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# Defending the Rules-Based International Order: Canada, Latin America and the Russia-Ukraine War

**UBC MPPGA Global Policy Project (2022-2023)**

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### Disclaimer

The designations employed and the presentation of material in this report do not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever on the part of Global Affairs Canada concerning its partners in the Latin America and Caribbean (LAC) region. The analysis conclusions and recommendations of this publication do not reflect the views of the Canadian government in any way, shape or form.

## ABOUT THE TEAM

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Latin American countries have not, as a whole, expressed collective condemnation of Russia, nor have they supplied Ukraine with material support, lethal or non-lethal, and they have not imposed economic sanctions on Russia. Global Affairs Canada wishes to engage its partners in the Latin America and Caribbean (LAC) region to encourage them to increase their support for Ukraine. This report analyzes the factors that determine why regional actors have chosen to remain uninvolved.

Focusing on four key regional actors, Brazil, Mexico, Colombia, and Venezuela, the report finds widespread disinterest in the region with the conflict. This is due to a combination of ideological and material factors. Actors in the region have a longstanding and historical diplomatic tradition which predisposes them to reject unilateral action on the world stage, a current wave of leftwing governments has been elected which are less sympathetic to American foreign policy priorities and finally, economic concerns such as increased fuel, food, and fertilizer prices have influenced policies.

Case studies on these key actors show some key lessons:

1. To encourage countries in the region to support Ukraine, Canada needs to be able to parse when regional players are reacting based on ideological concerns as opposed to material ones.
2. Canada is wise to avoid actions that can be interpreted by Latin American countries as seeking to divide and isolate some countries, and for this reason it is useful to consider the region as a whole, even as Canada approaches each country with an appreciation for its particular context.
3. Long-term strategies are best informed by working with the professional diplomats in Latin America. While Presidents come and go, diplomats remain constant. More routine, bureaucratic (or low rather than high politics) exchanges among public servants in the diplomatic services, as well as partnerships with civil society, can help Canada design strategies that can endure through electoral cycles.
4. Canada is always wise to avoid the appearance of exporting its values in the region. Tools such as Canada's Feminist International Assistance Policy, for example, can be useful in appealing to certain socially progressive governments, but not all. Values that are more broadly shared will be found in the area of commitments to human rights, the rule of law, and multilateralism.

We suggest that the Government of Canada develop a comprehensive LAC strategy. Such a strategy could resemble Canada's Indo-Pacific Strategy. Through a comprehensive LAC strategy Canada can deepen and expand its trade relations, providing LAC nations with a reliable trading partner, more easily provide financial assistance, and tackle collaborate with LAC nations as a collective instead of individuals to tackle regional issues. This strategy should be informed by the four key lessons from the case studies.

## INTRODUCTION

When Russian troops crossed into the Ukraine on February 24, 2022, interstate war returned to Europe at a scale unseen since the end of the Second World War. Almost immediately, in no small part due to President Zelensky's emotional appeals to the leaders of Europe and North America, billions have been delivered in funds, humanitarian, and military aid [1]. Furthermore, sanctions were imposed by countries in Europe, North America, and Asia [2]. Comparatively, Latin American support for Ukraine has been low. Indeed, no government in the region has imposed sanctions on Putin's Russia, much less provided any material support. As a region with a long history of foreign interference by Western powers, it might seem surprising that countries have not responded by prioritizing Ukraine's sovereignty. At most, some countries, like Colombia and Chile, have officially condemned Putin's invasion. Others, such as Venezuela and Cuba, as traditional allies of the Kremlin, have justified the invasion. Venezuela's Foreign Ministry announced on February 25<sup>th</sup> that it 'laments' the violations of the Minsk Accords by NATO while Cuba's President, Miguel-Diaz Canel, visited Moscow nine months after the invasion to assure Putin of his country's support [3]. Most countries, even the region's most influential actors like Brazil and Mexico, have adopted neutral positions and sometimes contradictory ones as presidents say one thing while their Foreign Ministry says another. This report will provide a summary of the positions on the invasion in the region, provide context of the role of both Canada and Russia in the region, and will analyze four countries in depth: Brazil, Colombia, Mexico, and Venezuela. This report will also include recommendations, based on document analysis and interviews of experts on ways that Canada can work with its Latin American partners to shore up support for Ukraine in the Western Hemisphere.

## CANADIAN PRESENCE

Canada has developed very good relations with the LAC region over many decades. Canada and Mexico, for example, were the only two countries in the hemisphere that did not break-off diplomatic relations with Cuba, following the Cuban revolution in 1959. When Pierre Trudeau, who was also fluent in Spanish, became Prime Minister in 1968, Canada joined the Inter-American Development Bank. Prime Minister Brian Mulroney continued the work of Trudeau in strengthening Canadian-LAC relations with Canada joining the OAS in January 1990, after spending 28 years as an observer. His efforts continued under the leadership of Prime Minister Jean Chretien when Canada hosted the third Summit of the Americas in Quebec City in April 2001.

However, the Paul Martin government's 2005 International Policy Statement only mentioned Latin America once and the Caribbean not at all. And while the Harper government attempted to boost trade ties, relations were in stark contrast from the priority Canada once had toward the LAC region. Indeed, in the wake of 9/11, Washington's gaze shifted away from the region and toward Asia and the Middle East, with Ottawa following suit.

One result of this inattention was a growing Russian and Chinese presence in the LAC region. Canada still has a significant presence in the region. For instance, Canada and the LAC region have an extensive web of trade and economies ties. Canada has free trade agreements with Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Honduras, Mexico, Panama, and Peru. In addition, Canada has Foreign Investment Promotion and Protection Agreements with Argentina, Barbados, Costa Rica, Panama, Peru, Trinidad and Tobago, Uruguay and Venezuela as well as 30 air transport agreements in the region. Furthermore, Canada's bilateral merchandise trade with LAC region totaled \$29.5 billion CDN in 2021, while two-way trade in services totaled \$15.4 billion CDN in 2020. However, there is no question that the political and economic space in the LAC region has become more congested with Russia's growing presence (see appendix).

Yet, Russia's inability to promote prosperity for all in the region allows Canada an avenue to strengthen its relationship with Latin America. The creation of a comprehensive LAC strategy can be key to this effort.

## LAC STRATEGY

It is recommended that Canada consider adopting a holistic approach towards engaging with the region by devising a comprehensive regional strategy. Canada is active in multilateral organizations, such as the OAS, which is useful at earning the good will of partners; Devising a regional strategy would be the next step. At present, Canada's engagement is primarily based on bilateral relationships, which can create a division within the region, categorizing countries into those that Canada actively collaborates with and those that it does not. Insights gained from our consultations indicate that this approach may limit the effectiveness of Canada's efforts in the LAC region, as it may not fully acknowledge the regional nature of the challenges and opportunities at hand.

For Canada to strengthen the resolve of LAC countries to build and maintain strong opposition to Russia's actions in Ukraine, creating a regional strategy akin to Canada's Indo-Pacific Strategy is a policy option worth considering. Indeed, the Indo-Pacific Strategy was designed to "advance and defend Canada's interests by supporting a more secure, prosperous, inclusive, and sustainable region while protecting Canada's

national and economic security at home and abroad. [4]” Moreover, the approach was built around “supporting democracy, the rule of law, economic growth and resilience, peace and security, human rights, sustainable development, gender equality, and concrete action to protect the environment. [5]”

The development of a similar strategy for the LAC region will signal a strong willingness on Canada’s part to pursue long-term, stable engagement in the region in an era of increasing geopolitical, great-power competition, and global instability. This regional strategy should be informed by four key lessons from our research.

## KEY LESSONS

We conducted research on four countries in the LAC region (Brazil, Mexico, Colombia, and Venezuela) as case studies of the position of countries and to determine how Canada can work with these countries. This section will summarize the main takeaways of our research on these key actors.

### **Lesson 1: Separate Ideological factors from expediency**

Ideology alone cannot generally explain the position of countries with regards to the Russia’s invasion of Ukraine. Many domestic issues take priority over posturing. Additionally, many of these issues are regional – for example, the issue of fertilizer critically needed in Brazil and Colombia. While ideology is an important consideration, it cannot be isolated as an explanation as it overlaps with expediency. The need for leaders in LAC countries to be pragmatic towards their domestic situations, when reacting to the Ukraine War, was a consistent theme across our interviews on the case studies.

Mexico’s reaction to the Russia-Ukraine War, for example, exemplifies this. Due to its overwhelming reliance on trade with North America, would have more interest in supporting American foreign policy priorities but this is not the case. President Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador (AMLO) personal ideology has serious influence on Mexico’s positioning. Furthermore, Mexico has a longstanding policy of neutrality and non-intervention, enshrined in their constitution.

Moreover, Venezuela, despite talk of socialism and anti-imperialism, opened negotiations with the US quickly after Russia invaded Ukraine, capitalizing on an opportunity to negotiate for the lifting of sanctions. Canada can find that Venezuelan diplomats can recognize where their best interest lies.

### **Lesson 2: Canada must not seem to seek to divide regional actors**

Canada should engage with the region wherever possible in multilateral and regional forums, not only with select groups of countries. Especially in public, Canada should continue to avoid the appearance of positioning countries in relation to big power rivalries and focus on working with the region as a whole and supporting regional efforts to find common ground.

Key actors across the region, such as Colombia, Mexico, and Brazil have begun normalizing relations with the Maduro administration in Venezuela. Canada must avoid seeming to divide actors in the region. A regional strategy would show partners in the region that Canada is a committed and trusted partner to all.



### **Lesson 3: Canada should work to identify allies in the country's diplomatic corps**

Presidents come and go but diplomats stay. Any regional strategy must be consistent across political divides and focus on the issues that all Latin Americans care about. Focusing on issues of gender equality and environment can work to build relations with current left-wing leaders, it will likely not appeal to conservative governments that will inevitably come to power in the future.

Hence, it is crucial for Canada to parse the ideological elements from the pragmatic ones. Pragmatic elements will endure, regardless of the ruling party. Issues such as fertilizers, crucial for Colombia and Brazil, should be prioritized by Canada. This material issue transcends ideology and is also a sector where Canada has a comparative advantage.

### **Lesson 4: Avoid exporting Canadian values and principles**

In crafting a long-term and consistent regional strategy, Canada must thread a fine line in being true to its principles and imposing them on the region. Canada must find those shared values and principles where they already have strong support.

Canada has shared values with LAC countries - like Mexico, in terms of feminist foreign policies. Currently, other key actors such as Brazil and Colombia are supported by progressive elements which value issues of gender equality and environmentalism. Building bridges with these countries in shared values can be useful but will only have a limited effect.

A Canadian regional strategy which takes these lessons into consideration is more likely to be receptive by LAC countries. It shows Canada is committed to the region in the spirit of equality and friendship. By doing this, Canada can continue establishing its presence in the region and in doing so begin to challenge Russian engagement.

The reaction of Latin American states to the Russia-Ukraine war was a wakeup call for Canada. Latin American countries and Canada do not view the conflict through the same lenses. The war in Ukraine is not a priority for regional actors. A myriad of tools is at the disposal of states to show how they interpret international conflicts. The most obvious one is their ability to vote at multilateral forums to condemn certain states.

## **VOTING PATTERNS AT UN & OAS**

Latin American nations reject unilateralism and value multilateralism. The first step towards understanding why Latin America has remained uninvolved is to clarify how they reacted in the first place. The following section provides a brief overview of how the region has reacted and how their positions have changed over time.

