

# A time of global transition: international concertation exercises during 2023



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## A TIME OF GLOBAL TRANSITION: INTERNATIONAL CONCERTATION EXERCISES DURING 2023

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During the present year 2023, a series of events have taken place in the multilateral sphere that reflect, on the one hand, the changes occurring in the world on that scale and, on the other hand, the proposals presented by regional groups or global articulation groups to face new and old challenges.

The backdrop has been the growing loss of U.S. hegemony in the main political and economic events on a planetary scale, plus Washington's declaration of the end of neo-liberal globalization, as well as the attempts in the commercial sphere to disengage from important markets, particularly China.

The People's Republic of China, for its part, celebrated the tenth anniversary of the Belt and Road Initiative, one of the main alternatives for relations with the Global South, based on the principles of equality and cooperation. The initiative expands continually in the face of the inability of the United States and Europe to articulate programs that represent a practice other than the constant plundering of the resources of Africa, Latin America-Caribbean and several Asian countries.\

The continuous breaches of agreements to prevent NATO's eastward expansion created the conditions in 2022 for Russia to launch a military operation on Ukrainian territory, which continues until 2023. Washington and other European capitals tried to use this conflict as a turning point to create international alliances, attempting to isolate Moscow and foster all out "Russophobia". However, most of the international community did not respond to such a call.

The ethnic cleansing carried out by Israel since the beginning of October against Palestine, as a culmination also of the disrespect for several multilateral instruments that have repeatedly called for the creation of two states living side by side in peace, has generated new alliances both at the international level and within each of the societies of the main parties involved. The unrestricted support of the United States for this barbarism has further limited its ability to act as a leader, not only of a group of nations that maintain docile foreign policies contrary to their national interests, but of

ruling classes that have viewed with fear the social mobilization that has taken place in their respective territories in solidarity with the Palestinian people.

In the midst of these changes and upheavals, the Republic of Cuba has held the presidency of the Group of 77 and China, the largest mechanism for political coordination among the countries that are part of the United Nations system. One of the most important results of the summit held in Havana in September was the approval of a political resolution summarizing the main concerns of the group and a set of proposals for the future.

From the Center for International Policy Research and other institutions we have taken a quick look at some of the main group meetings that took place during the year. Some of them show the inability of the mechanisms of the unipolar world to deal with the old problems of Humanity, while others reveal the attempts to move towards a multilateral world, rather than a multipolar one, in which all nations interrelate as equals and dependencies and subjugation disappear.

Thus, we can consult the following opinions on the G7 Summit (May), the CELAC-EU Summit (July), the Russia-Africa Summit (July), the BRICS Summit (August) and the G20 Summit just before the Havana meeting. Finally, we will talk about the challenges of a New International Information Order, since this is an issue that directly affects the domestic and foreign policy cycles of each country, as well as the weight that information management will have in the international alliances that will be forged in the future.

## RESULTS OF THE G7 SUMMIT

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### Introduction

Each year, the G7 Summit brings together the leaders of France, the United Kingdom, the United States, Germany, Japan, Italy and Canada, and the forum's communiqué is politically binding for all members. The EU has gradually been incorporated into all political discussions on the agenda of the summits and, since Ottawa (1981) the then European Economic Community participated in the working sessions. It now has all the responsibilities associated with membership.

This forum arose in the 1970s when the developed countries promoted a comprehensive coordination of macroeconomic, monetary, trade and energy policies that have led to aspects of geopolitical and security importance that have an impact on international political relations as a whole.

As an immediate precedent, it must be pointed out that the previous G7 summit was held in SchlossElmau (Bavaria, Germany) in June 2022. That same year, the NATO summit was held in Madrid, with similar agendas and where the conflict in Ukraine, as well as the confrontation with Russia, dominated a central part of the agenda.

This year, the rotating presidency fell to Japan and was held from May 19 to 21, 2023 in the city of Hiroshima<sup>1</sup>.

Nine working sessions were officially held and the following topics were presented:

- Russia's aggression against Ukraine
- disarmament and non-proliferation of nuclear weapons,

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<sup>1</sup> In attendance were the French President, the Canadian Prime Minister, the President of the United States, the German Chancellor, the Prime Minister of Italy, the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom and senior representatives of the European Union. In addition, the Prime Minister of Australia, the Prime Minister of the Cook Islands (currently holding the rotating chairmanship of the Pacific Islands Forum), the President of Comoros and current Chairman of the African Union, the Prime Minister of India (this year's G20 Chairman), the President of Indonesia (in charge of leading ASEAN in 2023), and senior representatives of Vietnam, the Republic of Korea and Brazil (next leader of BRICS) were also invited. Representatives of the UN, the World Bank, the International Energy Agency, the International Monetary Fund, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development and the World Trade Organization also attended. The President of Ukraine, Volodymyr Zelensky, was a special guest.

- the global economy, finance and sustainable development,
- climate change, energy and the environment,
- food security and health,
- cooperation with international partners.

As a result, five separate statements and a joint communiqué were issued for a total of six key documents: the "G7 Leaders' Statement on Ukraine," "G7 Leaders' Hiroshima Vision on Nuclear Disarmament," the "G7 Leaders' Statement on Economic Resilience and Economic Security," the "G7 Clean Economy Action Plan," the "Hiroshima Statement of Action for Resilient Global Food Security," and the "G7 Leaders' Hiroshima Communiqué".

## **Development**

The war in Ukraine was the central theme of the summit, where Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida stated that the group is committed to "strong support for Ukraine from all possible dimensions." Zelenski recalled the support Japan has provided in the context of the conflict. U.S. President Joe Biden announced a new \$375 million military aid package, bringing Washington's financial assistance to \$37 billion.

Earlier, the US confirmed that it would help train Ukrainian pilots for combat actions in F-16 aircraft, which Kiev claims it will use to achieve air dominance over Moscow. Precisely this was a topic on which several of the presidents present there, as well as Zelenskyy, spoke. German Chancellor Olaf Scholz said that the pilot training is a message for Russia to understand that "it should not expect to succeed in its invasion". While UK Prime Minister Rishi Sunak assured that pilot training would "begin in the summer".

G7 leaders announced new measures to increase costs for Russia and its supporters:

1. They will ensure that exports of all items essential to the Russian war machine are restricted in all G7 jurisdictions.
2. They will take steps to strengthen the prevention of evasion and circumvention of measures against Russia.

3. They will limit Russia's use of the international financial system, in particular by preventing branches of Russian banks in third countries from being used to avoid sanctions.
4. They will take measures to limit Russia's revenues from energy and metals.
5. They will work together to restrict the trade and use of diamonds mined, processed or produced in Russia.
6. They will deprive Russia of the G7 technology, industrial equipment and services that support its war machine.

**Nuclear disarmament** was another topic discussed as part of the manipulation of the symbolism represented by the host city of the event, Approached from an obvious double standard, the issue once again revolved around Russia and the conflict in Ukraine. The joint statement expressed, "We reiterate that Russia's threats to use nuclear weapons against Ukraine are not admissible." "We express our concern over Russia's announcement that it is ready to conduct a nuclear test, and call on Russia to respect its moratorium on nuclear tests".

The G7 leaders reiterated the importance of disarmament and non-proliferation efforts supposedly "to create a more stable and secure world" (...). They also expressed their willingness to reduce the production and stockpiling of nuclear material for civilian purposes around the world. The document closed by welcoming various initiatives sponsored by several of the countries present, among them, "Youth Leader Fund for a World Without Nuclear Weapons" (Japan), "Youth Champions for Disarmament" (Germany), and "Young Women Next Generation Initiative", established by the European Union's Disarmament and Non-Proliferation Consortium.

**On the economic front**, it was agreed to coordinate a resilient and secure economy based on diversity and deep agreements with the elimination of risks, as well as a transition to green, sustainable and renewable energy. Also, to mobilize 600 billion dollars for the financing of a quality structure through the Partnership for Global Infrastructure Investment (PGII), the promotion of the evolution of Multilateral Development Banks (MDBs) and the creation of a Pandemic Fund for the prevention of a possible future global pandemic. Joint mobilization of \$100 billion per year in climate

financing by 2025, building supply chain resilience, calling for the creation of a new Coordination Platform on Economic Coercion to promote cooperation within and outside the G7, and strengthening multilateral export controls on dual-use technology were proposed, all implicitly aimed at curbing China's global advance.

**On environmental and climate change issues**, the joint commitment to the Paris Agreement, support for the creation of Partnerships for a Just Energy Transition and a majority de-carburization by 2035 were timidly emphasized.

**With reference to Food Security and Sanitation**, the G7 Summit was preceded by the Ministerial Conference "United for World Food Security", which did not live up to the expectations announced and where political rhetoric prevailed that was far removed from practical actions. For example, they pledged to keep markets open, while pushing for a policy of unilateral sanctions against third parties and recognizing the importance of ensuring the resilience and long-term sustainability of agricultural and food systems.

They reiterated concern about grain exports from Ukraine and their supply to countries in need and to this end emphasized establishing the EU-Ukraine solidarity corridors, President Zelenski's "Ukrainian Grains" initiative and the continued and expanded implementation of the Black Sea grain export initiative. Ukraine is called the bread basket of the world, so it is a focus of attention toward the impact it may have on its exports of the product.

They made a statement in favor of resilient global food security. The US offered an additional 4.5 billion dollars for global food security. Other invited countries such as Brazil, Vietnam, India, among others, are included in this declaration.

They also addressed the decision to invest in global health through global vaccine manufacturing capacity, the Pandemic Fund, the future international agreement on pandemic prevention, preparedness and response, and efforts to achieve universal health coverage, but no concrete tactical actions.

**Cooperation with international partners.** Representatives from Australia, Brazil, the Cook Islands, Comoros, India, Indonesia, the Republic of Korea and Vietnam also participated in these discussions and expressed their willingness to revitalize



international cooperation and work with their partners to achieve a resilient, people-centered world that leaves no one behind. There is also no evidence of concrete steps on such cooperation. They discussed supporting a free and open Indo-Pacific region, strengthening their partnerships with African countries and supporting greater African representation in multilateral fora.

