



THE INTERNATIONAL ORDER AND LATIN AMERICA

The international system is weakened, and humanity faces daunting challenges such as climate change and wars in several regions, to which the United Nations is incapable of responding. In 2025, the new President of the United States will try to redesign the international order based on a scheme of hard power, also with impacts on Latin America.

Henry Kissinger, a faithful representative of the realist theory of the international system, argued that since the Congress of Vienna in 1815, the periods of world order have become shorter and shorter. Since the end of the Great War (1914-1918) Europe saw the flourishing of idealism and utopian dreams of peace developed by President Woodrow Wilson, Nobel Peace Prize winner in 1919, who promoted the creation of the League of Nations in 1920, which would allow European countries to move towards permanent or perpetual peace, like the old dream of the philosopher Immanuel Kant. However, the United States could not join because the Senate did not approve it. It took only twenty-one years after the end of the Great War for the Second World War to break out, which at its end gave rise to the current international order born at the San Francisco conference in 1945 and which established the United Nations under the preamble "We the peoples determined to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war..." after the horror of the two world conflicts. In 2025, the United Nations will be eighty years old since its creation and it is very difficult to argue that it has fulfilled the mandate of its founding charter. Federico Mayor Zaragoza, former director general of UNESCO and tireless fighter for peace and human dignity, recently deceased, argued that, until a few decades ago, "We the peoples did not exist and were fearful, obedient, silent and silenced". Today, although the peoples can speak, their voice is not sufficiently heard, despite the numerous initiatives that the United Nations has undertaken that are beneficial to humanity in the economic, cultural and human rights spheres.

The international system in the 21st century

Today, the international order is seriously weakened. Its structure dominated by

five countries entrenched in the Security Council has been overtaken by the violent reality of the 21st century.

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In the war that began in February 2022 with the Russian invasion of Ukraine, the official numbers of military and civilian dead and wounded are not yet known, but it is estimated that well over a couple of hundred thousand and more than six million have fled the country. In the face of the mega-attack by the Hamas terrorist group in Israel, which left 1200 dead and 250 people kidnapped in 2024, the government has responded with a war of

destruction and annihilation in the Gaza Strip where more than 45,000 people have been massacred, mostly defenceless women and children. In the Middle East, the sovereignty of the states created by the British and the French after the disappearance of the Turkish Empire in 1918 no longer exists. Syria, Lebanon and Yemen are regularly bombed by the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) forces, violating their airspace. In the end of 2024, there is an invasion of Israeli troops in the southern part of Lebanon and the future of Syria is uncertain after the fall and flight of Bashar al-Assad's regime.

In the civil war in Sudan, which has already caused thousands of deaths, famine is claiming the lives of children, women and elderly people left to fend for themselves. In the Tigray region of Ethiopia, the number of victims exceeded 100,000 people in 2022, and despite the peace agreements signed a year later, the fighting continues. South of the

THE PREAMBLE OF THE UN CHARTER, 1948

"WE THE PEOPLES OF THE UNITED NATIONS DETERMINED

to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war, which twice in our lifetime has brought untold sorrow to mankind, and

to reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person, in the equal rights of men and women and of nations large and small, and

to establish conditions under which justice and respect for the obligations arising from treaties and other sources of international law can be maintained, and

to promote social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom,

AND FOR THESE ENDS

to practice tolerance and live together in peace with one another as good neighbours, and

to unite our strength to maintain international peace and security, and

to ensure, by the acceptance of principles and the institution of methods, that armed force shall not be used, save in the common interest, and

to employ international machinery for the promotion of the economic and social advancement of all peoples,

HAVE RESOLVED TO COMBINE OUR EFFORTS TO ACCOMPLISH THESE AIMS."