To assess the region's stance, it is worthwhile to monitor two multilateral forums: the United Nations (UN) and Organization of American States (OAS). Faced with erratic presidents, many professional diplomats are caught in the middle. On the one hand trying to fulfill their duties to the president (Foreign Affairs is the sole right of the presidency under presidential republics) and maintaining their country's international image on the other; foreign ministers are in damage control mode.

Several resolutions have been put forward by member states at both forums, prompting a response from their dignitaries. Voting patterns are a decent proxy by which to measure the diplomatic position of a country. In some instances, voting

patterns are inconsistent such as voting to condemn Russia in one forum but not the other. Inconsistencies such as this make it harder to gauge a country’s position.

### United Nations Resolutions Voting Pattern

At the UN General Assembly, four resolutions have been passed condemning Russia in 2022 and one in 2023:

Country [6]	ES-11/1 “Aggression Against Ukraine”	ES-11/2 “Humanitarian Consequence s of the Aggression Ukraine”	ES-11/3 “Suspension of the right of membership of the Russian Federation in the Human Rights Council”	ES-11/4 “Territorial Integrity of Ukraine: defending the principles of the Charter of the United Nations”	ES-11/L.7 “Principles of the Charter of the United Nations underlying a comprehensive, just and lasting peace”
Date	March 2, 2022	March 25, 2022	April 7, 2022	October 12, 2022	February 16, 2023
Argentina	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green
Bolivia	Yellow	Yellow	Red	Yellow	Yellow
Brazil	Green	Green	Yellow	Yellow	Green
Chile	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green
Colombia	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green
Costa Rica	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green
Cuba	Yellow	Yellow	Red	Yellow	Yellow
DR	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green
Ecuador	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green
El Salvador	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Absent	Yellow
Guatemala	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green
Honduras	Green	Green	Green	Yellow	Green
Mexico	Green	Green	Yellow	Green	Green
Nicaragua	Yellow	Yellow	Red	Red	Red
Panama	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green
Paraguay	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green
Peru	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green
Uruguay	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green

Based on voting records, most countries at the United Nations General Assembly have voted repeatedly to condemn Russia, explicitly labeling it as an aggressor in many cases. Some states though, have made it a consistent policy to defend Russia either by abstaining or voting against resolutions. Countries which did not vote to condemn Russia in all resolutions are the following:

- Bolivia and Cuba abstained in all resolutions except ES-11/3, where they voted against.
- Nicaragua abstained for ES-11/1 and ES-11/2 but voted against ES-11/3 and ES-11/4.
- El Salvador abstained for all except ES-11/4, to which they were absent.

- Brazil and Mexico voted for all resolutions except ES-11/3, to which they abstained.
- Honduras voted for all except ES/11-4, to which it abstained.
- NOTE: Venezuela has been suspended from the General Assembly due to failure to pay their dues and did not vote on any resolution [7].

Cuba and Nicaragua, two Russian traditional allies from the Cold War have made it a consistent policy in these resolutions to never condemn Russia. They both voted against suspending Russia from the Human Rights Council, the only vote which was more than a declarative statement. It was only to ES-11/3 to which both Brazil and Mexico abstained, signaling that while they are comfortable condemning Russia on paper, they do not wish to hold Russia accountable in any material way. Bolivia has also chosen the same positions as Cuba and Nicaragua, reflecting growing anti-Americanism in the country's government as reflected by the adoption of a more pluralist diplomatic stance.

El Salvador remains elusive on their position on the conflict [8]. The only comment from President Nayib Bukele was on how the war was bound to affect the country's economic situation [9].

## Organization of American States Voting Patterns

Declarations and resolutions in support of Ukraine and opposition to Russia were passed by member states:

Country [10]	CP/CP/INF. 9293 "The Situation in Ukraine"	CP/RES. 1192 "The Crisis in Ukraine"	CP/RES. 1195 "Suspension of the Status of the Russian Federation as a Permanent Observer to the Organization of American States"	General Assembly Declaration on Ukraine
Date	February 25, 2022	March 25, 2022	April 21, 2022	October 6, 2022
Argentina				
Bolivia				
Brazil				
Chile				
Colombia				
Costa Rica				
DR				
Ecuador				
El Salvador	Absent			
Guatemala				
Honduras				
Mexico				
Nicaragua	Absent	Absent	Absent	Absent
Panama				
Paraguay				
Peru				
Uruguay				
Venezuela (Opposition)				

Some countries have been resolute in their OAS condemnations of the Russian invasion. Of the resolutions in question, the following countries did not consistently condemn the invasion:

- Bolivia, Brazil, El Salvador, and Honduras abstained in resolutions 1192 and 1195.
- Argentina and Mexico chose to condemn the invasion on March 25<sup>th</sup> but abstained at the vote to suspend Russia's observer status.
- Note: Venezuela's OAS mission was a representative of the opposition government.

- Note: Nicaragua chose to depart from the OAS in 2021 and has thus been absent from the forum.

Some patterns emerge when both UN and OAS voting patterns are analyzed. Firstly, the OAS has fewer Russian traditional allies in its midst with Cuba suspended since 1962, Nicaragua absent, and Venezuela's seat taken by the opposition government. Secondly, at time of voting, all governments who voted to abstain, save Brazil's Bolsonaro, were left-wing (more on Brazil later in the report). Thirdly, of states present in both the UN and OAS, the following states have not once condemned Russia: Bolivia and El Salvador.

Some states showed inconsistent voting patterns, namely Argentina, Brazil, Honduras, and Mexico. All four states abstained in the votes suspending Russia from the UN Human Rights Council (UNHRC) and the OAS Permanent Observer Status. Thus, they refuse to punish Russia for its invasion even if they condemn it in some resolutions. Honduras voted to abstain in all OAS votes and voted to condemn Russia at the UN but not to suspend it from the UNHRC. The voting patterns demonstrate several dynamics at play which can be explained by a confluence of factors, from ruling party ideology, economic considerations, and propaganda (see appendix for more).

Now that we've looked at the positioning of the region from a broader sense, we will now zoom in to examine a few of these countries more closely.

## CASE STUDIES

### Methodology

We present the following four case studies to assess the different factors affecting the positions of LAC countries and to inform our policy recommendations for Canada. These case studies were conducted through a mix of methods that draws from a combination of document analysis and expert consultations via interviews and focus groups.

First, we reviewed a variety of literature on the topic including news articles, official statements, policy reports, and voting records to both determine the stances of LAC countries on Russia's invasion of Ukraine and to build knowledge on potential reasonings. We then created semi-structured interview questions to pose in the format of fast talk events called Flash Talks. During this quick-pace, 60-minute focus group, several subject-matter experts (3-5, gathered through snowball sampling) would share their views on the issue, prompted by the questions, on a not-for-attribution basis. This was designed to enable the experts to discuss freely with one another, with minimal interference from the research team.

The data collected from the four Flash Talks were supplemented by information gathered through ten interviews with individuals, held virtually through Zoom or in-person depending on availability. This process involved fieldwork in Washington, DC, where we were able to consult a variety of experts from think tanks, universities, non-governmental organizations, and government agencies to hear a wide range of views on the matter. The diverse insights raised a number of considerations behind the positions of LAC countries on Ukraine, and potential paths forward for Canada.

At the beginning of our research process, we identified four countries that represent different groupings of relevance to our inquiry based on trends from our initial document analysis. This was important to give us space to focus more deeply on

several countries in a representative way instead of spreading our efforts thin across all states in the LAC region.

The four camps:

1. Core allies: Chile and Colombia
3. Ambivalent: Mexico, Brazil and Argentina
4. Russia-aligned: Nicaragua, Venezuela and Cuba

The four countries:

1. Brazil
2. Colombia
3. Mexico
4. Venezuela

Each case study will explore the different elements shaping the response of Brazil, Colombia, Mexico, and Venezuela to the Ukraine War, and highlight areas for potential cooperation with Canada. The first case study on Brazil is particularly unique in that it considers Brazil's recent national elections and how they impact the country's stance on Ukraine.



## CASE STUDY 1: BRAZIL

### Brazil's position

Diplomatically, Brazil under the Bolsonaro administration took diverging positions. Voting to condemn Russia at the UN but abstaining from doing so at the OAS.

The Brazilian delegation to the UN voted in favour of the March 2<sup>nd</sup> United Nations General Assembly Resolution ES/11-1 which condemned the Russian 'special military operation' in Ukraine. Afterwards, Brazil voted affirmative on two other general assembly resolutions: ES 11/2 on the humanitarian conditions on the ground and ES 11/4 which condemned Russian annexation of occupied territory.

This contrasts with their behaviour at the OAS, where similar votes were held regarding Russia's illegal invasion of Ukraine. On March 25th, 2022, the OAS convened to vote on a resolution that would condemn the invasion, while it passed with an overwhelming majority, the Brazilian delegation abstained. The OAS convened again the following month in April to vote on suspending Russia's observer status, again an overwhelming majority voted do so but the Brazilian delegation abstained. Finally, an October vote to condemn Russia's actions in Ukraine also passed, but again Brazil abstained.

What has caused this divergence? While there is currently no academic analysis on this voting inconsistency, our interview with a Canadian diplomat stationed in Washington D.C. gave us some insight into potential motivations. According to them, Brazil's position can be described as "posturing their values over ideology" [11] which has become exacerbated by the Ukrainian crisis. They go on to say that the OAS can serve as a platform for LAC countries to express anti-American sentiment as a means of garnering more support at home.

We do not expect that this anti-American, anti-Western stance to change during Lula's time as president. In a *Time Magazine* interview held in 2022, the then candidate Lula placed equal blame on both Putin and the NATO for the invasion of Ukraine [12]. The now President Lula has made his intentions known of building a stronger "strategic partnership" with Putin's Russia [13]. Thus far, Lula's foreign policy on Russia-Ukraine has not changed radically.

### Lula's Victory

While television and the media portray Lula's victory over Bolsonaro as decisive, it is indeed more complicated than that. Speaking to Jon Beasley-Murray, Associate Professor of Spanish at UBC, at our post-Brazil election flash talk; this election was quite close. The difference between the two candidates was only 2 million votes, which has not happened since the 1960s[14]. Moreover, Alessandra Santos, Associate Professor of Latin American Literatures and Cultures at UBC pointed out at the same flash talk, that the Brazilian Congress remains firmly conservative [15].

- The Liberal Party is the largest party in both the upper and lower house. Bolsonaro's Liberal Party increased its representatives in the lower house from 76 to 99 (out of 531 total seats), while in the Senate it doubled from 7 members to 14 (out of 81). Also, many candidates who served as ministers in Bolsonaro's government, including his former environment minister, won seats in Congress.
- Lula's Workers' Party has also increased its number of deputies from 56 to 68 and senators from 7 to 8 – but overall, conservative-leaning politicians will dominate the next legislature.

Lula will also face a lot of misinformation from the right, who, believe that the concept of 'fake news' is itself fake. This level of misinformation was indeed powerful enough to convince thousands of Bolsonaro supporters to storm the congress. As a result, Lula will have to downplay his socialism during his tenure, as a means of keeping reactionary conservatives at bay and preserving the tenuous domestic peace in Brazil.

Domestic politics is in many ways, the least of Lula's worries as president. His presidency will have to focus on recovery, be it economic, environmental, or diplomatic recovery; Lula and his cabinet are going to be in damage control mode for some time.

On the diplomatic front, Lula has his work cut out for him. In a flash talk conducted on November 2022, UBC Political Science Professor Maxwell Cameron stated that "Lula will attempt to bring Brazil back into the world by trying to regain its middle power status. [16]". He also noted that Brazil will most likely continue to fence sit on the Russia-Ukraine issue as a means of maintaining good relationship with his BRICS partners, China and Russia, thereby ensuring that Brazil has access to BRICS markets.