**Bilateral meetings.** Parallel to the summit, European Council President, Charles Michel, held a series of bilateral meetings with Canada, Vietnam and Ukraine, since President Zelenski joined on May 20-21. In a joint statement, prior to their meetings with VolodymirZelenski, the G7 members called on China to "exert pressure" on the Russian government to withdraw its troops from Ukraine "unconditionally".

### **Conclusions**

The contradictions derived from the agreements and communiqués of this summit were apparent. The declarations sought, in essence, to contain the rise of China and Russia in the balance of global forces, as well as to perpetuate an international order that is practical to Western hegemonic interests, while humanity faces the current impacts of the pandemic, a high rate of inflation, different international hotbeds of tension and a war in Europe with high international repercussions.

Aside from failing to propose effective solutions to global problems, this summit demonstrated a lack of real commitment to promoting equitable development for all other countries. The historical responsibility of these powers for underdevelopment, the limited representation of the interests of the global south in this forum and the subordination of global problems to others that fundamentally affect the status quo of the member countries, show that the G7 behaves more like a fraternity workshop that is incapable of mitigating the world's most urgent problems.

The G7 declaration does not provide a roadmap for raising the necessary resources, effectively addressing the food crisis, building resilience and protecting smallholder farmers. Nor does it provide decisive action on the effects of climate change, as the two crises are closely linked.

At the same time, financial commitments to respond to the ongoing effects of the pandemic remained outstanding and the ACT-Accelerator continues to face a \$13 billion funding shortfall. The G7 also failed to commit to further structural changes that could help prevent - or at least better prepare - for other pandemics. Unlike last year's summit where COVID-19 and global health systems took center stage, this year these issues were largely sidelined.

The G7 shows strong opposition to the major shift that has occurred in the correlation of global forces, whereby a significant part of the unilateral coercive measures promoted by the West against Russia and China are no longer effective in achieving their hegemonic and global domination objectives.

In the financial sphere, for example, the G7 miscalculated by using the disconnection of SWIFT<sup>2</sup> as a means of pressure on third parties and as part of its broad arsenal of unilateral coercive measures against Russia. In response, alternative financial transfer systems emerge and are developed, including the China International Payments System (CIPS), the one developed by the Central Bank of Russia (SPFS), or the System of Interbank Telecommunications of Iran (SEPAM). It is known that the use of the Russian ruble and the Indian rupee in trade has led to an alternative payment system that also replaces the SWIFT system, while in the countries of the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU), the proportion of payments in national currencies has already reached 75%.

In short, the breakup of the swift currency swap points to a gradual process of de-dollarization of the world economy and will be detrimental in the long term to the dollar's dominance in the world. A greater fragmentation of the monetary system and the proliferation of possible agreements for the use of other currencies in commercial exchange can be expected, although the dollar will continue for a longer period of time as the dominant international reserve currency.

The exit of European and U.S. companies from the Russian market also made possible a greater presence of Chinese companies in key sectors such as the automotive

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<sup>2</sup> The Society for Worldwide Interbank Financial Telecommunication (SWIFT) is a company created in 1973 that integrates 11,000 banking establishments throughout the world, allowing them to carry out financial operations for the transmission of payment orders. It is considered a system very close to the US Treasury and the USD.

industry, household appliances, the hotel industry and advanced mining projects. The progress in bilateral relations with China has been manifested in a more than two-fold increase in trade, with a goal of reaching US\$ 250 billion. This growth implies - in terms of Russia's exports - significant growth in oil and gas, as well as intense collaboration in the military field.

Russia succeeds in reducing the economic impact of Western sanctions. The State is redirecting most of its hydrocarbon exports to the Asian market, particularly to China and India. Payment for energy in rubles revalues the currency, and the Western intention to cut off energy supplies from Russia was not feasible in the short term due to the level of dependence of some EU member states.

Overall, current geopolitical, economic and security trends could accelerate the weakening of the dollar monopoly, the erosion of transatlantic cohesion due to medium-term disagreements on Russia policy, and the deterioration of US global strategic leadership as it faces increasing resistance to its economic and political dominance. It could be argued that the policy of maximum Western pressure against Russia and the growing rivalry with China also accelerate the strategic convergence between Moscow and Beijing and deepen Eurasian integration which, although framed within the regionalization inherent to global trans-nationalization, it also limits the scope of Washington and NATO's strategies as regulators of the international political-military sphere.

However, given the degree of progress made by the economic, commercial, financial and technological positions of the global South, and particularly in view of the cooperation between Beijing and Moscow, the G7 is showing strong opposition, determining the intensity of conflicts in the current system of international political relations. The US attaches increasing importance to NATO as a mechanism of coercion aimed at guaranteeing its strategic interests in any part of the world, in the form of increased consultations, alliances and affiliations to the Organization. In this context, the US and European military-industrial complex becomes fundamental as an element of deterrence, producing an escalation of the arms race and where the instruments of

arms control and non-proliferation, far from the rhetoric used by the G7 at this summit, are weakened.

## CELAC-EU SUMMIT: REASONS FOR MEETING AGAIN

**Lic. Lourdes M. Regueiro Bello and Claudia Marín Suárez, MSc.**

After eight years without a summit at the highest level, the Third Summit of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC)-European Union (EU) of Heads of State and Government took place on July 17 and 18, 2023 in Belgium, Brussels, under the theme "Renewing the bi-regional partnership to strengthen peace and sustainable development". The meeting was chaired by Prime Minister Ralph Gonsalves of St. Vincent and the Grenadines in his capacity as President pro tempore of CELAC, the President of the European Council, Charles Michel, and the President of the European Commission, Ursula von der Leyen.

The Summit was attended by the 33 CELAC countries and 25 members of the European Union, mostly represented by Heads of State and government, vice presidents and foreign ministers, in addition to other representations of EU bodies and regional and global organizations.

The previous CELAC-EU Summit was held in 2015 and the mechanism had not met again at its highest level due to political differences fundamentally associated with the reluctance of European countries to share this space with the government of Venezuela led by Nicolás Maduro. Following the United States, several European countries -and even some Latin American countries- did not recognize the Venezuelan government after the self-proclamation of Juan Guaidó as "interim president". During this period, CELAC also saw its dynamism slow down, impacted by changes in the regional political scenario and the shift to the right of several governments in the area.

This context changed as a result of the stimulus given to CELAC by Mexico's pro tempore presidency and the renewed interest of the countries of the region in resuming the Community's activity as a regional space for dialogue, consensus-building and cooperation. This has been favored by the re-emergence of governments that can be positioned in the broad spectrum of progressivism in Latin America.

On the other hand, there has also been a change in the policy of the United States and European countries towards Venezuela, although the sanctions imposed on that country remain in place. This is associated with the recognition of the failure of the 'maximum

pressure' policy to force a change of government in that country. A very special situation should be added to this, derived from the escalation of the war in Ukraine and the need of these countries to replace Russia as a fuel supplier by injecting offers from different sources into the energy market, among which Venezuela could be relevant.

The 3rd Summit is taking place against the backdrop of a context characterized by strategic competition between the established powers and the new ones, which have become global players or are striving to become so, in which the European Union is showing visible losses in its weight and influence in Latin America and the Caribbean. Objective factors such as the growing presence of China, which displaced it as the region's second largest trading partner, can only partly explain this trend, which Europe is clearly belatedly seeking to reverse. The revitalization of the EU-CELAC summit mechanism is a step in that direction.

The health and economic effects of the pandemic revealed the limits of the EU's humanitarian commitment to the region. Intervention by traditional partners was late and precarious in the face of the magnitude of the crisis, while vaccines and medical and protective equipment from China and Russia were brought in early to combat the devastating effects of COVID-19 in the area.

The combined effect of the Western decline in strategic competition, the pandemic and the subsequent outbreak of the conflict in Ukraine in February 2022, have meant a turning point in the international correlation of forces which, together with the change in the US administration (2021), prompted the renewal of alignments and agreements within the Western bloc.

In this context, Europe's "return" to Latin America and the Caribbean is related to its participation as part of the Western bloc to contain China; the need for access to resources to carry out its 2019-2024 strategy; the search for political support to condemn Russia in multilateral institutions; and the relaxation of U.S. policy towards Venezuela.

### **The European perspective on the "re-launching" of relations**

The EU did not fail to notice the estrangement that had developed between the regions in this context. The High Representative, Josep Borrell, expressed it clearly: "Despite the pandemic, I have traveled six times to Latin America and the Caribbean and I have well perceived the resentment for the negligence attributed to Europe in its approach to Latin America and the Caribbean" (Borrell, 2023b), explicitly recognizing that China had become the first trading partner of the region, while the projects of trade and association agreements with the EU were stagnant and in need of modernization. No less relevant was his observation of how the Latin American perception of Europe had changed: "To this impasse has been added the feeling that, although we share values, our priorities do not always coincide" (Borrell, 2023b).

In the 're-construction' of relations with the region some important moments prior to the CELAC-EU Summit were Borrell's visits to Latin American countries between 2021 and 2022 (Peru, Brazil, Panama, Chile, Uruguay and Argentina), the holding of the Third Meeting of Foreign Ministers (October 2022 in Argentina), the visit of Ursula von der Leyen to Brazil, Argentina, Chile and Mexico (June 2023), and the documents of the European Community instances related to the foreign policy of the bloc aimed at re-launching bi-regional relations.

The ministerial meeting –the first since 2018 - was a key milestone because it agreed to hold the 3rd CELAC-EU Summit in 2023, and the documents adopted by different community instances advanced the guidelines that the EU would follow in the meeting.

