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EU Relations with Latin America: From Social Resilience to Global Governance

by Bernardo Venturi

ABSTRACT

This event explored the relations between the European Union and Latin America in the framework of a wider transatlantic cooperation. In an age where chaos and crisis is proliferating, the links between the EU and Latin America offer much potential for closer cooperation and a joint contribution to a peaceful and rules based international order. This conference brought together key policy-makers and experts from both academia and civil society to discuss new challenges and opportunities of cooperation between the EU and Latin America as well as how powers on both sides of the Atlantic can join forces to find multilateral solutions to new global challenges.

*European Union | Latin America | Transatlantic relations | Resilience |
Global governance*



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by Bernardo Venturi*

Introduction

In a global environment marked by rising conflict and contestation, the Atlantic space stands out for pointing positively in the opposite direction. As an overall middle-income region making successful efforts to overcome entrenched conflicts, and advancing towards democracy and socio-economic development, the countries of the Americas represent key partners of choice for the European Union. This conference brought together key policy-makers and experts from both academia and civil society to discuss new challenges and opportunities of cooperation between the EU and Latin America as well as how powers on both sides of the Atlantic can join forces to find multilateral solutions to new global challenges.

The conference was organised in Rome on 15 January 2016 in the framework of the review of the EU Global Strategy by the Istituto Affari Internazionali (IAI) in cooperation with the European Union Institute for Security Studies (EUISS), the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation and Compagnia di San Paolo, with the contribution of Barcelona Centre for International Affairs (CIDOB) and Istituto Italo-Latino Americano (IILA). The fourth session was open to the public and media.¹ The conference addressed key issues concerning resilience, regional architectures and global governance.

¹ An event photoset is available on Flickr: <https://www.flickr.com/photos/59317822@N05/sets/72157661454282643>. A video (in Italian) is available in the Italian Foreign Ministry's official Youtube channel: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wC9y5s1zJZE>.

* Bernardo Venturi is Researcher at the Istituto Affari Internazionali (IAI). The author would like to thank Miryam Magro and Nicoletta Pirozzi for their comments and suggestions.

· Summary report of the conference "EU Relations with Latin America: From Social Resilience to Global Governance" held in Rome on 15 January 2016. The conference was organised in the framework of the review of the EU Global Strategy by the Istituto Affari Internazionali (IAI) in cooperation with the European Union Institute for Security Studies (EUISS), the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation and Compagnia di San Paolo, with the contribution of Barcelona Centre for International Affairs (CIDOB) and Istituto Italo-Latino Americano (IILA).

Resilience

The concept of resilience was invoked several times during the seminar, especially in relation to the current phase of economic difficulties: the economic crisis put at risk the political and social stability of Latin American countries, undermining the consolidation of the democratic processes necessary for an effective cooperation with Europe. Two specifications were stressed: firstly, in order to foster an effective global governance, resilience must have political, social and economic implications, and it is important that decision-makers are able to generate answers and changes. The aim is to make all the components of a society able to cope with external stresses (i.e. economic crisis, conflicts or social changes). In order to achieve this result, the constituent members of a society, especially the most vulnerable ones (minorities, marginalised groups, disabled, etc.), should be able to resist and to react through economic strength (job, subsidies, etc.), social inclusion (welfare, identity recognition, etc.) and political participation at all levels. Emphasising the link between economic and social issues, one of the panelists remarked that the economic development has not sufficiently considered the social and economic issues, and in this perspective a broader approach to resilience is also necessary. Secondly, the interconnectedness between citizenship, violence and marginality was presented. In fact, the high level of social violence and intrastate conflict is tied to the marginalisation of some groups and their weak participation in inclusive political processes.



Luis Almagro (left), Nathalie Tocci (right)

During the final session, **Luis Almagro**, Secretary General of the Organisation of American States (OAS), underlined the role of social resilience, the importance of working at the community level and the need for high politics to listen and adapt to the society.²

Regional architectures and global governance

The dialogue with the EU was judged as necessary, also for the resilience of Latin American countries. Nevertheless, at the inter-regional level, the EU is not a unitary actor for political dialogue and some key relations are developed at the bilateral level. On the other hand, Latin America itself is not a unitary continent

² See also the interview with Luis Almagro: *EU relations with Latin America from resilience to governance*, 19 January 2016, https://youtu.be/tMtQww_oLX8.



From left to right: Massimo Gaiani, Mario Giro, Federica Mogherini

at the political level, but more an archipelago that is based on the coordination among the agendas of different countries. From this perspective, it is necessary to create a new social and economic geography of Latin America in order to recover the vision of South-American integration as a whole, but without aspiring to the EU functionalist model. Even if the EU model is more attractive than the US one for Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) because the former is more inclusive

and politically institutionalised, it is essential to develop a new pattern of integration. Nevertheless, cooperation between EU and LAC is important for the political and economic role that they could play in the global governance. Some speakers also stressed the importance of linking social agenda and global agreements – through conditionality, for instance – and, similarly, to establish a more effective global governance through bottom-up processes.

During the final session, **Federica Mogherini**, High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy/Vice President of the European Commission (HR/VP) claimed the importance of working in the framework of a strategy, not only reacting to acute crises. In addition, the building of partnerships based on the weakening of the interlocutor may lead to inequalities and gaps that are hard to address, while strengthening our partners means strengthening of the EU itself.

Other issues

Some panelists evoked the common historical and cultural roots between EU and Latin America, inviting the representatives of the two regions to dare to strengthen global governance by pointing to an effective partnership. Yet, some speakers also recalled the necessity to talk less about common values in order to found practical and concrete solutions to the current problems beyond the simplification of the “cultural brotherhood.”