Lula also must decide whether he will follow in the steps of Bolsonaro and continue to withhold paying dues at the OAS. Convincing Lula to pay Brazil's dues is one area that Canada can use its more positive reputation in the OAS to great effect.

However, it should be noted that all our experts at the Flash Talk agreed that Lula's diplomatic and foreign policy will not be radically different to Bolsonaro's. Economically, Brazil can be best described as on the brink of economic disaster. Currently, Brazil faces 14.4% unemployment and growing, a GDP growth of only 1.2% (very low for a developing country) for 2023, rapidly growing inflation which is feeding into a looming food insecurity crisis [17].

Lula has already signaled his support for Brazilian business as a means of both tackling low growth and unemployment. In a surprising shift in ideology, Lula has sided with Bolsonaro era economic policy. He will end the industrial tax 'IPI' that was initially slashed by 35% by Bolsonaro [18]. This is an attempt to reduce production costs of industry thereby increasing profits, boosting growth, employment, and exports. Moreover, Lula will not reverse the changes to labor and pension reforms proposed by Bolsonaro and passed by congress between 2017-2019, both these reforms are seen as decidedly pro-business moves [19].

Inflation will prove difficult for the Lula regime to tackle and successfully control. Current inflation rates are a global crisis. However, developing nations like Brazil tend to see larger inflation rates that prove more devastating to its population. From our interview with members of the American Fertilizer Institute, Brazil relies on Russia and Belarus for approximately 44% of its fertilizer imports, with Brazil importing 80% of its overall fertilizer needs. Both the war in Ukraine and the supply chain squeeze brought about by COVID has made it expensive and difficult to acquire enough fertilizer. This is the main driver for inflation for everyday Brazilians, the cost of fertilizer is being pushed to the consumer, and is feeding into the growing food insecurity crisis.

Lula has yet to reveal what his comprehensive plan for tackling inflation and combating hunger in Brazil. However, we can assume that Brazil under Lula will remain neutral to maintain both Eastern and Western markets open. Brazil is likely going to seek a more reliable fertilizer supplier given the war in Ukraine is going to maintain Russia occupied for the foreseeable future. Canada's leading role in fertilizer production and net-exporter status of foodstuffs could offer a chance to expand trade relations with Brazil.



Unlike his predecessor, Lula campaigned on the promise that he would protect the environment, which hosts the Amazon rainforest. On this, our flash talk experts agreed that Lula will be more radical than his predecessor. Lula has already re-established the Amazon Fund which was previously frozen by Bolsonaro. He has also revoked a previous Bolsonaro edict that allowed for 'wildcat' mining, which is a huge factor in deforestation of the Amazon [20]. However, more robust climate policy does require the approval of Congress.

Lula will more than likely look towards likeminded nations to protect the rainforest; replant lost vegetation and get serious on environmental crime. Canada's world leading and innovative climate policy implemented by the Trudeau government, makes Canada an ideal partner to advance Lula's goals of protecting the environment in Brazil.

### **Canadian engagement**

Canada and Brazil cooperate in areas such as education, development, and trade where in 2020 alone this created two-way profits of \$984 million.

President Lula has signalled a desire to reset both domestic and foreign policies after outgoing President Bolsonaro shifted the nation radically to the right. This presents an opportunity for Canada to assist the Lula administration in their undertaking, by leveraging our longstanding bilateral relations.

Lula has indicated that unlike his predecessor, the environment and restoration of the rainforest are salient issues for his administration. This change in policy has created the possibility for Canada to cooperate with Brazil in helping the nation: reach its Paris Agreement targets, and its domestic goal of restoring lost Amazon Rainforest vegetation.

We believe that Canada's '2030 Emissions Reduction Plan' national climate strategy offers excellent medium to long term solutions for Lula's climate goals. We present the following strategies that Canada can work with Brazil to implement:

1. Like the '2 billion Trees' program (2BT), we propose Canada and Brazil work together to develop, implement and maintain a similar program for the Amazon Rainforest.
2. Reduce Brazil's dependence on fossil fuels for electricity by working together to develop a renewable energy grid. These grids should focus on providing cheap energy like solar to urban centers, which are large consumers of electric output.
3. Work to create Indigenous-led programs that use Indigenous knowledge of ecosystem preservation and restoration in rural areas.

Brazil is reliant on both Belarussian and Russian fertilizer exports for its agricultural sector. The strain placed by the war in Ukraine has resulted in an overall decrease in fertilizer exports. This has caused a net-decrease in farm-to-shelf foodstuffs production and a net-increase in the price of foodstuffs. For a country with already high levels of poverty and malnutrition this is a famine in the making.

Canada is the largest producer of potash, with the largest reserves of potash in the world. We propose that Canada use this abundance in potash to tackle the impending food crisis Brazil is facing by:

1. Subsidizing fertilizer companies in Canada to sell their potash to Brazil at below-market prices for two crop cycles. The first crop cycle should produce enough food to meet the dietary guidelines outlined by the Brazilian Ministry of Health. The second cycle needs to produce enough food to meet the dietary guidelines plus an extra half of that as a surplus.

## CASE STUDY 2: COLOMBIA

### Colombia's position

During the OAS's meeting to vote on the Crisis in Ukraine, held in March 2022, Colombia voted to condemn Russia. The following month the OAS convened a special meeting to vote on suspending Russia's status as a permanent observer. Colombia voted for suspension, reaffirming not only its support for Ukraine but its support for the West's actions against Russia.

While initial fears were that the Petro government would backtrack on Duque's position in the OAS, the appointment of center-left lawyer and ex-Commissioner for the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, Luis Ernesto Vargas seems to signal the opposite. During his swearing in ceremony as the OAS headquarters in D.C., Vargas reaffirmed his commitment to "the four pillars of the OAS: democracy, human rights, integral development and multidimensional security. [21]" Thus far, there has been no change in Colombia's position vis-à-vis Russia at the OAS.

Moving from the OAS to the UN, we see a similar anti-Russia, pro-West stance during the Duque administration. Between March and April 2022, the UN General Assembly held two votes. One demanded an end to the Russian offensive in Ukraine and the second proposed suspending Russia from the Human Rights Council.

On both votes, Colombia voted against Russia, signaling not only its continued commitment to Ukraine but also its commitment to supporting the Western bloc against Russian aggression in the European continent.

The move to a leftist-government in Colombia was met with uncertainty as Petro would not only appoint a new Colombian representative to the UN, but also address the UNGA himself which would reveal his stance on geopolitics.

However, Petro's address to the UNGA did not mention Russia, nor did it signal a radical change from historic Colombian diplomatic alignment. Instead, Petro focused on the need to tackle longstanding issues like drug trafficking and deforestation through a holistic approach with what he called Colombia's "principal ally, the United States. [22]" This nod to the importance of a holistic approach especially in dealing with drugs and the environment, is an area of expertise that Canada is well poised to assist Colombia with.

Moreover, the Petro government reaffirmed its anti-Russian stance by voting to condemn the Russian annexation via use of force and subsequent illegal referendums, during November 2022 UNGA emergency special session. However, Petro has expressed support for Mexico's peace proposal to the UN. The High-Level Caucus for Dialogue and Peace in Ukraine is a plan that would have Indian Prime Minister Modi, Pope Francis, and UN General Secretary Guterres serving as mediators; the plan was rejected by Kyiv as being "pro-Russia".

According to one of the expert interviewees, a former Latin American diplomat and associate professor in the US, Petro's position can be best described as "omnibalancing between: Russia, China, and the USA/Canada bloc. [23]" He noted that the Petro government is in a delicate balancing act where actions on the international arena need to be heavily weighed against whether said actions benefit the domestic issues facing Colombia.

## The Petro Government

The election of Petro is consequential for Colombia, as this is the first left-wing President in a country where political power has traditionally been held in the hands of the conservative elite. However, a senior fellow at a Washington D.C. think-tank cautioned at labeling the Colombian left with the same “leftist” label being used for Venezuela, Cuba and even Chile. The “left” in the LAC region is very diverse, and he encourages nations like Canada to approach leftist governments as “left” within the context of that nation’s politics specifically [24].

This same expert notes that Petro has assumed power during a very unstable time in Colombia. Politically, he currently has a tenuous majority in both houses of parliament, so among his top priorities will be to maintain the unity of his heterogeneous coalition while also meeting the high expectations that the Colombian people have of him.

As a result, his cabinet needs to reflect a respect for this balancing act, which requires the appeasement of the Colombian right through cabinet appointments. This is the driving decision to appoint conservative lawyer and human rights defender Alvaro Leyva Duran as Minister for Foreign Affairs.

However, as one expert on Colombia-Russia relations noted in our interview, “Minister Duran’s focus at the direction of Petro will be to secure peace with the ELN and normalization of relations with Venezuela. [25]” Thus, the war in Ukraine is very much unimportant for the Petro administration at this time.

Shifting away from politics, all our expert interviewees agreed that the domestic situation will be the focus for the Petro government. Broadly speaking, inflation, the environment, infrastructure issues and peace with the ELN are the most salient domestic issues Colombia faces.

While Russia’s trade with Colombia pales in Comparison to the US, China, and Canada, Russia’s main export to Colombia, fertilizer, has caused a ripple effect in the local economy. Currently, 29% of fertilizer imports come from Russia while 13% from Ukraine. [26] As such, the war has led to an increase in fertilizer prices and raised the input costs of the agricultural sector [27]. This has led to record high levels of inflation that directly affects every day Colombians. However, inflation predates the war in Ukraine, and can be traced back to COVID, when supply chains were disrupted on a global scale and net importers like Colombia suffered the most.

Critical to Colombia, is the preservation and expansion of the rainforest in the region. Industry, especially foreign industry from Canada and the US has led to massive deforestation and environmental degradation. Petro at COP 27 has made his environmental stance known; for the next 20 years his country will contribute \$200 million per year to protect the Amazon [28]. He has called not only on the LAC region but on the USA and Canada to contribute to Amazon protection.

Infrastructure, or more specifically energy infrastructure, is an ongoing issue in Colombia that has long remained unaddressed. Both the Minister of Mines and Energy and the President have conceded that Colombia still has problems delivering energy to over half-a-million Colombians [29]. While energy providers have been consulted by the government, there is no clear plan yet as to how best to close this gap.

The ongoing peace talks with the ELN and striking a longstanding peace for Colombians, will be the single-most important goal of the Petro government. Currently,

the UN and other local LAC powers like Mexico, Chile, and Brazil have been supportive in the ongoing talks. However, there has been no concrete resolution yet between the two parties. The longstanding distrust between both entities, regardless of Petro's past as an M-19 guerilla fighter, will require peace guarantors to bring this bloody chapter to a close.

### **Canada's Involvement**

Canada's ability to assist and influence Colombia, is dependent on which expert you ask. One academic, an expert on Latin American in a high-profile university in Washington D.C., believes that Canada cannot play a decisive role in the LAC region. On the other hand, another expert, the former head of a think-tank focusing on the Americas, sees a role for Canada given its more positive reputation vis-à-vis the United States.

Canada's role lies somewhere in the middle of the two opposing views. Canada should take advantage of its more positive reputation, especially now that the US is embroiled with Russia in Europe and China in the Pacific. However, Canada's approach to helping Colombia needs to go beyond the economics of trade and simply throwing millions of dollars at a problem in the hopes that it gets fixed.

Considering that the Petro government campaigned on implementing more progressive social, economic, and environmental policies, Canada is poised to use its more positive image vis-a-vis the USA to directly cooperate with the Colombian government at achieving said policy goals.