The main objectives and proposals of those documents were aimed at:

Renewed political association	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Periodic summits and a permanent coordination mechanism with CELAC.</li> <li>● Greater cooperation in UN forums; greater commitments not only at the regional level, but also bilaterally and sub-regionally, with special attention to the Caribbean, particularly to the conclusion of the post-Cotonou Agreement.</li> </ul>
Strengthening a common EU-LAC trade agenda	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Finalize the signing of the EU-Chile Agreement.</li> <li>● Achieve progress for the EU-Mexico and EU-Mercosur agreements, complete the ratification of the agreements with Central America and Colombia, Peru and Ecuador</li> </ul>

	<p>considering as a whole their respective updates.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Strengthen EU-LAC collaboration in the WTO.</li> <li>● Mutually diversify sources of raw materials.</li> <li>● Make global supply chains more resilient.</li> </ul>
Global Gateway	<p>Help address the infrastructure needs of Latin America and the Caribbean with sustainable investment projects; financial frameworks such as green bond markets; increased cooperation in disaster risk preparedness and management; inclusive and people-centered digital transformation, including regulatory dialogue to drive digital compatibility and promote the free and secure flow of data.</p>
Promoting sustainable economic growth for human development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Enhancing cooperation, including investments in health systems resilience (vaccine and drug manufacturing, digital health, health technologies, and health systems strengthening).</li> <li>● Cooperation in water and sanitation management.</li> </ul>
Joining forces for justice, public safety and the fight against transnational organized crime	
Promoting peace and security, democracy, the rule of law, human rights and humanitarian aid	
Building a vibrant EU-LAC people-to-people partnership between peoples (with a focus on youth)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Intensifying cooperation in education research,</li> <li>● Circular mobility and joint cultural initiatives,</li> <li>● Strengthening the role of the UE.LAC Foundation.</li> </ul>

While Borrell's visits were a way to reinforce and specify the pillars of the new European agenda for the region, they were also a promising occasion to reaffirm a set of key ideas underlying the EU's renewed policy towards the region. These ideas were obviously aimed at having Latin America and the Caribbean “re-evaluate” the place that the old continent should occupy in the European perspective in relation to other extra-hemispheric actors, aspects that were emphasized both in their speeches during the visits and afterwards. Among them, it is worth highlighting the following:



- The recurrent allusion to the place of the EU as the first investor in the region with a stock of 800 billion euros, which exceeds the amount invested by the bloc in China, Japan, India and Russia combined (Borrell, 2022), highlighting that Europe has invested more in Latin America and the Caribbean than in other regions with greater growth potential. He also highlights the EU as the leading contributor to development cooperation in the region.
- It expresses regret at having been displaced by China as the second largest trading partner, while highlighting the EU as the largest contributor of capital and technology to the region (Borrell, 2022).
- The repeated assertion that Latin America and the Caribbean are natural, equal and like-minded partners and key allies (European Commission & Borrell, 2023) in the promotion of a rules-based global order in the face of the autocratic threat (Borrell, 2022) in a clear reference to China and Russia.
- The axis of the new cooperation agenda focused on climate change, the digital revolution and social justice (Borrell, 2023a).
- The persistent intention to assure that the misunderstandings have been overcome and that there is greater sensitivity on the part of Europe to the region's problems.
- The relevance of the re-launch taking place under the Spanish presidency.

### **The interests behind the narratives**

Clearly, Europe sought to achieve a more emphatic position of condemnation of Russia with regard to the conflict in Ukraine, on the part of the governments of the region. However, by virtue of a position of non-alignment, which in this case vindicates the Declaration of Latin America and the Caribbean as a Zone of Peace, the countries of the region maintained the position of not getting involved in a conflict that -as expressed by Colombian President Gustavo Petro- is alien to them. On the contrary, they advocated a negotiated solution to achieve a lasting peace in that zone. It is not idle to recall that some Latin American governments had previously refused the request to send arms to Ukraine.

Through Global Gateway -the main initiative of its global projection- the EU pursues geopolitical and geo-economic interests in its relationship with Latin America and the Caribbean. Europe joins the competition with China by announcing €45 billion in investments in more than 130 projects until 2027 in the region, in areas such as renewable energies, digitalization and raw material supply chains, among others, which clearly coincide with some of the areas in which China has invested.

The region re-dimensions its importance as a partner to diversify the origin of energy supplies such as gas and green hydrogen -a goal that gains importance and urgency from the need to replace Russia as an energy supplier-, and to ensure access to strategic raw materials such as Chilean and Argentine lithium, Brazilian niobium and Mexican feldspar.

The EU-Latin America Raw Materials Partnership aims to promote and intensify cooperation between the EU and seven Latin American partner countries (Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Mexico, Peru and Uruguay) along the value chains of mineral-based industries (EU-Latin America Convention on Raw Materials 2023, 2023). While the Partnership aims to advance the integration of strategic industrial value chains for both regions, all indications are that the role of Latin America and the Caribbean as suppliers of the first links in the chain will be consolidated. Countries such as Mexico, Brazil and Chile play an important role for the EU as suppliers of fundamental, non-critical raw materials.

In order to contain China, the EU joins the call of the United States to participate in the process of digitalization of Latin American and Caribbean societies. In this sense, the EU-Latin America and the Caribbean Digital Alliance was launched, which has been joined by 20 countries in the region. In this process, the Latin American outpost is Colombia, a country that has proposed to be a facilitator of the collaboration process between the two regions in the field of digitization.

The Alliance's investment agenda is shaped by three projects of the Global Gateway initiative: extension of the BELLA fiber optic cable (to provide secure digital backbone connectivity and bring the research communities of both regions closer together); implementation of a regional Copernicus strategy with two regional data centers in

Panama and Chile; and the establishment of an EU-LAC Digital Accelerator (to foster collaboration, competitiveness, skills and multi-stakeholder and private sector innovation in the digital area).

The Alliance furthermore covers a wide range of areas for cooperation, including digital policies, internet and data governance, infrastructure, connectivity, security, data protection, artificial intelligence and other new emerging digital technologies, digital skills development, technology, entrepreneurship and innovation, digital trade, as well as those linked to space (European Commission, 2023). Note that digital competition with China has been one of the focal areas of the strategic dispute, due to the capacity shown by the Asian giant to develop frontier technologies especially linked to the field of information and communications.

### **The Latin American perspective**

For Latin America and the Caribbean, the international order in dispute and the geopolitical scenario formed around the process of redistribution of global power does not have the same connotation as for Europe. For developing regions such as Latin America and the Caribbean, being a space in dispute between the declining powers of the West and the emerging ones entails risks, but if managed with intelligence and pragmatism, it can also be an opportunity.

Most Latin American and Caribbean countries have made it clear that the expansion of their relations with countries and regions that until now have not had a relevant weight, and which are at the center of the geopolitical dispute, does not mean excluding their traditional partners. On the contrary, they believe that in the diversification of their relations they can find opportunities: greater autonomy, greater negotiating capacity and additional resources resulting from the competition between the initiatives and projects of the adversary powers.

In this context, the Latin American and Caribbean countries did not underestimate the EU's interest in 'rebuilding' its relations with the region. However, the region shows more demanding positions, less 'complacent' and more demanding that the 'new relationship' yields shared benefits in a fairer and more equitable manner.

The EU has taken note of the change, which is no less subtle than a warning about the need to pay attention, support and generate actions to incorporate into the agenda and action plans of global multilateral forums, the demands of the region aimed at solving problems that have accumulated on the basis of an unequal and asymmetrical relationship. In this direction, Borrell pointed out:

*"For Europeans, it is urgent to understand that we must engage not only with our problems, but with the problems of our partners. Latin America and the Caribbean are asking us to seek solutions to key issues that fall under the rubric of global justice: debt relief, climate finance, green bonds and attracting private investment, reorganization of value chains (avoiding extractivist policies), taxation on a global scale, joint fight against drugs and organized crime, among other issues. This also implies a willingness to reform the multilateral system and international financial institutions to make them fairer and more representative. In short, the region is asking for influence at the world's main decision-making tables"<sup>3</sup> (Borrell, 2023b).*

Several governments in the region, despite internal resistance, are paying special attention to the fact that the strategic resources needed to cope with technological development and competition, especially those required for digitalization and the energy transition, become the material basis for a deepening of primarization. These positions should lead to greater demands both for domestic processing that adds value to such resources and for technology transfer. Similarly, it is to be expected that the demands on environmental standards for the extraction and processing of resources will be raised; in this respect there could be a shared perspective with the EU.

### **Balance of the III CELAC-EU Summit**

The meeting adopted a 41-point Declaration (Council of the European Union, 2023), which reveals consensus, but also reveals some differences. Certainly, energy transition, tackling climate change, digitalization, health systems and social equity are, in general, areas of shared interest as well as relevant issues for development.

### **Climate change**

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<sup>3</sup> Highlighting by the authors.

Climate change is now firmly on the political agenda in Latin America and the Caribbean. This is an issue to which the EU also attaches importance. What is new is the European acceptance of the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities, although it limits the commitment to different national circumstances.

The reiterated calls for compliance by developed countries with their commitments in relation to the fight against climate change were reflected in the declaration, recognizing the importance of promptly complying with the mobilization of resources to finance developing countries for this purpose, as well as the commitment to the COP decisions in relation to preserving the global temperature increase at 1.5°C. Climate change

### **Bi-regional relations and relations with the sub-regions**

In an assessment of what each sub-region achieved, it can be said that the commitments with the Caribbean appear to be the most mature, which may be explained by the EU's need to rebuild its relations with that subregion after BREXIT. In this regard, the recognition of the damages caused by slavery and the reference - without implying any commitment- to the Caribbean claim for compensation for that concept is notorious.

### **Novel political approaches and reaffirmations**

The declaration to promote cooperation and friendly relations between peoples, irrespective of differences between political systems and taking into account disparities in economic, social or developmental levels, is unprecedented. It is noticeable that the priority of political commitment now rests on shared values, which obviously refers to the 'rules-based' international order, and denotes European concern for the directions of its new configuration. The appropriation of Chinese President Xi Jinping's idea of a community of shared destiny is also striking, as the declaration refers to "a common future perspective".