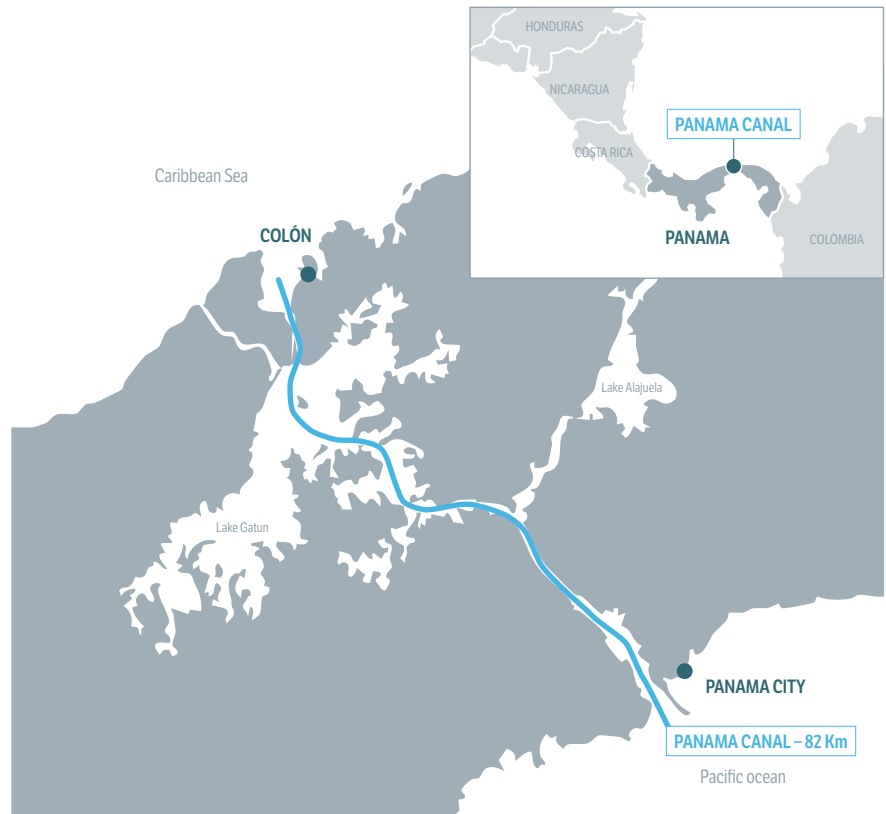
Sahara desert, in the Sahel countries, wars and terrorism do not cease, causing the emigration of millions of human beings seeking to reach Europe. In Asia, the situation in Myanmar since 1948 has been one of political and ethnic violence coupled with prolonged military dictatorships, abysmal income inequality and serious human rights violations. As a result, some 400,000 members of the Rohingya minority have left their homes, many of them moving to Bangladesh.

Threats to the planet and peace

History shows us, at least until now, that only major wars or world wars have put an end to a certain international order and given rise to a new one imposed by the victorious powers. The current question, faced with a weakened international system, is whether the United Nations will resist, whether its functioning will be modified or whether it will succumb to the current challenges. Climate change, in real terms, continues to be ignored as effective mitigation measures are not applied and the goals set are unattainable, despite the fact that it is the main threat to humanity as a whole. Added to this is the danger of the use of nuclear weapons in local conflicts in Europe or the Middle East, together with the rearmament of European powers such as Germany and France, as well as NATO. According to the 2023 figures provided by SIPRI (Stockholm International Peace Research Institute), the world's top 100 arms producing companies increased their sales by 4.2% in one year, reaching the figure of \$632 billion USD. The year 2025 will have at the head of the world's leading economic, technological and military power, President Donald Trump, whose actions during his first term in office we have already seen. Among the messages he has sent to different regions, the one addressed to NATO allies asking for an increase in defence spending from 2% to 5% of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP), which translates into billions of dollars in U.S. arms purchases, stands out. He has also indicated that he will put an immediate end to the war between Russia and Ukraine. In relation to the Kingdom of Denmark, he has reiterated his interest in buying Greenland due to its significance for the United States' geopolitical interests. The People's Re-

FIGURE 1. THE PANAMA CANAL, ABOUT 34 SHIPS CROSS DAILY

Source: Google



In the event of a conflict or closure of the Panama Canal, the Strait of Magellan, under Chilean sovereignty, is the alternative route for the transit of cargo and military vessels between the two oceans.

public of China, a country considered Washington's main strategic rival, has also been warned of tariff hikes since the first day of its mandate, which could unleash a global trade war of unsuspected dimensions. To his neighbours to the north - Canada - he has reiterated his desire to become the 51st state of the Union and has threatened them that they must stop immigration and the passage of fentanyl into the United States or suffer retaliatory tariffs of 25%. The same goes for his Mexican neighbours to the south, to whom he has let them know that deportations of illegal immigrants will begin on the first day of his new administration and has also threatened them with higher tariffs.

The surprises for Latin America have continued with Trump recently indicating that the Panama Canal (Figure 1), through which 5% of the world's maritime transport transits, with around 14,000 ships per year, could return to U.S. hands due to the excessive charges to U.S. users and the growing geopolitical threat he perceives from China, the country that controls two of the five Panamanian ports: Balboa at the mouth of the Pacific Ocean, and Cristobal in the part corresponding to the Atlantic. The main users of the canal are the United States, with more than two thirds of the cargo transported, followed by China, then Mexico, Chile and Japan. China, with the so-called "Maritime Silk Road", controls or has participation in close to 100 ports in all the world's seas. In the event of a conflict or closure of the Panama Canal, the Strait of Magellan, under Chilean sovereignty, is the alternative route for the transit of cargo and military vessels between the two oceans (Figure 2). The Strait of Magellan was crossed in 2023 by just under two thousand ships. Trump's statement is a clear warning to the Panamanian government that the treaty signed in 1977 between Presidents Carter and Torrijos, which allowed the

handover of the canal in 1999, might not be respected, despite the fact that the end of the colonial enclave and its handover to the Panamanians is considered one of the happiest days in their history. The governments of Latin America will have to pronounce themselves on the matter.