As previously stated, the Petro government faces five core domestic policy issues: ELN Peace Accords, the Venezuelan Refugee crisis, electric grid capacity issues, Amazon deforestation and food price inflation. We propose Canada do the following to help Colombia tackle these issues which continue to devolve the domestic situation in Colombia:

1. Create a pathway to safety for Venezuelans who are living in Colombia. We propose a program like that for Ukrainians seeking safety in Canada, that of temporary resident permits (TRV) for entry into Canada followed by a three-year open work permit. This should ease the strain of the refugee influx Colombia has been facing.
2. Act as guarantors for the Colombia-ELN peace talks. Currently, Mexico, Brazil, and Chile have been invited by both sides, however, all three lack the diplomatic and reputational capital to secure a long-term peace. Canada has a proven track-record of being a mediator and broker.
3. Work with the Petro government to develop a comprehensive energy strategy that would bring reliable, sustainable, and renewable power to those half-a-million Colombians. This could take the form of Canadian investment into existing energy providers in Colombia, or SLPs designed to contract Canadian companies to improve the grid and train Colombians in its operation.
4. Committing to Petro's Amazon fund, and matching Colombia's \$200 million contribution. Moreover, Canada should use its closer relationship with the United States to convince them to participate as well.
5. Assist in inflation reduction by reducing the cost of local food production. This can be done either by directly providing fertilizer at temporarily below market prices or assisting in the development of a local fertilizer industry.

## CASE STUDY 3: MEXICO

### Mexico's position

Mexico's stance on the Russian invasion of Ukraine has been indecisive. This is reflected in its votes within both the OAS and the UN. In March 2022, the OAS held a virtual special meeting to vote on the Crisis in Ukraine, where Mexico voted to condemn Russia. The following month, Mexico's stance shifted, as it chose to abstain along with seven other countries during another OAS special meeting on whether to suspend Russia's status as a permanent observer. The UN General Assembly held two resolutions in March and April 2022, demanding an end to the offensive in Ukraine and suspending Russia from the Human Rights Council. Mexico voted against Russia in the first resolution in March. Regarding the resolution suspending Russia from the Human Rights Council, however, Mexico abstained stating that the UN should have acted as an intermediary as opposed to excluding Russia. It is also critical to note that Mexico sat on the UNSC from 2021 to 2022. This is of particular interest given Mexico's vote on the Security Council draft resolution condemning Moscow's referenda in Ukraine's occupied territories. Another critical vote was Mexico's vote in favor of the February 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2023, UNGA resolution calling for Russia to end hostilities in Ukraine and withdraw its forces.

Based on its voting record, Mexico's stance on the Russian invasion of Ukraine reflects a condemnation of the invasion itself, as well as a sense of neutrality towards Russia.

### Presidency

Mexico's stance on the Russian invasion of Ukraine can largely be attributed to its mercurial President, Andrés Manuel López Obrador (popularly known by his initials AMLO). AMLO's political tenure began prior to his 2018 election win. His political career began in Mexico's ruling party, the *Partido Revolucionario Institucional* (PRI), which governed Mexico for most of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Having such a background has equipped AMLO with a wealth of political experience. His impact has been so immense that those we consulted agreed that he is the most powerful president Mexico has seen since President Carlos Salinas de Gortari (1988-1994). Prior to the presidential election, AMLO traveled all over the country, fine-tuning his political instincts to cater to the citizens of Mexico. AMLO's greatest priority is his domestic audience. He views all politics through the lens of domestic consideration, and this has helped him to gain the trust and loyalty of his constituents. This translates to AMLO's view on foreign policy.

While AMLO talks primarily to a Mexican audience, he is *not* only addressing them. Yet, as a seasoned politician, he is not trying to persuade other political actors — he does not need to. AMLO seeks to pit 'the people' (or *pueblo*) against the established elite, and this endears him to the Mexican left. AMLO's political party, MORENA is populist and anti-neoliberal.

The Mexican left, for historic reasons, is strongly anti-imperialist and hostile to the US, and tends to be more sympathetic to Russia, with which many feel a connection, and this may contribute to AMLO's policy stance.

## Secretary of Foreign Affairs

AMLO's focus on domestic politics can create tensions with his Secretary of Foreign Affairs, Marcelo Ebrard. It has been difficult for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Secretaría de Relaciones Exteriores) to accept AMLO's disapproval of "NATO's policy on Russia's invasion of Ukraine" [30].

Ebrard has a more conventional approach than AMLO. He is prioritizing diplomatic relations with Western trading partners by supporting work against Russia. Ebrard expressed Mexico's condemnation of the Russian attacks on Ukraine and proposed the UN establish a committee comprised of India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Pope Francis, and UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres to broker peace between Russia and Ukraine [31]. In contrast, AMLO was vocal in condemning the suspension of visas to legislators who participated in the Mexico-Russia Friendship Committee [32].

## Mexico-Russia relations

In addition to AMLO's focus on domestic politics, Mexico's unwillingness to alienate or sanction Russia can be explained by taking a closer look at relations between the two countries, especially vaccine diplomacy and oil.

Russia provided Mexico with vaccines early in the COVID-19 pandemic. In February of 2021, Russia sent Mexico the first 200,000 doses of an expected 24 million. It was not until a month later that the United States declared they would send COVID-19 vaccines to Mexico [33]. Russia's quick action and support may have bought them good will. While such factors may not be the primary reason for Mexico potentially favoring Russia, the ability for Russia to act in a time of need certainly remains on the minds of the Mexican government, and maybe more importantly, Mexico's citizens.

Oil is another critical area in which Mexico-Russia relations can be significantly developed. Oil is one of the pillars of Mexican development. If something threatened oil production, then AMLO would be very concerned. Both Russia and Mexico are members of OPEC+. Given Mexico's prioritization of oil, it is likely that they will not want to do anything that will significantly disturb Russia. This is a similar logic to what has been seen with Venezuela.

Russia's war on Ukraine has once again ignited discussions surrounding Canada's "ethical oil", the idea that it is superior to invest in Canadian oil versus oil from non-democratic regimes [34]. Canada's 'ethical oil' stance conflicts with the realpolitik views of these Latin American countries as they prioritize the practical over the ideological – in direct opposition of Canada's 'ethical' ideology. Further, this makes Canada less relatable for Latin American countries, such as Mexico, whose everyday people focus on being able to feed their families rather than on ethics.

However, there is little economic commerce between Mexico and Russia. Mexico is far more reliant on trade with Canada and the US. The United States and Canada continually remain the top trading partners for Mexico in both import and export contexts [35].

## **Tradition of non-intervention**

It is important to note that Mexico has a long-standing tradition of non-interventionist foreign policy. The principle of non-intervention was even written into Mexico's constitution, in Article 89 [36]. The main reason for this is the country's history. As an independent state, Mexico has suffered two invasions by France and two by the United States in the 19th century. AMLO referenced these four invasions directly in his first statement about Russia's invasion [37]. Since issuing that statement, he has continued to note Mexico's history of suffering from invasions when asked to comment on the conflict between Russia and Ukraine [38].

While Mexico's historical experience has led the country to condemn acts of aggression, it also fueled a preference of non-intervention and respect for sovereignty and independence. This tradition is evident in Mexico's neutrality towards the Ukraine crisis, and the country's unwillingness to impose sanctions on Russia or send weapons to Ukraine.

Although the principle of non-intervention helps provide a rationale behind Mexico's neutral position, it can also be contradictory in that Mexico's history should make the country even more sympathetic to Ukraine. Mexico's tradition of non-intervention can thus be something applied or referenced by Mexico as a front to achieve other interests (power balancing, appealing to a domestic audience, preserving friendly international relations, etc.).

## **Ties with the US**

Another critical factor to consider is Mexico's deep ties with the US. In addition to their extensive history and close geographic proximity, the US is also Mexico's largest trading partner [39]. Mexico is much more heavily integrated into the US economy than it is to Russia's.

Although it may be in Mexico's interests to geopolitically align with the US, Mexico has particularly distanced itself from US foreign policy when it comes to Ukraine. AMLO has voiced critiques also shared by other countries in the LAC region about NATO's expansion provoking Russia, US interventions in Iraq and Afghanistan, and the diversion of the US's attention and resources to Ukraine when there is already violence in the US's "backyard" (Central America) [40].

Close ties with the US cannot explain Mexico's stance on Ukraine. However, it should affect how other countries proceed to engage with Mexico. AMLO will exercise discursive politics when it suits him, which includes criticizing the US. But it is highly improbable that Mexico would do anything to truly cut ties with the US.

Mexico also has a positive view of North American cooperation more broadly and reaffirmed this at the recent North American Leaders Summit (NALS). Mexico has much to gain from a strong North American relationship and will not threaten it by antagonizing the US.

## **Canada-Mexico cooperation**

The prospects for Canada and Mexico working together on an intervention or diplomatic initiative that is explicitly critical of Russia is a non-starter according to our consultations. Intervening in Ukraine is not something Canada can persuade Mexico on. Yet, there is room for cooperation between Canada and Mexico on two fronts of



common values, to either support the Ukraine efforts and/or mitigate vulnerabilities Mexico might have that prevents it from taking a stronger stance against Russia.

It must be noted that our consultations emphasized that any action taken towards cooperation must be sensitive to the ongoing dispute with Mexico regarding AMLO's nationalist energy policies [41].

The first area of possible cooperation we identified is gender equality. Both Canada and Mexico have an official feminist foreign policy. Their commitment to promoting and protecting gender equality and women and girls' empowerment was reaffirmed as part of the Canada-Mexico Action Plan from NALS [42]. It can be further explored how this shared commitment can translate into humanitarian initiatives for Ukraine. Mexico did show support for humanitarian assistance to Ukraine when authoring a proposal to the United Nations with France about sending aid to Ukraine [43]. This does not go against Mexico's pacifism or neutrality.

Canada should also continue to focus on strengthening the overall North American relationship, to avoid pushing Mexico to forge other strategic relationships, and to keep Mexico's ties to Russia to a minimum. This includes reinforcing economic ties. For example, Canada, Mexico, and the US agreed to boost semiconductor output and investment in the continent to compete with Asia, and to organize a semiconductor forum this year to increase investment [44]. Canada can devote serious attention to these commitments and cooperate on these matters to develop the North American partnership.

## CASE STUDY 4: VENEZUELA

### Venezuela and the Russia-Ukraine War

Venezuela's position on the invasion has changed over the last year. From explicit support to neutrality. This evolving position can be attributable to a rapprochement between Venezuela and the US. This has manifested itself through the tone and content of statements of Venezuelan diplomatic representatives, especially at the UN. Although small progress has been made, this provides Canada an opportunity to take the initiative. By normalizing relations with Caracas, the country can be moved away from Russia and the goodwill of key actors in the region can be earned.

### The Limits of the US-Venezuela Rapprochement

The Russian invasion of Ukraine created an opportunity for Venezuela to weaken American and European sanctions in return for access to Venezuelan oil, but President Maduro has taken advantage of the situation to gain benefits from both Russia and the US. By analyzing this episode, we can better understand the kinds of strategies of engagement to work in the Venezuelan regime.

In March 2022, as Venezuelan officials publicly blamed NATO for the war in Ukraine, backchannel negotiations with the US began. Three American officials, Roger Carstens, presidential envoy on hostage affairs, Ambassador James Storey, head of the Venezuelan Affairs Unit from the Embassy in Colombia (the Trump administration closed the embassy in Venezuela), and Juan Gonzalez, National Security Council director for the Western Hemisphere, all traveled to Venezuela to meet with President Maduro and negotiate a possible lifting of sanction [45]. Days later, on March 8<sup>th</sup>, two American prisoners in Venezuela were released [46]. This was the beginning of a series of meetings between the US and Venezuela aimed at thawing relations.