The call to "[...] recognize the importance of ensuring universality, objectivity and non-selectivity when dealing with human rights issues, as well as the elimination of double standards and politicization" (Council of the European Union, 2023), is a change to underline in the political perspective of the document, since criteria permeated by these

approaches have been used to isolate, punish, stigmatize and even support ruptures of the democratic order in countries that have undertaken political processes of progressive tendencies in the region.

The recognition of slavery practiced by European countries as a crime against humanity in the final declaration is only a step in the exercise of restorative justice that implies comprehensive attention to the victims and is not limited to the acceptance of the moral damage inflicted, but also has an economic dimension regarding which there does not seem to be a consensus in the European bloc.

For the first time in the history of the CELAC-EU Summit, something related to the sovereignty of the Malvinas Islands is included. The mere fact of the inclusion is transcendental, although the formulation concerning the EU is cautious when referring [...] has taken note of the historical position of CELAC, based on the importance of dialogue and respect for international law in the peaceful settlement of disputes" (Council of the European Union, 2023).

As expected the hot topic of the declaration would be the position in relation to the conflict in Ukraine. The EU was aiming for a statement condemning Russia, which it did not achieve; however, it did achieve a formulation that subtly distorts the nature of the conflict by endorsing in the wording: [...] our deep concern about the ongoing war against Ukraine" and reiterates support for all diplomatic efforts seeking a just and

The declaration reaffirmed once again the condemnation of the economic, commercial and financial blockade of Cuba, as well as the rejection of the inclusion of Cuba in the list of countries sponsoring terrorism, highlighting the fact that these political designations hinder transactions with the island. Likewise, support was reiterated for the peace process in Colombia and the dialogues with the ELN and other armed actors.

### **International financial order**

The meeting reiterated its support for the multilateral system and the promotion of more effective and inclusive global governance. Behind these terms is the acceptance of the need for reforms to the current international order. A commitment was made to contribute to efforts to reform the United Nations system, including its Security Council.

With regard to the international financial order, the Summit called for more inclusive institutions, greater representation of developing countries and their access, on favorable and transparent terms, to financial resources that would enable them to manage external debt and improve its sustainability.

The need to use criteria based on vulnerabilities, rather than GDP, to determine access to financing was recognized. This represents a significant change in the relationship between a developing region such as Latin America and the Caribbean and a power such as the EU. In this regard, it is important to emphasize that innovative and daring proposals that break away from the traditional approach to financing, such as the Bridgetown Initiative, will be studied.

### **Digital transformation**

As an expression of the European accompaniment to the United States in the technological race against China, the focus is placed on issues linked to the regulation of the use of digital technologies, such as the protection of privacy, cybersecurity and the reliability of artificial intelligence, which - although relevant - have been raised as criticisms of the deployment of Chinese 5G and artificial intelligence technologies.

### **Health cooperation**

The (lack of) health cooperation with Latin America and the Caribbean during the pandemic called into question the real commitment of the EU (and the United States) to the region. Thus, the intention to cooperate in the manufacture of vaccines and medicines and to strengthen the resilience of health systems in the face of the risk of a repetition of events of this nature, in support of the self-sufficiency plan that had been approved in the framework of CELAC, reinforces the idea of greater European receptiveness to the needs and demands of Latin America and the Caribbean with the intention of 'recomposing' the relationship in a context of realignment and redefinition of alliances.

### **Pending trade agreements**

In relation to pending agreements, the progress made in the modernization of the EU agreements with Chile and Mexico was positively valued, unlike the one being

negotiated with MERCOSUR. This was an issue of tension with the Brazilian government just before the start of the Summit. Beyond the interest of both parties to close the negotiation, the European environmental demands (especially from France) on the exploitation of the Amazon caused reactions from Brazil, whose president demanded that the environmental issue not be used as a barrier to the entry of goods from the South American bloc into the European market.

The Declaration of the Third CELAC-EU Summit is a reflection of the changes underway in the international scenario in which developing countries are demanding their participation in the design and decision-making in a new international order in the making. A distinctive feature is the inclusion and recognition by the EU of political approaches that reflect the views of the countries of the region, even the smaller ones such as those of the Caribbean, which have been heard in the forums of the global South but were previously difficult for a power such as the EU to accept. This can be read as a sort of 'damage mitigation/adaptation' in the face of changes in the international scenario where the countries of the South assume more demanding positions.

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## THE SECOND RUSSIA-AFRICA SUMMIT; A MUTUALLY BENEFICIAL RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN MOSCOW AND THE GLOBAL SOUTH

**Lic. Lucas Domingo Hernández Polledo; Lic. Rodobaldo Isasi Hernández Herrera**

### **Introduction**

The organization of the Second Russia-Africa Summit, the high level of participation among the parties and the results achieved reaffirm the willingness of the African continent to reassess and assume the role to be played by the Russian Federation in the construction of a multipolar world, based on multilateralism.

The second Russia-Africa summit, held in St. Petersburg on July 27-28, 2023, convened by President Vladimir Putin under the theme "For peace, security and development", is a milestone in the multifaceted relations between Moscow and the African countries in the 21st century.

### **Development**

The results achieved in its first edition in Sochi (2019) were key to the agreements reached between the parties in its second high-level version, which was attended by 49 delegations, 17 heads of state, as well as four vice-presidents, five prime ministers, two deputy prime ministers and 13 ministers, including eight foreign ministers, as well as senior representatives of international and regional organizations and bodies, such as AU, the Economic Community of Central African States and the new BRICS Development Bank.

The Western media described the convention as a failure of Moscow's foreign policy, due to the low presence of African heads of state and government at the summit, in addition to the lack of agreements on the end of the war in Ukraine and the resumption of grain exports under the Black Sea Grain Initiative (BSGI).

However, the African presence in St. Petersburg was representative, if one takes into consideration that it was held in the midst of the escalation of the war in Ukraine and the disagreements on the issues of peace and the grain export agreement, which were taken up again during the development of the event.

In responding to the invitation of the St. Petersburg meeting, the African delegations demonstrated their sovereign will to continue advancing relations of friendship and cooperation with the Slavic giant. In this context, Washington and Brussels, which seek the political and diplomatic isolation of Moscow, could consider the African presence at the summit as a challenge to the West.

In that sense, the summit took place in the country that launched the Special Military Operation in Ukraine (SMO), which in real terms is confronting NATO, a military organization that uses a strategy of attrition against Russia with its support to Kiev in military, economic, financial, media and diplomatic isolation.

The African delegations came to the summit aware of the negative effects of the SMO on the continent. Although the conflict is in Europe, it affects the African continent in sensitive sectors such as food, fertilizers and aid from international organizations and agencies of the United Nations.

The SMO not only affects Africa economically, but also diplomatically, because it somehow influences those African countries that chose to abstain. The truth is that the support of the USA and NATO for Ukraine has prolonged the duration of the war.

As the SMO is extended in time, the political and media pressures on the countries of the continent that decided to maintain an equidistant position in the conflict increase.

In contrast to the African abstention, the West reaffirms its appeal to the recourse to the denunciation of the violation of international law by Russia, as opposed to the argument of the right to national defense put forward by Moscow, especially when the debate on the African continent is between military intervention for the reestablishment of constitutional order and international law.

African delegations remained committed to attending the summit, even when the Kremlin announced its withdrawal from the Black Sea Grain Initiative (BSGI).

The decision taken by Moscow was rejected by almost all the African countries present at the summit because of the negative consequences in terms of food insecurity, political instability and national insecurity. However, the African countries identified at

the Summit to receive grain donations from Moscow appreciated the gesture in the bilateral framework.

The disagreements that surfaced in the course of the Summit on peace in Ukraine and the grain agreement will go down in the history of Russia-Africa relations as the most controversial moment in terms of discrepancies since the inception of the OME, with the merit that the parties had the opportunity to exchange their differences, views and opinions face to face on equal terms.

The African delegation's visit to St. Petersburg also challenged a context of political uncertainty in Russia, with the insubordination of the Wagner Group to Putin's government. The momentary insecurity that occurred around the Kremlin extended to the spectrum of West Africa and the Sahel where Wagner operates.

It is true that Wagner is accepted by African governments, which consider it as an instrument of national security in the face of the incapacity shown by French forces in the face of Islamic jihadists.

On the other hand, the Wagner Group is also questioned and rejected by other countries in the sub-region, which consider it a destabilizing element in the service of a foreign power.

What is significant is that the differences of perception among African countries regarding military cooperation with Russia in relation to the Wagner Group did not prevent the majority presence of the countries of the region in St. Petersburg.

In this sense, the coup d'état in Niger stimulated the imagination of the Western media, which tried to link it, in some way, to the influence of the Wagner Group, which was later denied by the US Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs, Victoria Nuland, during her urgent visit to Niamey, where she spoke with the new military authorities.

The St. Petersburg summit took place at a time when the Biden administration is developing a political-diplomatic offensive towards the continent, based on the so-called new strategy, which is characterized by millionaire commitments in terms of investment, trade and cooperation, accompanied by visits of high-ranking officials to the continent, carrying an anti-Russian and anti-Chinese communicational matrix.

For its part, the African leadership's strategy is to strengthen its relations with the main actors and international financial organizations on the basis of economic pragmatism.

It is possible that the Biden administration's policy has raised the expectations of African countries in their ties with Washington, which could be conditioning the attitudes of some capitals to project themselves with caution in their relations with Moscow, while at the same time considering the privilege of exchanges with the U.S. to be crucial, motivated at the current juncture by economic and national security interests.

Similarly, a significant segment of African leaders is not willing to sacrifice its relations with Moscow, also taking into account the willingness of the Eurasian power to strengthen and expand ties with the continent with a multifaceted approach.

This may explain why the level of governmental participation of African countries in the St. Petersburg meeting responded to the development of the existing dissimilar agendas with Moscow and priorities, in each specific case, and not precisely to the alleged pressures coming from Washington and other Western capitals, as reported by several media following the summit.

