

Grace Jaramillo, compiladora

# Los nuevos enfoques de la integración: más allá del nuevo regionalismo



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Avenida Colón y Juan León Mera  
Quito-Ecuador  
Telf.: (593-2) 2903 763  
www.ministeriodecultura.gov.ec

ISBN:

Cuidado de la edición: Paulina Torres  
Diseño de portada e interiores: Antonio Mena  
Imprenta:  
Quito, Ecuador, 2008  
1ª. edición: julio, 2008

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# De Viena a Lima: evaluación de las relaciones Unión Europea-América Latina

Roberto Domínguez\*

## Abstract

While the North-Transatlantic community is deeply intertwined, the relationship between the European Union (EU) and Latin America, a transatlantic association as well, is trying to find formulas to revitalize their partnership. Today, the EU is the leading donor of aid in Latin America, its largest foreign investor and the second most important trade partner in the region. Nevertheless, the Forth EU-Latin America/Caribbean Summit held in Vienna in May 2006 was pervaded by an unenthusiastic atmosphere about boosting the dynamism in the bi-regional relationship. On the road to Peru 2008, site of the fifth bi-regional summit, the main target of both partners is the enhancement of the network of association and free trade agreements and strengthening the existing ones with Mexico and Chile. Will the EU and Latin America be able to reach such an objective? If that is the case, what can we expect from those association agreements?

Key words: European Union, Latin America, integration, transatlantic relations, economic integration

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## Introduction

While the North-Transatlantic community is deeply intertwined, the relationship between the European Union (EU) and Latin America, a transatlantic association as well, is trying to find formulas to revitalize their partnership. Today, the EU is the leading donor of aid in Latin America, its largest foreign investor and the second most important trade partner in the region. Nevertheless, the Forth EU-Latin America/Caribbean Summit held in Vienna in May 2006 was pervaded by an unenthusiastic atmosphere about boosting the dynamism in the bi-regional relationship. On the road to Peru 2008, site of the fifth bi-regional summit, the main target of both partners is the enhancement of the network of association and free trade agreements and strengthening the existing ones with Mexico and Chile. Will the EU and Latin America be able to reach such an objective? If that is the case, what can we expect from those association agreements?

## Current challenges

The European Union has undergone profound transformations since the end of the Cold War guided by the paradox of simultaneous deepening and widening the integration process. The combination of both processes has forced the EU to revisit its priorities; the result of it is that enlargement and the close neighborhood policies are at the top of the agenda while Latin America is one of the lowest in the ranking.

On the other hand, Latin America has gone from democratic enthusiasm to institutional skepticism. In the mid-1980s, only three countries in the region had democratically elected leaders; today, only Cuba remains reluctant to adopt the basic rules of any electoral democracy. However, even though Latin America has largely adopted democratic practices such as elected civilian governments, peaceful transitions of power and basic civil liberties, scholars and political analysts, even the most conservative ones, agree on the fact that corruption, weak institutions and economic inequality, coupled with the inability of regional gov-

ernments to provide basic services, are undermining the democratic consolidation in the region.

The immediate effect of the growing frustration with Washington-backed economic prescriptions and disillusion with the failure to deliver prosperity is the left turn in Latin America. From different perspectives, scholars concur with the assessment that there are at least two lefts in the region. The first is open-minded and modern; this wing is headed by Lula da Silva in Brazil and Bachelet in Chile. The second is close-minded and stridently populist; this is the case of Chavez in Venezuela. A third group is composed of recently elected leaders who are defining to lean to the modern or the strident populism; these are the cases of Ortega in Nicaragua and Morales in Bolivia. In light of these transformations, what are the effects on the relations with the European Union?