Negotiations continued into the summer. In June, the same three officials returned to Venezuela, where they held a meeting with opposition leader Juan Guaido to discuss a resumption of negotiations between the government and the opposition [47]. By the end of 2022, seven more American prisoners had been released, two Venezuelans under US custody were also released [48], sanctions on the Venezuelan First Lady's nephew were lifted [49], Spanish and Italian firms were granted permission to import Venezuelan oil to import, a license to import Venezuelan oil was also extended to Chevron [50], and negotiations between the government and the opposition resumed in Mexico City [51].

The Russian invasion has appeared to create an opportunity for the two countries to find common ground. The rapprochement may have been partially responsible for the more neutral tone adopted by Venezuelan delegates at the UN vis-à-vis Russia. However, the thaw in relations with the US has been limited, expressing itself only through a subtle change in their diplomatic statements.

### Diplomatic Response to the Invasion

Since the beginning of the Russian invasion of Ukraine, Venezuela's has shifted from explicit support for Russia to a more ambiguous position. In 2022, Venezuelan public statements repeated pro-Russia statements such as blaming Ukraine and NATO for the failure of the Minsk Agreements, stressing Russia's right to self-defense, and decrying sanctions on Russia. By 2023, Venezuelan diplomats were advocating peace and negotiations, and were refraining from expressions of support for Russia or Ukraine.

Immediately after Russian troops invaded Ukraine, Venezuela gave its explicit diplomatic support. The day of the invasion, the Foreign Ministry blamed the US and NATO for violating the Minsk Agreement. Venezuela “laments the mockery and violation of the Minsk Agreements by NATO promoted by the United States of America,” stated an official communique from the Foreign Ministry; this was followed by a call for peace and a rejection of “illegal” sanctions on Russia [52]. Four days later, the Foreign Minister, Felix Plasencio, in an interview for the Russian news outlet, Sputnik, accused Ukraine of violating the Minsk Agreement and reiterated Russia’s right to self-defense. “We’re constantly being bombarded by a warmongering, threatening discourse from Brussels -NATO headquarters- Washington and from Kyiv, opposing regional and global stability, and irresponsibly and even childishly ignoring Russia’s right to preserve its peace,” he stressed [53]. Plasencio also shared what was said in a conversation between Maduro and Putin, in which the Venezuelan leader expressed his support for Russia and its dedication to peace [54].

Explicit Venezuelan support for Russia continued in the months immediately after the war began. In May 2022, the new Venezuelan Foreign Minister, Carlos Faria, expressed support for Russia when he traveled to Moscow to meet his counterpart, Sergey Lavrov. He again condemned US and EU sanctions, the continued “injection” of weapons into Ukraine by the West and expressed concern at Finnish NATO membership. The meeting ended in an expression of a spirit of cooperation and hopes of deepening ties between the two nations [55].

Diplomatic statements throughout 2022 stand in contrast to those of 2023. Now Venezuelan diplomats no longer explicitly support the Russian Federation’s war, but instead stress the importance of peace and dialogue.

This new position is most evident at the UN. Although Venezuela is barred from voting due to failure to pay dues, its representatives are still active [56]. On February 22, 2023, at a UN General Assembly Emergency Session, a draft resolution introduced by Ukraine, which condemned the Russian invasion, was debated. Belarus, supported by Russia and Syria opposed the resolution, offering corrective amendments to what they called “half-truths” in the document [57]. The Venezuelan representative did not back the Russian and Belarussian delegations, but instead chose a tamer tone [58]. This seemed like evidence of a desire for rapprochement with the US, but it also made the Venezuelan position seem ambiguous.

At the debate, the Venezuelan representative at the UN, Joaquin Alberto Perez Ayestaran, opposed the Ukrainian resolution on the grounds that “States must not allow the Assembly to be instrumentalized to advance initiatives such as Ukraine’s draft that lack consensus. [59]” The delegation then called for an end to confrontation and the resumption of dialogue [60]. Compared to previous statements, the subtle change of tone is noticeable, since it refrained from explicitly supporting or condemning any state, and instead opting to call for negotiations. In comparison, Mexico, also present at the session, chose to call for peace and negotiation but did explicitly state its support for Ukraine, which Venezuela never did [61]. The Venezuelan delegate thus chose a middle ground between explicitly supporting or opposing any side in the conflict.

A more recent example came on March 1, 2023, at another UN session, where Venezuela’s new ambiguous position was evident once again. At a Special Committee on the UN Charter’s implementation failed to reach consensus over the conflict in Ukraine. Paragraph 4 of a draft, [A/AC.182/2023/L.2](#), included an explicit mention of the Russia-Ukraine war, stating “the ongoing aggression of the Russian Federation

against Ukraine is a serious violation of international law...” [62] The Russian delegate opposed the inclusion of the section, arguing the inclusion of specific situations is beyond the committee’s mandate. Several countries agreed, namely Syria, Nicaragua, Eritrea, and North Korea. Venezuela did not concur [63].

Instead, Venezuela supported an amendment put forward by Iran, which proposed the deletion of any explicit reference to Russia or Ukraine in paragraph 4, and instead limited the section to the following passage: “A number of delegations emphasized that the maintenance of international peace and security is at the heart of the Charter of the United Nations, that Article 2 (4) of the Charter prohibits the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any State, and that the prohibition of aggression is a peremptory norm of international law. [64]” No proposal achieved consensus and the session was suspended.

In short, at the UN, Venezuelan delegates have moved away from explicit support for Russia and have fallen back on a more ambiguous position. Although its delegates still support propositions that do not condemn Russia, it no longer explicitly supports it. Other states, like Syria, Nicaragua, and Belarus more closely support Russia at the UN. It seems reasonable to assume that Venezuela’s softer tone can be best attributed by the negotiations between Venezuela and the US which have been ongoing since 2022. At the same time, Venezuelan ties to Russia remain strong, suggesting a desire to occupy a middle ground in which Venezuela benefits from relations with both sides. To keep Venezuela within its sphere of influence, Russia has continued to invest into the country. Evidence of the desire to strengthen ties with Russia came in early March 2023 when Igor Sechin, President of Rosneft, travelled to Venezuela to meet Tareck El Aissimi and Rafael Tellechea, Venezuela’s then Oil Minister and the president of PDVSA respectively. On March 6, 2023, it was announced that Rosneft and Venezuela had laid a plan to boost oil production jointly [65]. Decades of cooperation between both countries will not so easily be undone.

The deal between Russian oil firm Rosneft and Venezuela is either a Russian effort to keep the Latin American country within its sphere, or Maduro playing both sides or, more likely, both. Consequently, despite the new rapprochement, American sanctions and a \$15 million bounty on Maduro is still in effect [66]. There is still a lot of work to be done to turn Venezuela away from Russia. Over the last decade, ties between Russia and Venezuela have strengthened significantly, especially under Maduro. These ties will not be easy to break. In the next section we discuss the implications of the foregoing analysis for Canada’s role.

### **Maduro and Russia: Background**

Under Hugo Chavez Venezuela enjoyed warm relations with Russia. However, unlike his successor Maduro, Chavez always ensured that his relationship with Russia never got too close to the point where it might jeopardize trade relations with the US. The main driver behind this close relation is the purchasing of Russian military equipment. Since 2005 and just before Chavez’s death in 2013, Venezuelan purchases of Russian military equipment surpassed \$4-billion USD. The Russians also conduct military exercises and training with their Venezuelan counterparts, as means of maintaining the Venezuelan regime in power. The two countries also support each other diplomatically. Russia has been highly supportive of Venezuela’s criticisms of the West and has condemned what it sees as arbitrary sanctions imposed on Venezuela by the US. Venezuela has diplomatically supported Russia by echoing Russian rhetoric on Kosovan independence and recognizing the Georgian separatist states of Abkhazia and South Ossetia after Russia’s 2008 Invasion. Chavez was strategic about his relationship with Russia. He understood that Russia could not provide the same

economic relations that the US could, and that pushing for closer relationships with Russia could alienate Venezuela from Western markets.

With Chavez's death in 2013, his successor Nicolas Maduro had the task of running a country with significant economic distortions, scarcities of all kinds, declining oil production, and growing debt [67]. Maduro was not recognized by many countries in the Western Hemisphere as the legitimate president and came under pressure to resign. In response to Maduro's refusal to resign and his crackdown, the US led the West in placing heavy economic sanctions on Venezuela (this included oil).

The Lima Group was established in August 2017, as the crisis in Venezuela worsened. Canada had a leading role in the initiative [68]. The following countries were founding members: Argentina, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Panama, Paraguay, and Peru [69]. In the lead up to the elections, the Lima Group called for Venezuela to suspend the elections [70]. After the elections, all Lima Group members, along with the US and EU, recalled their ambassadors from Venezuela, increasing the pressure on Maduro [71]. In 2019, the crisis intensified as Juan Guaido declared himself interim president.

In February of that year, during a Lima Group summit in Ottawa, the Guaido government was recognized and allowed to participate as a signatory to the declaration which explicitly condemned Maduro's regime as 'illegitimate' and 'dictatorial.' [72] Throughout 2019, the Lima Group continued to isolate the Maduro government. Isolated by the Lima Group and the US, Russia-Venezuela ties strengthened.

Maduro saw Putin as a lifeline, and Putin saw the possibility of regime collapse under Maduro, which jeopardized Russian interests in the region. This prompted Russia to develop an intervention plan in the event of the Maduro regime collapsing [73], and Maduro to increasingly rely on Russian military assistance. Almost immediately after the fraudulent elections, Russia sent nuclear capable bombers, military advisors, and equipment to the Maduro government as a means of stabilizing the embattled regime. The withdrawal of Western (in particular US) oil companies left Venezuela desperate for revenue, creating the opportunity for very close economic cooperation with Russia. The Russian state-owned oil company Rosneft and the Venezuelan owned PDVSA begun multiple joint extraction projects in Venezuela in 2018 right as the US firms were leaving [74].

In spring 2022 alone, this cooperation led to average production of 125,000 barrels per day [75], netting the Venezuelans \$9.9 billion in oil exports alone [76]. So close is this relationship, that in 2019 PDVSA moved its office from Lisbon to Moscow as a means of increasing cooperation and safeguarding its Russian investments from being frozen due to sanctions that have been placed on both countries [77].

When Russia invaded Ukraine in 2022, Putin expected Venezuelan support [78]. Maduro, however, saw an opportunity to play both sides against the other. By adopting an ambiguous posture, it hoped to maintain ties with Russia while loosening US sanctions. The strategy has met with only mixed success. It is possible the US has lost a strategic opportunity, but this can may be the unavoidable consequence of Venezuela's an ambiguous strategy.

### **Implications for Canada**

Canada had a leading role in the establishment of the Lima Group in 2017. The Lima Group did not achieve its goals of dislodging Nicolas Maduro from power and may have pushed the country closer to Russia. Furthermore, the Lima Group has become

less relevant in the region's current left turn, as left-wing presidents have abandoned the coalition. Argentina and Mexico, two significant regional players were the first to disengage from the Lima Group. Mexico's President, Manuel Lopez Obrador signalled a different approach than his predecessor by inviting Nicolas Maduro to his inauguration [79]. Argentina officially left the group in 2021 after the election of Alberto Fernandez [80]. The group's erosion signalled a foreign policy setback for Canada. Latin America's new left is less belligerent towards Venezuela. Colombia's President, Gustavo Petro, has visited the country four times in the last eight months [81] while President Lula da Silva in Brazil is already making overtures [82]. Juan Guaido, once the opposition leader has been replaced [83] and negotiations between the opposition and the government resumed in Mexico City. This new context, dominated by a new left in Latin America, provides Canada plenty of room to engage.