The goal of the US and its NATO allies is to isolate Moscow and for that purpose Africa is essential. In fact, it is the continent most divided in relation to Russia's OME in Ukraine. Economic interests, historical ties or political positions of equidistance in the face of the rivalry of the main international players converge in this position.

However, Russia, in line with its strategy of strengthening ties with Africa, undertook to evaluate the peace proposal outlined by the African Union.

Likewise, President Vladimir Putin, in his speeches to the plenary sessions of the Economic and Humanitarian Forum and the Summit itself, reviewed the state of relations with Africa, and put forward a broad plan for cooperation in complementarity of agendas.

## **Conclusions**

1. The Second Russia-Africa Summit was remarkably well attended and adequately represented by African counterparts. The delegations that were not headed by their Heads of State and Government were led by the executives in

charge of cooperation or by the top officials in charge of the areas of specific interest; a reality that contrasts with the criteria of the alleged failure of the summit and Moscow's international isolation, put forward by the West;

2. The great meeting did not begin on July 27, 2023. It was a process of construction, animated by bilateral and multilateral exchanges that led to dialogues and visits from African capitals to Moscow and vice versa, based on the results achieved at the First Russia-Africa Summit in Sochi (2019);
3. The summit highlighted Russia's interest in favoring the creation of a multipolar world, with the support of the global South, with Africa as an indispensable partner, taking into consideration the levels of coincidence reached in bilateral ties between both parties, and in the most varied situations, from the second half of the 20th century until the II Summit, in St. Petersburg;
4. The meeting reaffirmed the recognition of the interests and needs of the African continent based on mutual benefit, with a guarantee of sovereignty. At the same time, it reaffirmed that Africa needs peace in Europe for national security interests, in view of which the African delegations insisted that Russia reach a peace agreement with Ukraine;
5. The St. Petersburg conclave evidenced the sovereign will of the region to continue advancing relations of friendship and cooperation with the Slavic giant, despite the current adverse circumstances in the international arena, such as the undesired dissimilar impacts of the OME in Ukraine;
6. If some negotiating modality for the solution of the war in Ukraine is implemented, Africa would be able to gain credibility as a future member of the G20, based on its own efforts towards the pacifying purpose mentioned above, and
7. The implementation and fulfillment of what was agreed by the parties at the summit, in terms of trade, investment and cooperation, will depend on the final fate of Russia's OME with Ukraine, at a time when the African concert reaffirmed its position in favor of a negotiated solution to the conflict.

## SIGNIFICANCE OF THE 15th BRICS SUMMIT IN THE CURRENT INTERNATIONAL SCENARIO

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### Introduction

From August 22-24, 2023, the 15th Summit of the Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa (BRICS) group was held in Johannesburg, the capital of the African nation, under the theme "BRICS and Africa: Partnership for Mutually Accelerated Growth, Sustainable Development and Inclusive Multilateralism". BRICS is an association of five major emerging market and developing countries, founded on the basis of shared interests.

Cooperation among BRICS members is structured around three pillars: political and security cooperation, whose principles are mutual respect, sovereign equality, inclusiveness, consensus and strengthened collaboration; economic and financial cooperation, which aims to be a catalyst for global economic recovery and its main financial tool is the New Development Bank (NBD); and finally, cultural and people-to-people cooperation, through which more than 100 multilateral projects in research and innovation, energy, healthcare and education have been financed (DSN, 2023).

In terms of its architecture, the BRICS does not have a supra-national body. Instead, the presidency rotates annually among the members and sets the priorities, as well as the schedule of meetings to be held, after consultation with the other countries. The chairmanship for 2024 was assumed by Russia, following the conclusion of South Africa. Interestingly, at the same time, Brazil assumes the presidency of the G-20. In fact, Lula has emphasized that during his presidency he coincides with a troika composed of BRICS countries: India, Brazil and South Africa.

It is important to note that in the BRICS there is no clearly defined power base, despite the fact that there are countries with different power potential among its members (Bordachev, 2023).

Its origin is based on their status of large emerging markets which explains their membership in the G-20, however, it is important to underline that it has been self-recognized not only as a voice for the claims of emerging markets, but of developing countries in general; in fact, the enlargement that has taken place at the Summit includes countries that are not part of the G-20.

### **Context for the 15th BRICS Summit**

The BRICS Summit took place in the context of an acute geopolitical dispute based on the inability of the current international order, dominated by the United States and defended by other powers of the so-called political West, to make room for more inclusive forms of participation of the rest of the world and especially of the rising powers in the redesign of global governance. China and Russia are identified by the Western bloc as strategic adversaries and rivals in this dispute, and the West's struggle to maintain the exclusivity of its areas of strategic influence has taken shape in the confrontation of the established powers with initiatives that do not come from that bloc, especially the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI).

Another component of the international context is the generalization of sanctions and coercive measures against strategic competitors and rivals promoted by the United States and the European Union (EU) to which they have tried to bring in the rest of the world with the aim of isolating and containing China and Russia. To achieve this, the restriction on the use of the dollar as an international payment currency and the exclusion from the SWIFT financial messaging system stand out, which has particularly affected Russia.

### **Relevance of the BRICS in international geopolitics**

The BRICS project themselves as a bridge between the North and the South. The group has traveled a reasonably productive path. At the same time, they present a common global perspective in which they called for the reform of multilateral institutions to reflect the structural changes in the world economy and the increasingly central role now played by emerging markets. As a cooperative mechanism they developed a shared outlook on a wide range of global and regional issues, established the NDB and created



a financial stability network in the form of the Contingency Reserve Arrangement, among others (Drishti, 2021).

The last two decades have witnessed important political and economic transformations within the BRICS countries which have influenced their regional dynamics. These nations have promoted ambitious infrastructure projects, reflecting their respective visions of development. China's BRI Initiative aims to establish extensive infrastructure networks connecting Asia, Europe and Africa. India has planned the development of 100 smart cities connected by bullet trains, while Russia seeks to build the Russian Far East as a new economic bridge between Europe and Asia through Advanced Special Economic Zones. Brazil and South Africa have focused on large-scale agricultural and industrial expansion (Das Kundu, 2023).

The BRICS have provided alternatives to existing global mechanisms that are considered to be heavily influenced by Western policies. The NDB, established as a partial alternative to the World Bank (WB), has approved more than 90 projects worth \$32 billion to support members' infrastructure. (...) In practice, the BRICS are seen as a union of strong emerging powers with a common monetary reserve of about four trillion dollars, which has already made achievements in its fight against unilateralism and can be useful when positioned as an alternative to Western-controlled institutions such as the WB, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and Western financial and trade policies in general (Devonshire-Ellis & Ramezani, 2023).

The BRICS are advocating reforms in multiple global institutions<sup>4</sup>, arguing that they are currently underrepresented. They emphasize the need to address the structure of the United Nations, representation in terms of quotas and voting in the WB and IMF, and membership and renewal processes to strengthen global organizations such as the World Trade Organization (WTO) and the World Health Organization (WHO). By pushing for these reforms, the BRICS aim to create a more inclusive and equitable global order (Das Kundu, 2023).

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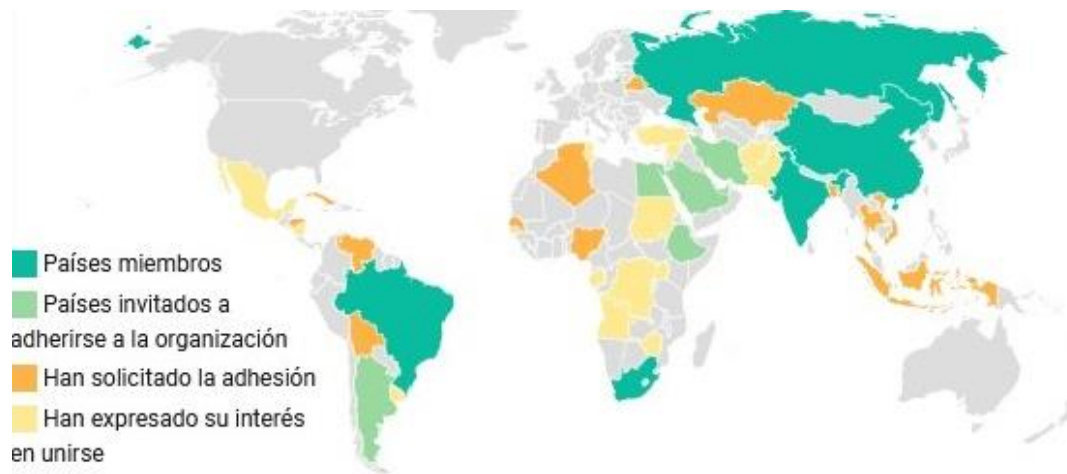
<sup>4</sup> Basically, Brazil and India have specific aspirations to achieve a permanent seat on the UN Security Council.

In order to further enhance cooperation and engagement, the bloc has established a pattern of "BRICS+N" dialogue. Whenever a summit is held, a meeting is also held with the leaders of developing countries in the region. During the meeting in Brazil, a dialogue was held with leaders of South American countries. On the sidelines of the summit in Russia, BRICS leaders convened a dialogue with members of the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) and members and observers of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO). During the Durban summit in South Africa, there was a dialogue with leaders of African countries. At the summit in India, there was a dialogue between BRICS leaders and their counterparts from member states of the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectorial Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC) member states (Wang, 2018).

### **Enlargement of the BRICS and its significance in the current scenario**

The most important decision of the XV BRICS Summit was the incorporation of new members. Six new members were admitted, namely Argentina, Egypt, Ethiopia, Iran, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, and will officially join as of January 1, 2024. According to the government of South Africa, which held the rotating presidency in 2023, more than 40 countries had shown their willingness to belong to the group and 23 of them formally expressed their interest (image 1). This increase in membership is a challenge for BRICS+, given the different interests of its members and, fundamentally, because it is an organization based on consensus, where decisions must have the agreement of all its members (DSN, 2023).