The Trump administration

Latin America and the Caribbean is a region of peace, free of nuclear weapons and where social problems resulting from inequality, low economic growth, drugs and crime are the main problems faced by its countries. As he did in his first administration, Donald Trump will seek to align the region with his interests and hinder a greater Chinese presence in areas considered strategic. To this end, he will not hesitate to apply the "carrot and stick" approach, which we will see with governments unconditional to Washington, such as Argentina and El Salvador or, on the contrary, with Cuba, Nicaragua and Venezuela, especially - where in the latter country the electoral fraud will materialise on January 10, 2025, when Nicolás Maduro starts a new presidential term. Will the United States continue to buy oil from Venezuela as it has done so far? The appointments of Senator Marcos Rubio as U.S. Secretary of State and of Mauricio Claver-Carone, in charge of Latin America, both of Cuban origin, ensure ideological hardening in a region that has unsuccessfully sought to distance itself from Washington's shadow.

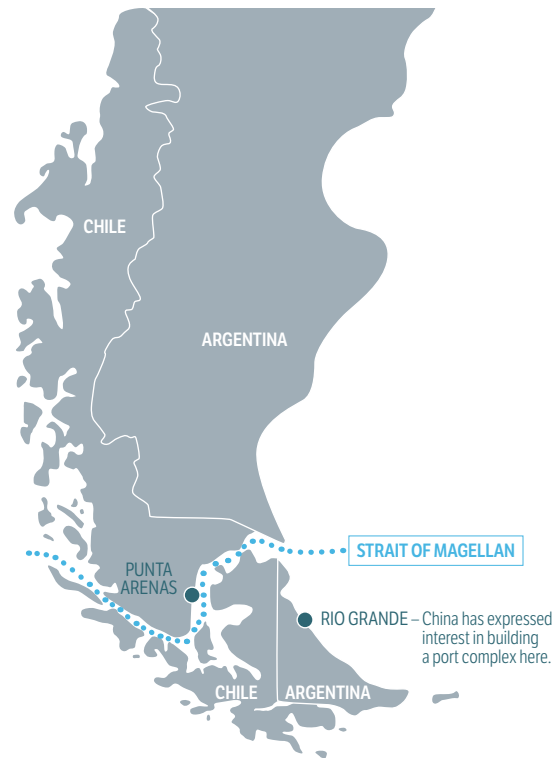
In the current circumstances, mainly due to the inability of its rulers to have a common voice, Latin America is of an absolute irrelevance when it comes to political decisions in the global scenario. The year 2025 coincides, moreover, with new electoral cycles with presidential elections in Ecuador, Bolivia, Chile and Honduras, while in the following year, 2026, elections will take place in Peru, Colombia, Brazil and Costa Rica. All of this will be under the watchful eye of the conservative hawks in Washington, so uncertain times are ahead for Latin Americans.

Towards a new order?

Today, every international problem has a global effect due to the interdependence of economies and the liberalisation of financial flows generated in recent decades. Globalisation is a phe-

FIGURE 2. THE STRAIT OF MAGELLAN, JOINS THE PACIFIC AND ATLANTIC OCEANS

Source: Pierucci, Victoria (2024). La relevancia estratégica de Punta Arenas y la creciente importancia internacional desde la perspectiva argentina, Escenario Mundial, 24.04.2024.



nomenon that can hardly be stopped. Artificial intelligence, networks and communications are weapons of global use, whose effects are still difficult to measure, including the impact they will have on the international system.

If the trend of rising temperatures, forest fires, floods, melting of the poles and other climatic catastrophes that threaten the existence of the planet as we know it continue, it will be the responsibility of the great powers to enforce the recommendations of the scientific community to truly mitigate the effects. It seems clear that the new administration initiated by President Donald Trump will seek to modify the current order using the immense economic, technological and military power of the United States. From January 20, 2025, onwards we will see how far he will be able to impose his vision and those of his advisors in relation to the current ongoing violent conflicts. It seems that they intend to redesign the international order based on a scheme of hard power where the sovereignty of the states and perhaps even international law itself will have to adapt to the logic of a sort of U.S. imperial power, shared for the time being with others such as China and Russia. ●

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