Opposition to Venezuela is no longer a winning proposition to make friends in the region. Canada's foreign policy on Cuba can be a model for Venezuela. Canada has won 'kudos' from Latin American for not participating in sanctions [84]. Canada's room to maneuver is limited and requires speed. With Latin America now dominated by the left, Canada can earn their goodwill and show solidarity with the region by normalizing diplomatic relations with the Maduro government.

The reopening of the Canadian Embassy in Caracas would be the most cost-effective action available. The Canadian Embassy suspended operations in Caracas in 2019 and has been closed since [85]. Should Canada reopen its embassy and recognize the Maduro administration, it would earn the goodwill of Latin American partners such as Mexico, Colombia, and Brazil, all of whom are working to normalize relations. At the same time, Canada would have to welcome a new Venezuelan ambassador in Ottawa, representative of the Maduro administration.

This move also comes with risks. Firstly, it would isolate and weaken the hand of the opposition in their negotiations in Mexico. Secondly, reactions in the United States will be mixed. It would elicit hostility from American politicians and citizens of the Nicaraguan, Cuban, and Venezuelan diaspora who are traditionally hostile to their respective regimes. With Republicans in control of the House, especially with many representatives from Florida where said diasporas are concentrated, there is a real possibility for Canada to become a target of American domestic politics.

The normalization of diplomatic relations would either open President Biden to criticism or allow him to further the rapprochement without exposing his administration to direct critique from political adversaries. Canadian diplomats in Washington DC would have to gauge this.

Russia looks like a very unreliable ally right now. Global oil prices, the initial impetus for the US-Venezuela rapprochement, have decreased over the last year [86], weakening Maduro's hand in bilateral negotiations. The Russian military's performance in Ukraine has been disappointing and has drawn enormous quantities of military resources. The Venezuelan military, reliant on Russian equipment, will likely be starved of critical components like replacement parts and ammunition.

With negotiations between the opposition and the regime at a possible impasse in Mexico, the normalization of relations along with an offer to serve as mediator would set up Canada as a peace maker in the region, a reversal from its image as leader of the Lima Group. To give the regime a lifeline now, just like Russia did in 2019 would bring Venezuela, and key actors in the region, a step closer to alignment with Canadian interests.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

This section will now cover our recommendation for an approach to the LAC region and summarize our country-specific proposals based on the case studies discussed above.

### A Regional Strategy

At the beginning of this report, we noted that Canada still has a significant presence in the LAC region. What Canada lacks, however, is a coherent strategy for its regional relations, creating a sense that engagement efforts are perhaps haphazard and short-term. This is important to help build trust between Canada and LAC nations, which will be key for Canada to ease the way forward for its relations with the region according to our consultations. Our consultations emphasized that pursuing a comprehensive regional strategy to demonstrate a coherence of vision and intent to invest resources to LAC engagement would be a viable way to achieve this. One that would be well received by Latin American leaders and their publics.

The creation of a Latin American & Caribbean Strategy would likely not require the same resources as the Indo-Pacific Strategy. In terms of economy, number of states, and population, Latin America does not compare to the Indo-Pacific Region. Nevertheless, like the Indo-Pacific Strategy, Canada would need to look at expanding market access, increasing its visa-processing capacity and education exchange opportunities, support the LAC region as it transitions to a low-carbon footprint and clean energy, and enhance its military-to-military ties just to name a few examples. Furthermore, incorporating a focus on expanding cooperation with like-minded countries on promoting gender equality and women and girls' empowerment would tie into Canada's feminist foreign policy priorities.

Canada's strong and growing Latin American diaspora is another factor that should also prompt the Canadian government to develop a LAC regional strategy. In the 2021 Census, 580,000 people reported being Latin American, the vast majority coming from South America (40.7%) or Central America (31.9%) followed by the Caribbean and Bermuda (4.2%) [87]. And the path to a new strategy should be supported, much like the Indo-Pacific Advisory Committee, by a similar committee of experts representing the private sector, civil society, and government to ensure that a renewed Canadian approach to the LAC region also reflects the many perspectives of Canadians from across the country.

Our consultations agreed that the alternative would be Canada continuing its current inconsistent approach to the LAC region, which is surmised as a scattered approach that does not support Canada's national interests. In sum, in light of evolving geopolitical developments with the Russia-Ukraine War, the creation of a LAC strategy would demonstrate that Canada is a trusted and committed partner, including on issues of key importance to them such as pandemic recovery, irregular migration, climate action, gender equality, regional security, and the adverse impacts LAC countries face as a result of sanctions on Russia. This will ultimately help mitigate the vulnerabilities preventing LAC nations from taking a stronger stance against Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

Below is a summary of country-specific recommendations of how to engage with the four key actors identified to help achieve this objective:

Brazil	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assist Brazil with its reforestation efforts by working with the Lula administration to develop, implement and maintain a similar program.</li> <li>• Cooperate with Brazil to create an electric grid that is at least 60% reliant on renewable sources of energy, specifically wind and solar.</li> <li>• Provide subsidies for a period of two crop cycles to all potash producers wanting to sell their product to Brazil</li> </ul>
Colombia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create a pathway to safety for Venezuelans who are living in Colombia.</li> <li>• Act as guarantors for the Colombia-ELN peace talks.</li> <li>• Work with the Petro government to develop a comprehensive energy strategy that would bring reliable, sustainable, and renewable power to those half-a-million Colombians.</li> <li>• Committing to Petro’s Amazon fund, and matching Colombia’s \$200 million contribution.</li> <li>• Assist in inflation reduction by exploring joint initiatives to reduce the cost of local food production.</li> </ul>
Mexico	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cooperate with Mexico on their shared commitment to a feminist foreign policy, and focus efforts on how this can evolve to help facilitate humanitarian programs for Ukraine.</li> <li>• Concentrate on further developing the North American relationship to prevent Mexico from growing stronger ties with Russia, including by exploring how to strengthen economic relations.</li> </ul>
Venezuela	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Adopt Canada’s foreign policy on Cuba as a model for Venezuela, and normalize diplomatic relations with the Maduro government</li> <li>• Reopen the Canadian Embassy in Caracas</li> <li>• Welcome a new Venezuelan ambassador in Ottawa – a representative of the Maduro administration</li> </ul>

### Key Considerations

- (1) From our consultations, we were strongly advised that Canada needs to consider America’s response. Given the US’s history in the region, its massive economic and political investments, how will they respond to Canada increasing its presence in what has been coined as “America’s Backyard”? If the US sees Canada as a competitor, how does Canada aim to compete with this financial and diplomatic giant? Or, if the US sees an avenue for cooperation with Canada, how does Canada prevent itself from being relegated to junior partner?
- (2) Second, China has made substantial gains in the region. China’s current strategy is to provide the region with massive low-interest loans, and bankrolling large infrastructure projects. From what we gathered from our interviews; Canada must prepare to be in direct competition with China in the region. Canada will be unable to match China’s ability to invest in the region, so the question then becomes: What can Canada do to compete indirectly with China?



## CONCLUSION

This study is an attempt to analyze the complex positions of LAC countries with respect to Russia's invasion of Ukraine, and to identify key factors influencing those responses. Four key actors – Brazil, Colombia, Mexico, and Venezuela, – representative of the undecided, core allies, ambivalent, and Russia-aligned camps that arose following the invasions, were highlighted with a deeper dive into their contexts. Their case studies were used as templates to inform both region-wide and country-specific recommendations.

The recommendations of this report pinpoint how Canada can engage with the LAC region, specifically the countries of Brazil, Colombia, Mexico, and Venezuela, to help build support for and maintain opposition to Russia's invasion of Ukraine. The areas for potential cooperation discussed can contribute to future Canadian foreign policy decisions in the region.

It must be noted that the project was limited by the research team's time and financial constraints. For example, we were unable to visit Brazil, Colombia, Mexico, and Venezuela to hear local perspectives. Furthermore, our research focus deals with a large, expansive region made up of greatly diverse states that consist of diverse populations. Our findings aim to be high-level and exemplary, but not generalizable to all LAC contexts. This report can serve as a starting point to help understand how Canada can engage with LAC countries to build support for Ukraine, and we encourage more work to be done on this topic.

## APPENDIX I: POLICY CONTEXT

This section will provide key historical and political developments that help explain Latin America's position on the war. Focus will be placed in understand Latin American diplomatic traditions, which have been influenced by a history of colonialism and American imperialism, little experience with inter-state warfare, cycles of political instability culminating in the current wave of left-wing presidents, and the history of Russian engagement in the region since the Cold War. Collectively, these factors help explain Latin American diplomatic traditions and how they manifest themselves in the current geopolitical conflict.

### Diplomatic Traditions

Due to their shared experiences, as victims of Spanish/Portuguese colonialism and American interventionism, Latin American diplomacy has prioritized the principle of multilateralism and the principle of non-intervention. There are two main diplomatic traditions which inform their stance on the war. Both were forged as responses to histories of foreign interference in domestic affairs yet can lead to radically different foreign policies.

The first one, termed the 'republican' tradition, which emphasizes "civic virtue and citizens' duty towards the political community" and which favors collective responses to crises [88]. This tradition also values multilateralism and puts emphasis on international law and the principle of self-determination [89]. According to J. Luis Rodriguez, a Postdoctoral Fellow at Stanford, states such as Chile and Colombia fall, at this moment, more clearly under this tradition [90].

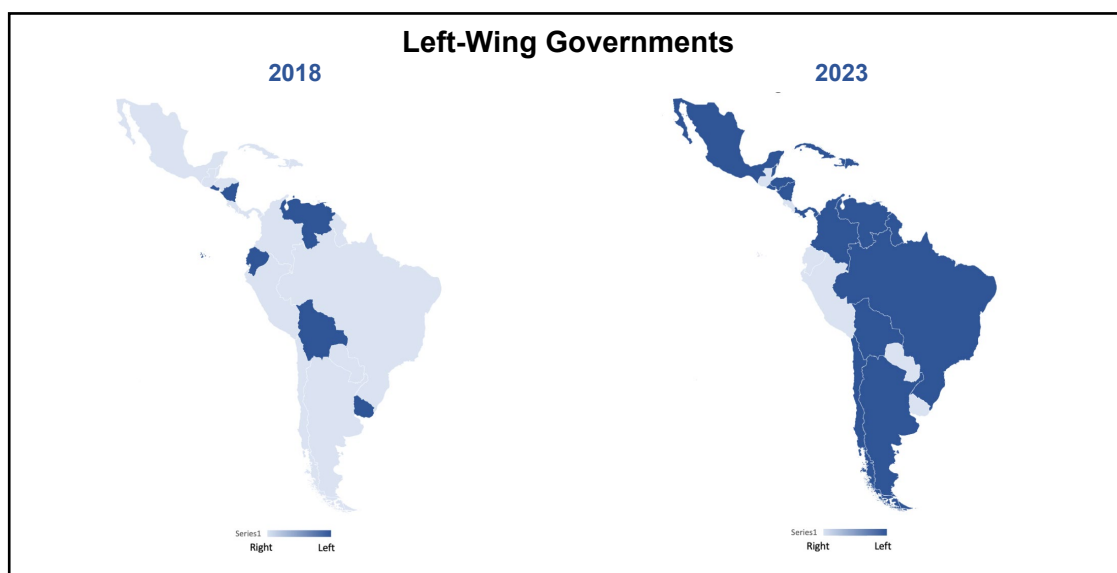
The second one, more aligned with the foreign affairs of Venezuela, Nicaragua, and Cuba, should be dubbed the 'pluralist' tradition according to J. Luis Rodriguez [91]. Latin American pluralism can be described as anti-Western, as it seeks to oppose Western/American imperialism internationally. It is more anti-American than pro-Russia. This tradition also values multilateralism and international law but will be used to oppose Western imperialism and to advocate for a plurality of values internationally and a plurality of political regimes, including authoritarian ones. Unsurprisingly, it is the Latin American authoritarian regimes who use this tradition to advocate for the inclusion of another authoritarian regime, Russia, in the international order [92]. Though it should be noted that in its early history, the pluralist approach grew as a defensive approach from American imperialism in the region [93].

