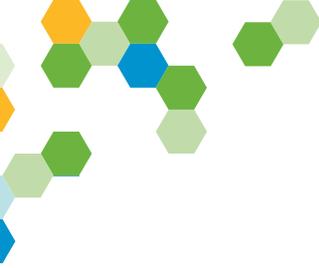
*of the objectives and goals of sustainable development which will be defined from 2015 onwards, once the cycle of millennium development goals ends”<sup>23</sup>.*

Apart from the subject of cooperation, the common agenda must treat, from a dialogue between equals, topics which concern both parts: the construction of a governance at a global level, or shared problems such as the fight against climate change, the preservation of natural resources like water and the efficient use of alternative energies; the fight against drug trafficking and organised crime, and against insecurity in urban areas (maras and youth gangs), as well as the management of migratory flows.

- **A fluid relationship with civil society:** The summits and the Euro-Latin American link cannot live turning their backs on society, but they should legitimate their existence in it and include it in their own functioning.

For that reason, to begin with, a powerful webpage of the Summit should exist that allows citizens to come closer to the advances of the process, even involving the different sectors of civil society. It is

<sup>23</sup> José Antonio Sanahuja, La UE y la CELAC: revitalización de una relación estratégica (The EU and the CELAC: revitalization of a strategic relation). EU-LAC Foundation, Hamburg, 2015, consulted at [http://eulacfoundation.org/sites/eulacfoundation.org/files/Published%20version\\_ES.pdf](http://eulacfoundation.org/sites/eulacfoundation.org/files/Published%20version_ES.pdf).



**“Changes which, in short, transform the relationship from top to bottom”**

society that should enliven and give meaning and content to this link.

How? Implementing “from the bottom” the presence of the different networks of that civil society, including the business and academic spaces.

In order to give shape to this business and academic space and to the different social organizations it is necessary to build a structured, institutionalized and formal framework on solid pillars which already exist: the ones of a common history and a common identity and above all based on the benefits that come from investment in human and economic capital on both sides of the Atlantic.

How would this business contribution to the formation of a Euro-American space be consolidated?

Through a more fluent and bi-directional relationship with society, creating joint areas of academic reflection, sharing experiences and giving answers, within the business framework, to the social demands and increasing the level of coordination and alliances between companies from both sides of the Atlantic.

The institutional relationship should contribute to the creation

of platforms which help develop the Euro-Latin American business and academic link which, should also accept not only big companies, but also those small and medium sized enterprises and be aware of the needs and demands coming from civil society.

This space can also constitute itself as a “virtual hub” which facilitates the contact between businessmen, academics and social organisers on both sides of the Atlantic to carry out common alliances and projects and insert the two regions in the production of value chains.

## 5. CONCLUSIONS

The future of the relationship between the European Union and Latin America and the Caribbean is at stake this 2015 during the EU-CELAC Summit in Brussels. The relation, to gain legitimacy and not forget the purpose for which it was created, should leave the current and already too long standstill –with a few moments of renewed euphoria such as in 2010– carrying out a set of structural reforms and changes which, at the same time, require important consensus between actors, as well as political imagination and boldness between the leaders of both sides of the Atlantic.

It consists in changes which, in short, transform the relationship from top to bottom, from the summit to the plain.

“It is necessary to have  
a global and strategic  
vision”

From the “top”, re-politicizing –adding political capital– the link, removing red tape from it and introducing a strategic approach, at the same time as opting for a more fluent, clear and direct relation. From the “bottom”, converting the link and its institutions and mechanisms in tools that can be seen as useful and necessary for both societies and for the citizens that integrate them. Only in this double way the EU-CELAC association will gain the legitimacy that, to a large extent, has gradually lost over the last years.

History is important and it lays the foundations from an ideological and identity point of view of what it wants to attain, but history is not enough to reinforce the roots which should sustain the relationship. The world has change, and is going to keep changing in many spheres: geopolitics counts on new emerging actors (China) which coexist with the traditional powers (USA and the EU); the commercial links have become more diversified and complex, and these middle-class societies are much more difficult to govern.

The EU-CELAC link should react and find answers from a

pragmatic stance in the face of these changes. It is necessary to have a global and strategic vision in order to give itself total meaning. However, many of the proposals must touch ground so that they have visibility and practical effects in the day to day life of the citizens on both shores. In those subjects that are truly central for development, which concern both sides of the Atlantic and which have as a final objective the improvement of the quality of life.

As José Ortega y Gasset said referring to the Argentineans but which nowadays is a comparable thought to the Euro-Latin American relationship: *“Argentineans! Get to the heart of the matter; get to the heart of the matter! Leave behind previous personal questions, suspicions, narcissisms. Do not boast about the magnificent leap that this country will take the day that its men decide for once and for all to, bravely, open their hearts to things; to take responsibility for and to show concern for them directly and without further delay, instead of living on the defensive and of having their eminent spiritual powers, their curiosity, their perceptiveness, their mental clarity, all hijacked by personal complexes, restricted and paralyzed”*<sup>24</sup>.

<sup>24</sup> J.R. Lucks, *Literatura y reflexión (Literature and reflection)*, Struo Ediciones. Buenos Aires, 2007 p. 185.

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