#### **Image 1: Invited countries that applied for membership**



**Source: The Grand Continent (2023).**

Following enlargement, the BRICS+ countries will further increase their international weight. Thus, it is estimated that the sum of their economies will be 37% of the global economy, compared to 25% previously; demographically, they will account for 47% of the world's population (previously 42%). In addition, future enlargement will mean a greater geo-strategic presence as countries from new areas - especially from the Middle East sub-region - will join the BRICS (DSN, 2023).

BRICS expansion has very specific and far-reaching implications for future global trade flows and cross-border investments. Detractors point out that they are not an institutionalized trade bloc; however, at this stage of development, being more flexible means that the BRICS can enter into agreements more quickly and consensually and establish institutional structures later. Indeed, the absence of a defined institutional structure may be consistent with a deliberate strategy to avoid that, as a group, the BRICS may be subject to sanctions (Devonshire-Ellis, 2023).

Each of the original BRICS members and the newcomers have significant economic leadership and influence in their respective regional spaces and participate in mechanisms that include trade liberalization schemes at that level. Brazil is a major player in the Southern Common Market (MERCOSUR), Russia in the EAEU and Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS); India in the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) and BIMSTEC; China in BRI and the Regional

Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) and South Africa through the African Continental Free Trade Agreement (AFCTA).

The new additions:

Saudi Arabia and United Arab Emirates: Gulf Cooperation Council and Greater Arab Free Trade Area (GAFTA). Also along with Russia and Iran among the eight largest oil producers.

Egypt: AFCTA, but also the geopolitical value of the Suez Canal.

Iran: Key component of the International North-South Transport Corridor linking the Middle East with Central and South Asia.

Argentina<sup>5</sup>: MERCOSUR is the second largest economy in the bloc after Brazil. It constitutes a triangular bridge with Brazil and South Africa in relation to the South Atlantic. It is an important supplier of lithium and agricultural products.

Ethiopia: Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) and AFCTA. It is the seat of the African Union and perhaps that is the reason why it has been invited over others with greater economic potential such as Nigeria. Geopolitical value that connects it with Saudi Arabia and Algeria.

### **Internal contradictions**

While there are important developments, it cannot go unmentioned that the BRICS group has revealed its internal divisions as the rivalry between China and the United States has intensified. India has tried to resist China's efforts to turn BRICS into an organization supporting its geopolitical agenda, such as promoting the BRI and its three other initiatives.

New Delhi has focused BRICS discussions and activities on economic and financial cooperation projects within the so-called Global South, initiatives to reduce global dependence on the U.S. dollar-based international financial and payments system, and reforms of international financial institutions to give developing countries more voice and

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<sup>5</sup> It remains to be seen how the external projection will depend on who wins the next elections, given the extreme position of one of its candidates

representation. Although India has been reluctant to establish a common currency it has promoted trade in local currencies.

The disagreement between China and India over the expansion of their membership will determine the inclusion of other aspiring BRICS countries and the future of the organization after 2024. China and Russia have been the main promoters of enlargement, the former to consolidate its spheres of influence and the latter to expand spaces that can evade sanctions. No less representative countries were left out of this summit such as Indonesia, the largest economy in Southeast Asia, but also the one with the largest Muslim population.

### **The future of BRICS, the financial agenda and its development bank**

One of the most important elements of the BRICS agenda is the financial issue. The NDB established in 2015 based in Shanghai, with AAA and AA+ credit rating to play a catalytic role in the development of specific projects has become the financial arm of the BRICS. In 2021, the NBD accepted Bangladesh, Egypt<sup>6</sup> (1), the United Arab Emirates and Uruguay as new members. This has exemplified the bank's positioning as one of the preferred financial institutions for emerging markets and developing countries.

The NBD, has lent \$33 billion in eight years of operation, a fraction of the WB's \$78 billion in 2022 alone, and a meager sum compared to the nearly half a trillion dollars China has lent through its own policy banks (Sahay& Mackenzie, 2023).

The combined efforts of the BRICS are seen in the cooperation and collaboration in the development of alternative payment systems to SWIFT, the gradual development of a non-dollar financial system, a common payment system (BRICS Pay) and increased trade using the respective national currencies (...). All of these are progressing on different time scales; however, the use of the respective digital currencies in the settlement of future trade within the BRICS will be an important step. Russia, China and India are set to launch their digital currencies for common use in early 2025. This will allow trade to take place between them without the global SWIFT network and reduce

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<sup>6</sup> Egypt formalized its accession in 2023, while Uruguay is qualified as a prospective member pending the deposit of the accession document (New Development Bank, n. d.).

threats from it on other countries. Brazil and South Africa follow closely behind. In comparison, the US and EU, with rather more complex financial markets, recently agreed on their digital currency protocols, a technical step that most BRICS members completed three years ago (Devonshire-Ellis & Ramezani, 2023).

The international financial architecture is one of the main sources of dissatisfaction in developing countries. The preponderant role of the dollar in cross-border transactions means that the monetary policy applied in the United States affects the entire planet, especially those who borrow and accumulate dollar reserves. In the summit communiqué, there was no mention of a new BRICS currency because the idea is not feasible at the moment, nor is the idea that the Chinese renminbi will supplant the dollar as long as China remains committed to capital controls. The real monetary objective is to conduct more trade and investment in local currencies, facilitated by their central banks, and possibly shift reserves to other currencies (Hung, 2023).

The latter, together with the implementation of alternative payment mechanisms to SWIFT, would facilitate the evasion of sanctions imposed by the United States and the EU on countries in the group, such as Russia and China. In fact, several relevant trading partners of the sanctioned countries participate in the group, especially in the energy area.

### **Final considerations**

The XV BRICS Summit showed the ability of the group to set an agenda different from that imposed by the United States. At the same time, it demonstrated with the large demand presented to join the bloc the influence of the group as a new geopolitical force with the potential to challenge the Western-led system. The BRICS countries connect around common development interests and the quest for a multipolar world order in which no single power dominates. The group is challenging some key tenets of U.S. hegemonic global leadership.

Successive BRICS summits have promoted a path towards the construction of a different perspective from that of the West. In particular, the 15th meeting of top leaders was a leap forward that points to cumulative changes in the correlation of international

forces between the global South and the global North. The voice of the BRICS will strengthen the claims and proposals of the South in the G-20 and other international forums.

Undoubtedly, the most visible achievements of the 2023 Summit held under the South African presidency have been the consolidation of the NDB, which provides financial support to projects in the prioritized areas, and a strategy that, in compliance with the interests of each of the members, has the potential to weaken the role of the dollar in the international economy, on which an important part of US hegemony is based.

It is common to hear about the alternative character of the BRICS. In this sense it is necessary to point out that as a group they are not proposing a rupture with the capitalist system, it is not an anti-systemic alternative; they are demanding the elimination of the obstacles derived from the subordination of these countries to the powers of the center and limit their growth due to the subordination that guaranteed other countries to reach the condition of global powers. With the recent enlargement, the BRICS, acquire a relevant participation in the production of energy, food, strategic minerals critical for development, in addition to the weight they achieve as consumer markets, the product and global trade (Regueiro, 2023).

The growth to eleven members in the BRICS was the result of a careful selection, but many who officially expressed their interest in joining the group were left out in this first round. The magnetism of the BRICS could not be explained by the political-ideological affinity among its members.

The diversity of the group, its outlook and support for the scope of certain proposals should be highlighted as challenges. For example, with regards to the creation of a common currency, an idea that does not seem to have the support of India. Russia is interested in legitimizing internationally the special military operation in Ukraine and in building rejection of the sanctions it is subject to, so that under its presidency a common foreign policy was proposed, which was obviously difficult to receive acceptance. At the same time, a serious challenge is to manage the internal divergences between China and India without reaching the threshold of conflict; the West's intentions to divide the founding group, which it has classified as democratic and autocratic, as well as

countering the Western narrative that BRICS is a bloc to oppose the G7 within the G20, are further challenges.

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## THE "G20 SUMMIT" (2023) AND THE "DELIVERY OF THE MOUNTAINS".

**Jorge Casals Llano, PhD.**

This year has been prodigal in international events, all enclosed within the cataclysmic geopolitical changes occurred at the end of the last century and the first years of the present one, accelerated by the "war in Ukraine" provoked by the USA and the self-styled "West". Significant among such events were the "BRICS Summit" in South Africa with its enlargement to 11 countries; the "G77 and China Summit", which was held in our country, composed of 134 countries, and also the 78th session of the UN General Assembly, all of which shook the foundations of the imperial "rule-based order". The "G7 Summit" (whose members represent the imperial order) and the "G20 Summit" (which is the subject of this paper) were also held. In each and every one of them, although with different approaches, the certainty of UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres' affirmation was evident when, at the opening of the UN General Assembly session, he stated: "Democracy is under threat, authoritarianism is advancing", together with his appeal "to renew international institutions of the 21st century" in "a world fractured by war, climate change and inequality" and later, in the course of the session itself, he declared that: "We have opened the gates of hell".

And if we all (or almost all of us) agree on the need to make changes in global geopolitics that will lead us away from the path that has brought humanity to the brink of the precipice, the coincidence ends when it comes to specifying the magnitude and nature of such changes and even the forums in which aspects such as leadership and global governance, the participation of international organizations in such governance should be debated, the characteristics that global organizations should have, including commercial and financial organizations, currency issuers and regulators, and even the "Security Council", all of them "21st century international institutions" created in - or in the spirit of - the post-World War II world which has brought us to the crisis we are experiencing today.

And although the genesis of "the crisis" is beyond the scope of this summary of events related to the recently concluded "G20 Summit", it is at least essential to summarize some central ideas in order to understand and even catalog it. To do so, it is convenient

to refer to Antonio Gramsci's "Prison Notebooks" and his interpretation of what he called "Organic Crisis".