Several speakers also highlighted the necessity for the EU of a new methodology and agenda in its approach to Latin America, in particular to transform itself from a community *for* development into a community *of* development. In this perspective, EU should look at LAC not as a region to help but as a proper and real partner in development, using a mix of low and high politics to foster the integration process. An example of development linked to the concept of democracy is the “Digital Single Market” supporting a EU-LAC ICT gateway.

During the final session, **Mario Giro**, Italy's Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, suggested to build up a strategy for a "welfare of the globalization." He also stressed the importance of working with civil society organisations in both the continents.³ **Luis Almagro**, Secretary General of OAS, highlighted the importance to find global solutions to organised crime and terrorism.



Conference participants

Recommendations

The EU should:

- Be more ambitious in structuring *political* and *strategic* dialogue with the Latin American region in order to include the region in the new global governance debate, working with LAC for global development avoiding the "development aid" approach.
- Be more cohesive and cooperative inside before presenting itself as an international partner in order to be more credible in the international arena. Strengthen the existing channels of political dialogue as the EU-CELAC Summit.
- Use the EU Trust Fund and other European investments for social aspects of economic development – for instance, boosting investments in order to create jobs. Additionally, projects with LAC partners through a common job market and strengthening bilateral agenda on small and medium enterprises in order to make the region self-reliant and ready to face new global challenges as a real partner of the EU would contribute to this end. Extend the short-stay visa waiver granted to the people from Colombia to the citizens of the other Latin America countries. This could support a common job market: an integrated job system between EU and LAC in order to allocate the units of workforce where they are needed.
- Upgrade trade agreements with the LAC region, introducing into the EU-Central America Association Agreement (signed in 29 June 2012) the job market issue, within part IV of the Agreement related to trade, and push for the ratification of the Agreement by the remaining 12 countries that have not done it yet.
- Lead the negotiations started with MERCOSUR in 2010 to a positive conclusion in order to implement concrete projects together, and to start as soon as possible an

³ See also the interview with Mario Giro (in Italian): *Europa e America Latina, tra resilienza e governance*, 19 January 2016, <https://youtu.be/BrBqdUSjM74>.

effective economic partnership with the region.

- Foster pan-Atlantic agreements among the four regions (North America, Europe, LAC and Africa) on specific issues, i.e. development cooperation, fights against drug trafficking and climate change.
- Fight organised crime through a comprehensive strategy and in strong cooperation with LAC countries, i.e. building new form of cooperation between Europol and relevant authorities in the LAC countries through an integrated criminal database for specific fields.

Updated 22 February 2016

Conference Programme

Rome, 15 January 2016

Welcome Addresses

Massimo Gaiani, Director General for Global Issues and for Asia, Sub Saharan Africa, Latin America, Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation

Introductory Session

Latin America and the EU Global Strategy

Nathalie Tocci, Deputy Director, Istituto Affari Internazionali (IAI), and Special Advisor to EU HRVP Federica Mogherini

Alfredo Conte, Head of the Strategic Planning Division, European External Action Service (EEAS), Brussels

Antonio Missiroli, Director, European Union Institute for Security Studies (EUISS), Paris

Session I

Good governance and societal resilience in Latin America: How can the EU contribute?

Chair **Anna Ayuso**, Senior Researcher, Barcelona Centre for International Affairs (CIDOB)

Speakers **Miriam Gomes Saraiva**, Professor, Department of International Relations, University of the State of Rio de Janeiro

Mario Cimoli, Chief of the Production, Productivity and Management Division, Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC)

José Luis Rhi-Sausi, Socio-economic Secretary, Istituto Italo-Latino Americano (IILA), Rome

Roland Schäfer, Acting Managing Director for the Americas, European External Action Service (EEAS), Brussels

Session II

Reframing EU-Latin America relations: promoting dialogue

Chair **Nathalie Tocci**, Deputy Director, Istituto Affari Internazionali (IAI), and Special Advisor to EU HRVP Federica Mogherini

- Speakers **José Antonio Sanahuja**, Robert Schuman Fellow, European University Institute (EUI), and Professor at the Complutense University of Madrid
Loris Zanatta, Professor, University of Bologna
José Antonio García Belaúnde, Ambassador, former Minister of Foreign Affairs of Peru

Session III

EU and Latin America towards more effective global governance

- Chair **Nicoletta Pirozzi**, Senior Fellow, Istituto Affari Internazionali (IAI), Rome
- Speakers **Fernando A. Iglesias**, World Federalist Movement Council Chairman, President Democracia Global, Director Cátedra Spinelli, Buenos Aires
Detlef Nolte, Director, GIGA Institute of Latin American Studies, Hamburg
Susanne Gratius, Professor of Political Science and International Relations, Autonomous University of Madrid, and Associate Fellow, Fundación para las Relaciones Internacionales y el Diálogo Exterior (FRIDE), Madrid
Antonella Spada, Regional Specialist in Political and Prospective Analysis for Development (Expert of the UNDP Regional Centre for Latin America and the Caribbean)
José Luengo-Cabrera, Associate Analyst, European Union Institute for Security Studies (EUISS), Paris

Session IV

Closing remarks

- Chair **Donato Di Santo**, former Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs, Latin America expert
- Speakers **Mario Giro**, Under-Secretary of State, Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation
Luis Almagro, Secretary-General, Organization of American States (OAS)
- Keynote Speech **Federica Mogherini**, High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy/Vice President of the European Commission

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Via Angelo Brunetti, 9 - I-00186 Rome, Italy

T +39 06 3224360

F + 39 06 3224363

iai@iai.it

www.iai.it

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