Other countries embody a tension between these two traditions, namely Brazil and Mexico. At the time of the invasion, both countries were ruled by squarely populist leaders, like Mexico's President Manuel Lopez Obrador (AMLO), or one who uses populist rhetoric like Brazil's Bolsonaro. Their style of politics frequently put them at odds with their professional diplomats at the foreign Ministry. Brazil and Mexico exemplify a tension between the two traditions within the government: a conflict between the pluralist executive and the republican diplomats. While Brazil's UN representatives condemned Russia, Bolsonaro stated that the war would likely end just like Argentina's 1982 invasion of the Falklands, implying that Ukraine, the weaker country, would lose [94]. Similarly, Mexican diplomats have condemned the invasion, while AMLO first publicly stated that NATO's policy in Ukraine was 'immoral. [95]' Mexico's position was described by one analyst as 'schizophrenic' and argued that Mexican foreign policy has been taken away from the professional diplomats who ensure a consistent position, going as far as to say that Mexico's foreign minister now spends more time in damage control [96]. Brazil and Mexico, the region's most

influential countries, represent conflicting stances to the war; more on each country later in the report.

### Political Trends

The contemporary Latin American political scene is what some analysts have characterized as a “second pink tide” [97]: the election of leftist candidates to the presidency. Currently, the leftists were elected in Mexico, Honduras, Colombia, Chile, Argentina, Brazil, and Bolivia. This is reminiscent of the first pink tide that overtook the region in the early 2000s, characterized by figures such as Rafael Correa, Evo Morales, Cristina Fernandez de Kirchner, and Hugo Chavez. Differences abound between the pink tide of today and that of two decades ago, and many more between the many left-wing leaders of today, such as economic conditions and ideological priorities.



In the early 2000s, Latin America’s pink tide leaders ruled under favorable macroeconomic conditions which allowed them to spend heavily on social services. High commodity prices and low interest rates in the US allowed Latin American economies to grow at impressive rates. Today’s leaders have inherited catastrophic economies, recently devastated by the COVID-19 pandemic. As the Russia-Ukraine war shows, they are also caught in the middle between the geopolitical games of the US, Russia, and China. As the effects of climate change become more noticeable, today’s leaders cannot expect to enjoy the popularity of their predecessors earlier this century [98].

They also differ ideologically. Concerns over environmentalism, gender equality, and LGBTQ+ rights are more prominent. Some of the first pink tide’s leaders, such as Chavez and Morales were homophobic, for example [99]. Today’s leaders vary in their stances on progressive issues. Although most have made a stance in support for gender equality and LGBTQ+ rights, their attitudes on environmentalism show signs of disunity [100]. While Luis Ignacio Lula da Silva’s presidency strives to protect the Amazon and Colombia’s Petro has stopped issuing new oil and gas leases, in Mexico, AMLO commits the country towards a fossil fuel-dependent future [101]. In issues such as feminism, minority and LGBTQ+ rights, Canada has an opportunity to engage.

The intersection between internal political considerations and international relations in a region as large and varied as Latin America defies simple solutions and

categorization. Another axis of analysis was introduced by Anne Applebaum who argues of a new dividing line between democracy and autocracy [102]. From this perspective, autocratic states, whether they call themselves nationalist, theocratic, or communist, see in each other partners, thus creating a global network of autocratic allies. This is perhaps why populist leaders tend to be more friendly towards Putin: from Trump, to Orban, to Bolsonaro, and even AMLO and Morales.

Other Latin American leaders outside Russia's traditional circle of allies (Cuba, Nicaragua, Venezuela) have responded with equal amounts of skepticism at the motives of Ukraine and its Western allies and even glee at the mention of Russian successes. A mere week after the commencement of the Russian invasion, ex-president of Bolivia, Evo Morales, tweeted a call to action against the 'expansionist intervention' of 'NATO and USA. [103]' This contrasts with the Bolivian government's position which is one of mere neutrality. The Bolivian government voted not to condemn Russia at an OAS vote in March and have stated their position as 'a pacifist state' which condemns all acts of violence and embraces diplomacy as a solution to conflict [104].

Across the region, individuals and factions are sympathetic to Russia. The announcement that the German government approved the delivery of Leopard tanks from its own arsenal as well as its European neighbors was met with skepticism in Mexico. AMLO reacted with displeasure to the news of military aid to Ukraine, outright stating that the news media pressured the government to approve of the delivery despite the wishes of the German public. This was met with a tweet by the Russian embassy in Mexico City thanking the president for his statements [105]. Despite the neutral position that Mexican diplomats have tried to maintain, AMLO continues to make untactful statements such as this.

In Argentina, political divisions over the war took a dramatic turn when the current President, Fernandez, clashed with the Vice-President and ex-president, Fernandez de Kirchner. On Twitter, Kirchner wrote a lengthy thread about the conflict, avoiding words like "war," "invasion," and "Vladimir Putin." She compared the situation to the Falklands War [106]. On March 22nd, ahead of a General Assembly vote on humanitarian aid for the war, Kirchner's ally in the Foreign Ministry, Pablo Tettamanti, defied the Foreign Minister's decision and ordered the country's permanent delegation to the UN to vote for a resolution introduced by South Africa that didn't explicitly name Russia's invasion. Meanwhile Mexico and France introduced one that did mention Russia's aggression [107] Despite orders to vote for the Franco-Mexican proposal, Kirchner's faction instructed the delegation to vote for the South African resolution. The Argentinian Ambassador to the UN, Maria del Carmen Squeff, discovered the plan and confirmed with Minister Cafiero, leading to the decision being overturned [108].

Throughout Latin America, high-profile political leaders maintain positions which are sometimes explicitly pro-Russia but often serve as apologia by refusing to condemn Putin as the aggressor. It is important to remember the extent to which people in Latin America are sympathetic to the Russian cause. The pluralist tradition in Latin America came to be as an initiative to counteract American imperialism in the region. To many Latin American leaders, the war between Russia and Ukraine is framed through the lenses of a history of American intervention. According to Maria Jose Urzua Valverde and Gino Pauselli, at Princeton and Penn State respectively, statements of neutrality such as that of the Bolivia's at the UN are expressions of anti-Americanism [109]. In sum, ideology matters, and current leaders are skeptical of American motivations. Furthermore, they do not see the benefit that their countries would accrue from a stronger pro-Ukrainian stance.

It is important to stress that many Latin American states, indeed states across the Global South, the war between Russia and Ukraine is not a global conflagration or a major priority, it is a far-off European war which does not concern them. Many nations also sense hypocrisy in defending the rules-based international order against Russia when the nations most responsible for eroding it were from the West through acts such as the intervention in Libya or the 2003 invasion of Iraq [110]. Latin American states do not feel compelled to respect an international order which its founding member, the United States, does not respect either.

## **APPENDIX II: HISTORICAL CONTEXT**

### **19<sup>th</sup> Century US Interventions**

The Latin American region, stretching from the Rio Grande to the Tierra del Fuego includes 22 countries, many dating back to 1821 and the independence movements from Spain and Portugal. Despite the different histories and political circumstances, the 22 countries that make up Latin America share commonalities namely in terms of language, culture, and legacies of colonialism from Spain and Portugal, as well as a well-documented history of foreign interference on the part of the United States. It is this shared experience of American interference and support for anti-democratic elements which must be considered to understand Latin American foreign policy traditions. The history of American imperialism in Latin America dates to the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Events such as the establishment of the Munroe doctrine, the Mexican-American war of 1846, establishment of banana republics in Central America, and a myriad of Cold War interventions would come to define American policy towards the region.

In the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, newly established United States of America feared the reestablishment of European colonial control over the now independent states of Latin America. Tensions arose over the threat of Spanish and French interventions in the Americas to restore their power, as well as Russian expansion in the Pacific-Northwest, prompted American president James Munroe to establish a what is now known as the Monroe Doctrine in 1823 [111]. The doctrine outlined two main principles, firstly, that European powers were not to expand any further in the Americas and secondly, that European powers must refrain from threatening the integrity of the independent republics of Latin America [112]. In return, President Monroe stated that the US would not interfere in European affairs [113]. The Monroe doctrine was a crucial step in the establishment of the America's as the exclusive sphere of influence of the US.

Over the rest of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the United States would transform into a continental power as it spread westward towards the Pacific Ocean. American westward expansion was inspired by the principles of Manifest Destiny, the belief that expansion West was America's God-given right [114]. This brought the United States into conflict with Mexico in 1846, a war which would result in the loss of half of Mexico's territory. From the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century to the post-WWI era, American interventions in the region were driven by the interests of the private sector [115]. America's bloody history in the region is well documented and its legacy has left an imprint in Latin American politics and diplomatic traditions. Another crucial factor in understanding Latin American diplomacy has been the rarity of inter-state conflicts, particularly in the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

### **Inter-State Warfare in Latin America**

The role of war and the military in Latin America has had a profound influence on Latin American diplomacy. Inter-state warfare in the region is exceedingly rare and they are almost always of low intensity and duration. During times of extra-regional conflicts, such as WWII, Latin American states have remained at the margins.

Latin America's history of inter-state conflict differentiates it from other regions. Since 1825, the region has only seen ten instances of significant (in terms of troops mobilized and total casualties) inter-state warfare, with half in the 19<sup>th</sup> and half in the 20<sup>th</sup> century [116]. The largest conflagration of the 20<sup>th</sup> century was the Chaco war (1932-1935)

between Bolivia and Paraguay, described by some as the region's only 'real war' over the last century [117]. Particularly since WWII, instances of inter-state conflict have been short-lived. Since 1945, there have been 30 instances of bilateral conflicts but only a handful, namely Honduras and El Salvador's Football War (1969) and the Cenepa War (1995) between Peru and Ecuador being of significant intensity, although it should be noted the conflict lasted only a month [118]. Due to the rarity of inter-state conflicts in the region, Latin American militaries in the 20<sup>th</sup> century have been conceptualized as politicized armies as evidenced by their interventions in internal affairs [119]. Latin American militaries have been, historically, even less involved in extra-regional affairs such as WWII.

Before the 2022 Russian invasion of Ukraine, WWII was the last instance of large-scale inter-state war in Europe. Throughout the conflict, Latin America shied away from direct interventions in the conflict even though they all eventually declared war on the Axis powers. The degree of involvement varied by country with some, such as Brazil sending combat troops to Europe while others, like Argentina, did not declare war on Germany until March 27, 1945, one month before the war in Europe ended [120]. The region's largest contributions were in terms of raw resources and access to bases, airfields, and ports for the Allied powers [121]. Latin American cooperation in the war took place under different circumstances.

Relations between Latin America and the US were different in terms of American concessions, economic support, and disposition. In the years leading up to WWII, American President Franklin Roosevelt's policy towards Latin America was known as 'the Good Neighbor Policy,' characterized by a recognition that intervention in the region had become an impractical way of maintaining control. In 1933 and 1936, at inter-American conferences in Montevideo and Buenos Aires, respectively, the US recognized the legal equality of all nations and condemned the principle of intervention [122]. To win over the country, President Roosevelt ignored calls for intervention in Mexico after the government nationalized American oil companies. In Cuba, the US surrendered its right to intervention as enshrined in the Cuban constitution by the Platt Amendment. Furthermore, the US's history of intervention was mostly limited to the Caribbean, making it easier for South American countries to be won over to the Allied cause [123].