For Gramsci, "the crisis" is a historical phase of transition initiated with the First World War, of long duration and global character, in which the old historical-political rationality dominant at that time is combined with the emergence of new historical subjects and new collective behaviors in which causes and effects are interrelated and superimposed and in which even wars are but a manifestation of a global historical crisis in which its particular aspects (productive and economic, political and ideological? ) can only be separated by abstraction because they are intimately interconnected.

It was born in the period in which capitalism had already formed a market of world dimensions and therefore had created the possibility for the dominant economic groups of the nations that had benefited from it to obtain profits by taking them away from other nations; in such conditions the international market was constituted as a place of competition between the different national dominant economic groups in which the market was constituted in a relation of social forces, at the same time complementary and antagonistic, in the frameworks of a determined structure of the production apparatus.

Germane in the referred context and as last elements necessary to at least point out from the Gramscian analysis of "the crisis" -particularly for the understanding of its current manifestation and its relation with the recent G20 summit and the delivery of the mountains- those referred to the global change in the correlation of forces between classes and between States; the rupture of the balance between inflation and deflation and the increased stratification of classes; that of the "loss of the dynamic equilibrium between the share consumed and the share saved of national income and the rate of production"; that produced by "changes in the use of international currency which cause changes in the hierarchy between States This leads to changes in the volumes of trade and wealth from one country to another and not only from one class to another"; the 'free' passage of goods and services from one country to another - and not only from one class to another - as a consequence of the fact that the issuing state spends too much and does not want to make certain classes pay its expenses directly, but indirectly

to others and even to foreign countries"; because it does not want to decrease a cost "directly" (salary), but only indirectly and over a long period of time, avoiding dangerous conflicts; because "the crisis exists when an intrinsically parasitic function proves necessary given the existing conditions and this makes the parasitism even more serious". "Precisely when a parasitism is 'necessary', it is required to make the parasitism even more serious because the system that creates such a necessity is itself doomed".

It is in the context of this crisis that the "G20 Summit" was held (a group that at the time could be considered an attempt, which turned out to be unsuccessful, to revive the importance of the G7). A summary of the "achievements" of the Summit are summarized as follows

1. Expand lending by multilateral institutions such as the World Bank (which is expected to generate about \$200 billion in additional funds over a decade).
2. That the U.S. host the G20 Summit in 2026
3. That a " full, timely and effective implementation" of the Black Sea Grain agreement be carried out.
4. That the U.S., India, Saudi Arabia and the EU present a rail and port agreement.
5. Tripling renewable energy by 2030.
6. Change in the belligerent and condemnatory language of the war in Ukraine focusing on its social impact.

All of which explains the title of the requested commentary and its reference to Aesop's fable and the "delivery of the mountains that gave birth to a mouse".

## The Summit of the Group of 77 + China

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The Group of 77 + China summit was held in Havana, Cuba, on September 15-16, 2023. The negotiating group is the largest intergovernmental organization of developing countries in the United Nations, created in 1964 and currently comprising 134 nations. The Group as a whole represents two-thirds of the membership of the United Nations system and 80% of the world's population.

The essential objective of the group is to provide the means for non-developed nations to promote and develop their collective interests and increase their joint negotiating capacity on major international issues, especially economic ones.

The meeting took place in the midst of an extremely complex international juncture, at a particular moment in which overlapping situations of tensions converge in different areas: economic, financial, environmental, health, food, education and geopolitical. In fact, the global scenario is characterized by the persistent negative effects of the COVID-19 pandemic; geopolitical tensions; unilateral coercive measures and the current multiple crises, both economic and financial; the fragility of the global economic outlook; increased pressure on food, energy; displacement of people; market volatility; inflation; monetary adjustment; growing external debt burden; increasing extreme poverty; widening inequalities within and between countries; and the adverse effects of climate change.

Immerse in an extremely complicated, difficult and dangerous international situation, Cuba's invitation to the Summit was well attended. It brought together 116 member states, 12 organizations and agencies of the United Nations system, 31 heads of state and government, 12 vice presidents and a significant number of deputy prime ministers and ministers, representing 33 countries from Latin America and the Caribbean, 46 from Africa, 34 from Asia and three from Europe, totaling more than 1,300 attendees.

The event focused on the discussion and approval of the preliminary document - previously agreed upon - entitled: "**Current Development Challenges: The Role of Science, Technology and Innovation**". Its study generated intense debates and

transcendent interventions that allowed the necessary consensus to outline adequate strategies to face the adverse international situation. Precisely, the letter and spirit of the Havana Declaration underscores the rule of precise consensus, not only as a priority of what was agreed upon in a plural organization, but also as a fair and balanced appreciation of a difficult reality that impacts, in a more incisive manner, the countries of the Global South.

The Cuban presidency specified needs and gaps that must be addressed in order to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and preserve peace. The figures reveal the deterioration accumulated by underdeveloped economies and the need for a new global social contract that involves the concert of nations in achieving greater balance in the distribution of world income and the satisfaction of the needs of the population, which has participated in the production of global wealth, a process in which the social and environmental impoverishment of most of the G77 members has worsened.

The Cuban Foreign Minister, at the transfer of the presidency of the G77 + China, updated some of these gaps and needs (Rodríguez Parrilla, 2023):

- Achieving the SDGs would require mobilizing between \$3.3 - 4.5 trillion annually; with current levels of investment developing countries face an average annual financing gap of \$2.5 trillion.
- Developing countries have only 24 doses of Covid-19 vaccine per 100 population, while more developed countries have almost 150 doses.
- The external debt of the countries of the South has doubled in the last 10 years and they have had to spend about \$379 billion of their reserves to defend their currencies by 2022, which is almost double the amount of new Special Drawing Rights (SDRs) allocated to them by the IMF.
- The Least Developed Countries (LDCs) contribute only 4% of global greenhouse gas emissions, but have suffered 69% of the deaths caused by climate-related disasters.
- Climate adaptation needs will require between \$140-300 billion per year until 2030, but funding from developed countries represents less than one tenth of that amount.

In addition to the above, the thirty measures and systems of coercive measures applied by the United States and its allies that particularly affect sensitive areas for developing countries.

There was broad agreement in condemning the international economic order, which they described as hegemonic, unjust and exclusive, causing the worsening of conditions in the most backward countries and the widening of the gap between the developed countries and those of the Global South. Specifically, they criticized the international financial architecture, which is based on the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank and the full domination of the dollar as international currency. They highlighted the difficult situation of undeveloped countries to finance their economic and social development, while chiding the unbearable foreign debt that suffocates these nations.

Likewise, the fragility of the world economic outlook, galloping inflation, market volatility, increased pressure on food and energy were also criticized. Furthermore, the adverse effects of climate change, loss of biodiversity, desertification and environmental degradation were highlighted.

Concern was expressed about the extremely dramatic effects triggered by the COVID-19 pandemic, which has caused numerous deaths in large populations. The increase in extreme poverty, the huge migrations, and the lack of health and education coverage of a large part of the population of the countries of the South were highlighted.

There was an explicit rejection of industrial monopolies and other unfair practices that hinder the technological development of the countries of the South.

The vast majority of speakers condemned geopolitical tensions, unilateral coercive measures and extraterritorial laws on the international scene which harm the enjoyment of human rights and access to health care.

There was consensus at the summit that both the confrontation of the situations described above and the achievement of the SDGs will require international cooperation, which is not only absolutely insufficient but also represents a rampant breach of the developed world's commitments to the nations of the South.

Regardless of the demands made to developed countries, one line of action of the G77 + China should be aimed at identifying and promoting certain proposals and searches for solutions that are currently taking place on the basis of internal dynamics.

The Cuban presidency, assumed for the first time since January 2023, has been an opportunity to make the voice of developing countries heard in international forums during the current year. From this position, Cuba has put forward the following priorities (Rodríguez Parrilla, 2023):

- Solidarity and international cooperation for post-pandemic recovery: materializing projects from the South in health, biotechnology, education, climate change and disaster prevention.
- The relationship of the G77 + China with developed countries on issues related to their Official Development Assistance (ODA) commitments, climate finance and North-South cooperation.
- Building a common position for COP 28.
- The exploration and promotion of novel approaches to address debt architecture.
- The restructuring of the global financial governance system.

El entonces representante permanente cubano ante Naciones Unidas y actual Representante Especial para coordinar la Presidencia del G77 + China, en su discurso ante el presidente de la Asamblea General de Naciones Unidas, puntualizó las acciones requeridas para atender las prioridades del grupo, con especial énfasis en aquellas que ponen en riesgo el cumplimiento de los ODS y que afectan de una manera más sensible a las sociedades de los miembros del grupo (Pedroso Cuesta, 2023).

Although the issues raised reiterate the historical demands of developing countries in multilateral forums, the distinctive feature of this position is the urgency of paying attention to these demands. In this regard, emphasis is placed both on the potential of South-South cooperation and on highlighting the inescapable responsibility of developed countries for the critical situations affecting developing countries.



Unlike the Cold War and the so-called 'unipolar moment', the current demands of developing countries are taking place at a time when the strategic dispute has particularities that differ from the Cold War, when alignments and spheres of influence were delineated. Currently, it is possible to distinguish political alignments and loyalties that do not have their correlate in the weight of economic relations, which is weakening associative commitments and generating more diffuse maps of influence (Marín Suárez & Regueiro Bello, 2023).

These fractures associated with the strategic dispute between the United States and its allies, on the one hand, and China and Russia, on the other, create a different scenario of opportunity that could favor – chiefly due to interests than to conviction or commitment to the SDGs - greater receptiveness to the demands of certain developing countries or areas considered strategic (Marín Suárez & Regueiro Bello, 2023).

The need to strengthen the unity, coordination and cooperation of the group was emphasized in order to promote and develop its economic interests and increase its collective negotiating capacity on the main issues of concern. It was agreed to outline strategies to close the technological and economic development gap with developed countries. In addition, the need to develop South-South cooperation was emphasized, especially to advance in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for sustainable development.

An element that deserves to be highlighted in the evaluation of the Summit is the capacity shown by Cuban diplomacy to articulate a consensus on a wide range of points (47 in total) among the 134 nations<sup>7</sup> participating in the mechanism, which materialized in the Havana Declaration on "Current Development Challenges: role of science, technology and innovation" (Summit of Heads of State and/or Government of the G77 and China on "current development challenges: role of science, technology and innovation", 2023).

In addition to the above, the Cuban presidency's ability to convene this extraordinary Summit, after 18 years without holding a meeting at the highest level, should be added to the above. The number of delegations and high-level authorities who attended the

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<sup>7</sup> It could become 135 with Mexico's possible accession.

Havana meeting, as well as the numerous speeches made at the event, have shown not only the strengthening of the mechanism, but also the intention of the members to make their voices heard on the most pressing problems of the underdeveloped countries and to advance concrete proposals and initiatives that contribute to their solution.

In this regard, the Cuban presidency has endeavored to ensure that the results of the Summit go beyond the formal declaratory level of this type of meeting. The fact that the Summit was conceived just before the high-level segment of the United Nations General Assembly is indicative of how the matters agreed at the Summit can lay the groundwork for the articulation of common positions on behalf of the Group of 77 + China in the different multilateral spaces that will hold meetings henceforth.

Beyond the consensus on a broad group of demands and lines of action, concrete proposals were also advanced, including the creation of collective technological platforms in different areas such as health, environment and food security, and the articulation of a network of universities and research centers to strengthen the exchange of knowledge among members.

The Cuban presidency made available to member countries a portfolio of 17 cooperation projects in specific areas in which Cuba has developed capabilities. These cover, among others, health, biotechnology, education, care for the disabled, epidemiology, climate change and disaster risk reduction.

It is imperious to meditate on the leading role that the Group of 77 + China is called upon to play in a changing international scenario. The Global South requires sustained dialogue, timely coordination and consensual decision-making that will enable it to advance its strategic objectives, such as the broad and pluralistic vision of development, with unavoidable determining factors, as evidenced by climate change, sustainable peace and a new international economic order. It is important to recognize the timely moment of the South, especially considering the resonance that the group might establish with the strengthening of the BRICS, based on coinciding objectives. However, the complexity, diversity and changes of the pro tempore presidency must be acknowledged.

In summary, it can be said that the Summit demonstrated the successful articulation and unity of the developing countries and Cuba's leadership before the countries of the global South. The Group of 77 + China emerges strengthened after the Summit in Havana, and undoubtedly in better conditions to face the challenges of development, in particular the necessary transformation of the unjust, unstable and insecure world economic and political order, with the purpose of building a new order based on the principles of justice, equity and inclusiveness.

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## THE CHALLENGES TOWARDS A NEW WORLD INFORMATION ORDER

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Forty years after the presentation of the McBride Report in 1980, the world is facing the same challenge: the need for a new world order in the field of information and communication. As then, the challenge is to find real paths that promote development, generate spaces for the decolonization of knowledge and independence, and promote the construction and strengthening of endogenous capacities.

Despite all the attempts to create a regulatory environment in the various national contexts, the nature of the economic activities carried out by large IT companies and their involvement in the controversial field of international law have hindered this. Internet governance, with the current model, points to the prevalence of agreements that impose a liberalized regime for the international circulation of data with little supervision, a fundamental impediment to the preeminence of a democratic regulatory framework that responds to the interests and needs of all the actors involved in the communications spectrum.

Based on these principles, it has managed to build and consolidate its power, to the detriment of the interests of national governments and intergovernmental organizations as opposed to those of transnational private companies, to the benefit of geopolitical and geo-economic interests, especially those of the United States.

In this sense, it is essential to resort to the standard of ethics, as well as to understand the democratization of information as an essential component of law, cultural identity and human dignity. These elements are necessarily associated with the understanding that any action to be developed in the field of public communication must be conceived as a process of production, distribution, use of information and change of societies (Serrano, 1993), therefore, it must have a strategic character (Uranga, 2020).

The dignity of the individual is not only a fundamental right in itself, but the foundation of freedoms, including the rights to intimacy, privacy, personal data protection and informational self-determination.

Every day, individuals are required to disclose more and more personal information over the Internet to participate in social, administrative and business activities, with increasingly limited scope to go offline. With all the activity potentially taking place online, the notion of free and informed consent is placed under enormous strain.

In fact, that notion is being removed by the minute and manipulated to classify individuals in real time, and even to create multiple, often contradictory, profiles that can be circulated in microseconds without people's knowledge and used as the basis for making important decisions that affect them.

Profiles used to predict people's behavior imply the threat of stigmatization, stereotyping, segregation and social and cultural exclusion. This type of artificial intelligence, which subverts individual choice and equality of opportunity, can end up stifling creativity, innovation and the freedoms of expression and association that have allowed digital technologies to flourish (Varona, D. 2020).

Meanwhile, a sort of continuous state of exception is used for security reasons to apply multiple layers of intrusive techniques to monitor people's activity (Anderson, K and Waxman, M. 2013).

There is a growing demand for and need to consider the data subject as a person and not only as a consumer or user, since it is essential for political decisions to understand their substantive role in the development of mechanisms to prevent a future where people are determined by algorithms and their continuous variations. It is necessary to consciously assume the implications of being equipped to exercise individual dignity online with responsibility and proper care, not only at a discursive level but also at a factual level.

Thus, the traditional concepts of privacy, data protection and ethical principles for the safeguard of dignity must be redefined in light of today's trends, which have opened a whole new chapter, and there is a need to explore whether the principles are robust enough for the digital age.

The notion of personal data itself is likely to change substantively as technology increasingly enables people to be re-identified from supposedly anonymous data. In

addition, the learning that occurs in the fusion of human and artificial intelligence will, in some ways, undermine traditional concepts of rights and responsibilities.

Hence the essential need to give new meaning to the individual, to his or her outstanding dignity and place him or her at the center, so that the entire ecosystem revolves around him or her and no distortions of any kind are allowed.

This is the only way to understand why privacy and data protection are said to be part of the solution and not part of the problem. Since for the moment technology is controlled by people, we postulate the need to continue deepening this control, which also implies an education in values from an early age and for society as a whole.

It is also necessary that in the classrooms of software engineering and system design, along with the best teachings of ICT and its potential, the incentive to innovation and its importance in development, the social impacts are also studied and the ethical responsibility of the system designer in artificial intelligence is consciously formed (Varona, D. 2018).

It is highly worrying the proposal to the alleged New World Order in the communicational field that has been given voice in recent times: the "Great Reset"<sup>8</sup> The authors of the Great Reset call on governments and institutions to use the COVID-19 pandemic and the lockdowns introduced in many countries-especially in the West-to change social behaviors and accelerate the fourth industrial revolution- that of digitalization.

They are in favor of state intervention to impose the ecological transition and the circulatory economy and justify the surveillance of all individuals thanks to the Internet and facial recognition. The various themes of the Great Reset had been the subject of debate during the Davos Forum in June 2020. Critical opinions have identified in the

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<sup>8</sup> The term Great Reset was first introduced in 2010, i.e. in the aftermath of the 2008-2009 crisis, by Richard Florida in his book *The Great Reset: How the Post-Crash Economy Will Change the Way We Live and Work*, but, as noted in the introduction, today's reference is primarily directed to the essay by Klaus Schwab and Thierry Malleret published in July 2020 *COVID-19: The Great Reset*, which was immediately made freely available on the internet as a product of the World Economic Forum in Davos, of which Klaus Schwab has been founder and executive director since 1971, as it represents a synthesis of the projects discussed at the June 2020 annual meeting.

Great Reset model a fierce surveillance society, the lowering of living standards and a world government (Campani, 2022).

This vision is gradually gaining strength in neo-reactionary currents in the United States capitalized by a sector of the technological elite of Silicon Valley, California. They advocate the suppression of national states and a power based on companies and corporations, where the most powerful and capable lead the dispossessed and "incapable".

This would supposedly avoid what according to them was "an evil of Modernity", namely Democracy, which they consider in practice to be a "dictatorship of the mob". Given the profile of these people, who are largely managers, founders of Think Tanks or professionals associated with the world of information technology and communications, it is not surprising that they have implicit in their thinking the idea of world domination by

According to his futuristic vision, there will be no national borders or citizens' rights, but free mobility from one company to another (Raim, 2017).

Given this scenario, in the context of the G77+China, the spirit of the McBride Report is taken up again and advocates in favor of a New World Order that promotes development, respect for the sovereignty of peoples and cultural decolonization. To this end, the need for investment in research, development and innovation (R&D&I) must be conceived as a top priority. In this regard, an approach of solidarity and complementarity among our societies should be promoted, so as to foster endogenous development and feedback as principles of sustainable and maintainable development.

It is not enough to create technological poles of excellence in universities, it is also necessary to implement development policies in a sustained effort so that they can serve as a platform for local productive sectors, aiming at the registration of patents to promote technological innovation, reduce dependence and create a consensual basis for ordering the governance of the digital world. That responds to the defense of human rights, includes the protection of personal data and ensures the equitable distribution of the value derived from the monetization of such data.

At the same time, it is important that global antitrust rules be implemented and that an international mechanism be guaranteed to ensure their enforcement. As Internet access is vital for all citizens globally, it is crucial to ensure that access to modern technology for all companies is affordable and non-discriminatory.

The challenges to be faced are manifold. In order to achieve the democratization of communication and of the monopolized media, under the current conditions, it is not enough to build popular and alternative media that construct their own narratives in the face of the dominant ones. What is needed is, on the one hand, to increase the importance of scientific development aimed at promoting innovation, with leadership standards to generate new and own developments and thus enhance synergies and consolidate the projection as a knowledge-based society.

On the other hand, to reach a consensus and implement a regulatory framework appropriate to current conditions and the reality of our societies that will make it possible to guarantee communication based on truly ethical and democratic principles.

The greatest challenge to be faced is that there can be no changes in the systems of public communication at their maximum expression as long as there is no radical change in the system of international relations. This is the only way to achieve a tangible results in democratization and decolonization.

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