Latin America's perspective on diplomacy and global politics have to a large extent been influenced by their experiences as the United States' sphere of influence. A long history of intervention, the overthrow of democratic governments, and support for military regimes have informed the region's diplomatic traditions. These diplomatic traditions are an important factor in understanding the region's position on the Russia-Ukraine war.

## APPENDIX III: RUSSIAN ENGAGEMENT IN LATIN AMERICA

A running trend in this investigation, especially when interviewing experts, has been the tensions between ideology and expediency. Russian engagement with the region has been longstanding and most center on its three traditional allies: Cuba, Nicaragua, and Venezuela. Russia provides diplomatic cover and support to its allies in the LAC region by use of its UNSC veto and through the sales of armaments. These three traditional allies have been the most outwardly supportive of the war in favor of Russia. Russia’s engagement in the region is not limited to its three traditional allies, and can include vaccine diplomacy, and propaganda outlets. Russian economic investment and cooperation in the region is negligible for most countries yet the fertilizer trade with Brazil is a significant factor. No one factor can explain why a given country has chosen their given position on the war, but it does influence it.

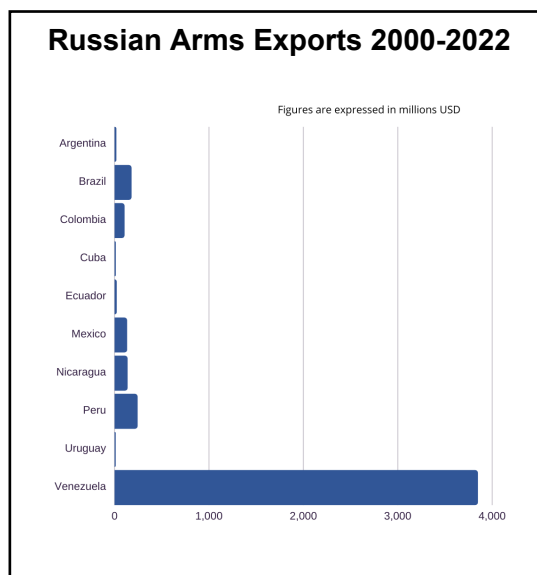
### Arms Sales

Russia’s traditional allies all maintain a revolutionary spirit and are particularly antagonistic towards the United States. They are also authoritarian states, maintain their security forces. Arms imports are particularly prominent with Venezuela which spent \$9 billion between 2009 – 2019 in Russian weapons and more than \$15 billion since 2002 [124]. These vary from small arms to complex weapon systems [125]. Russian weapons in Venezuela’s arsenal include rifles, fighter jets, bombers, missiles, air-defense-systems, tanks, and helicopters [126]. Furthermore, Russian military assets such as mercenaries and nuclear-capable bombers have been dispatched to Venezuela [127].

Nicaragua is one of the few Latin American countries which cooperate at a high-level with Russia in terms of military equipment and training. Starting in 2008, the Nicaraguan military was modernized with new Russian equipment such as T-72B tanks. Yet, Nicaraguan economic resources are scarce, thus limiting cooperation to training. In 2013, a memorandum of international security cooperation was signed between the two countries. Training facilities are operational in Nicaragua, one for ground troops and one for helicopter pilots [128].

Most Latin American countries, such as Argentina, Peru, Brazil, Mexico, and even Colombia have purchased Russian equipment at one point or another over the last two decades. Some military contracts have also been for complex weapon systems as well, with Colombia purchasing a batch of armored personnel carriers. Yet, Russian military cooperation is most pronounced with its traditional allies.

Most arms purchases in the region took place between 2000 – 2014, when commodity prices were high, and economies grew. Despite Russian weapon sales, the largest exporter remains the United States, with a mere 4.6% of all Russian arms exports going to the LAC region [129]. What is more, even

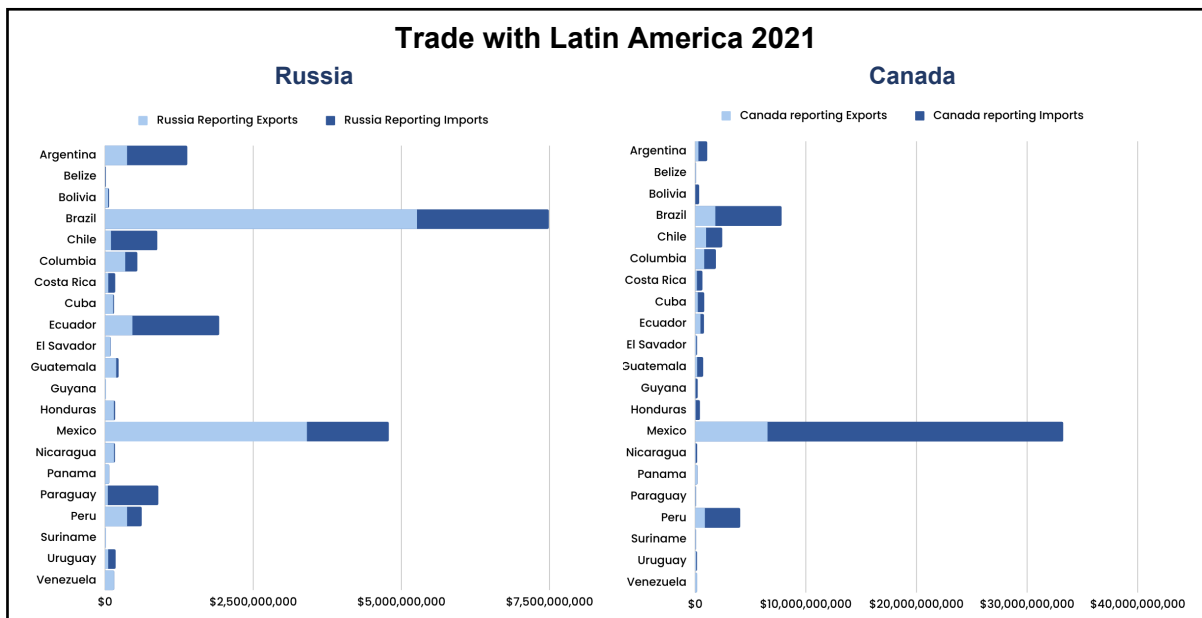




Russia’s biggest costumer, Venezuela, has been unable to fulfill payments due to the crumbling economy and American sanctions; between 2014-2020 Russia did not deliver new material as a result [130]. With a new wave of leftist leaders in the region then purchases of Russian weapons might increase but stagnant economies and the ongoing war in Ukraine, it might mean that in any case, Latin America does not have the money and Russia does not have the weapons for any significant deals.

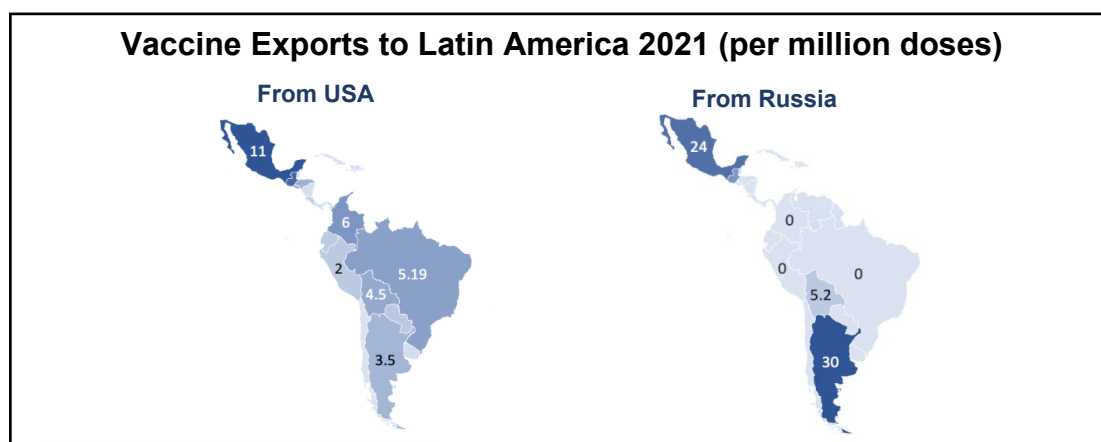
### Trade and Investment

Between 2006-2016, trade between Russia and Latin America increased by 50% but even with this spike, total trade amounts to a mere \$12 billion, with Brazil and Mexico as the biggest trade partners. In 2021, Russian energy firm, Lukoil, invested \$435 million (50% stakes) in a Mexican oil and natural gas field which can expect to produce more than 100,000 barrels daily [131]. In Bolivia, a nuclear energy research facility is being built in cooperation with the Russian firm Rosatom [132]. Russia and Argentina signed several pacts, yet none have led to any projects save for the Bolivian research facility [133]. The only substantial leverage in terms of trade is Russia’s fertilizer exports to Brazil, at 44% which is a significant factor in explaining Brazil’s position (more on this later in the report). Economic ties between Russia and Latin American countries are negligible, accounting for only 0.6% of Latin American trade [134]. Any economic sanctions on Russia from the region would serve only as virtue signals but would unlikely have any effect on the Russian war effort. On critical products like fertilizers, it is likely to be more damaging to Latin American economies.



## Vaccine Diplomacy

In August of 2020, Russia announced the launch of their vaccine against COVID-19, Sputnik 5. The Russian government proceeded to embark in a project of vaccine diplomacy with countries across the world, including in Latin America. Sputnik V received emergency authorization in most Latin American countries, with Costa Rica, Colombia, and Uruguay as the holdouts [135]. In 2020 and 2021, many Latin American countries negotiated with Moscow amid accusations that Western countries were hoarding all vaccines [136]. In Argentina, Bolivia, Venezuela, Paraguay, and Nicaragua, Sputnik V was the first vaccine to be injected when vaccination campaigns began [137]. By the end of December 2021, Latin America became one of if not the most highly vaccinated region in the world [138]. In most countries of the region, Sputnik V makes-up a tiny fraction of total vaccinations with the highest proportion in Peru where 40% of total vaccines were of Russian origin [139]. Despite this, the biggest impact of Sputnik V was twofold: Russia was willing very early on to give them away while Western countries set-up export controls on their vaccines and the associated propaganda campaign. Russian vaccine diplomacy likely earned it some goodwill in the region but is unlikely to contribute significantly to influencing the region's diplomacy.



## Propaganda

One of Russia's most effecting methods of exerting pressure in the region is through its state-owned media outlets. Russia has offered increasingly sophisticated services in the region, even in Spanish. The Federal Agency for the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), Compatriots Living Abroad and International Humanitarian Cooperation (*Rosstrudnichestvo*), which answers to the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, plays a central role in portraying a positive and consistent image of Russia abroad, including in Latin America. Partners of *Rosstrudnichestvo* include the influential outlets such as *Russia Today* and *Sputnik* [140].

*RT Espanol* and *Sputnik Mundo*, the Spanish language versions of *Russia Today* and *Sputnik*, are two of the Kremlin's most influential media outlets, which offer exclusively pro-Russian and anti-American perspectives [141]. *Rosstrudnichestvo* has nine offices in Latin America and its media reach is great that it comparable to American propaganda in the region [142]. Again, the extent to which propaganda efforts significantly impact diplomacy is impossible to measure but it is important to note that regional leaders, at least democratically elected leaders, must appeal to their audience when devising foreign policy. Anti-Americanism is not only relegated to leaders but also to their constituents.

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