## The distant dialogue

The region to region dialogue between the European Union and Latin America was institutionalized in 1999 when the first bi-regional summit took place in Rio de Janeiro (Roy and Domínguez, 2005). The second summit was held in Madrid in 2002 and the third one in Guadalajara in 2004. Despite the limitations of the bi-regional dialogue, particularly the 2004 summit brought about a sense of confidence in light of the recognition of social cohesion as the top priority in the summit agenda. Nonetheless, regional transformations in Europe and Latin America were taking place and by 2006 the atmosphere in both regions was quite different: the EU was exhausted of the 2004 enlargement process and under a period of reflection after the difficulties to ratify the Constitutional Treaty, while elections in several countries in Latin America made evident the rising skepticism of free markets.

In May 2006, the fourth EU-Latin America was held in Vienna. The meeting had few positive outcomes. First, the European Commission published new communications to the Council on Latin America and the Caribbean replacing those of ten years ago. Second, the European Parliament strengthened its role and delivered its opinion in several doc-

uments about the bi-regional relationship. Third, in the context of the EU financial perspectives up to the year 2013, the EU was able to sketch concrete commitments to buttress social cohesion policies in Latin America. Fourth, for the first time, a business summit took place in parallel with the political meeting (Schussel, 2006). However, the general assessment of the achievements of the summits, including the most recent one, seems to be unenthusiastic even in the voice of one of its protagonist: “But we must also ask ourselves in a mood of self-examination whether we have really done everything that we might have undertaken. And there, the answer can only be a self-critical no. And so here in Vienna, we cannot have a summit of self-satisfied, empty rhetoric; this must be a working meeting where we improve our own work.”(Schussel, 2006).

Along these lines, and unlike the Guadalajara summit, signs of disagreement and irreconcilable differences were apparent during the Vienna summit and overshadowed the meager agreements. As it was said above, the political environment in Latin America eroded European enthusiasm to deepen cooperation in the context of the strategic alliance due to the emergence of populist governments and policies in the region (Sberro, 2006). Particularly, the Venezuelan withdrawal from the Andean Community of Nations shattered one of the historical objectives of the EU in the continent: the development of integration processes in Latin America. On the other hand, in the case of Bolivia, President Evo Morales nationalized the gas sector, which affected Spanish investments in that country, while the Venezuelan government announced plans for a new tax on foreign oil firms.

In response to this challenge, the President of the European Commission, José Manuel Barroso, argued that European businesses have found some obstacles in Latin America: lack of predictability of the economic setting, market access difficulties (trade and on-trade barriers), political instability, excessive red tape, customs problems, insufficient regional infrastructures, corruption and so forth. However, he straightforwardly emphasized that “On top of these obstacles, there is a worrisome new one: the tendency to understand European investment under a negative light.... Make no mistake, whether this political attitude prospers,

European businesses will not be harmed as a consequence because there are abundant investment opportunities in other regions, and the victims will be poor people in Latin America... In order to facilitate investment and trade in Latin America and the Caribbean, we need to guarantee predictability and safety for investments...” (Barroso, 2006)

Between Vienna and Peru, the European Commission has recommended following several strategies depending on the specific particularities of each one of the sub-regions in Latin America. In the long run, however, reaching association agreements is the most important objective for both the EU and the sub-region in Latin America (Central America, Caribbean, Mercosur and Andean Community of Nations).

### Two lane traffic negotiations: explaining association agreements

How should one explain the relationship between two parties whose a) priorities, b) interest, and c) political and economic developments are different? The rhetoric of official statements emphasizes the “common” heritage of the European presence in Latin America. However, an evaluation of the European and Latin American relationship by almost any political and economic standard reflects a moderate impact of European strategies in Latin America, while the Latin American leverage in Europe is quite marginal. In other words, it would seem that as in any negotiation there is a two-way street, but the traffic is heavier in one lane than in the other.

In the case of the EU’s relations towards United States, for instance, common history, legacies and above all shared challenges (security, migration, and economic growth) provide a firm and solid ground for applying theoretical assumptions such as rationalism or constructivism. However, when one shifts the attention to Latin America, one can see that the driving forces of interests and/or identities diminish and the bilateral agenda becomes less complex due to the lack of intense and deep structural links.

In this regard, the asymmetry of economic and political power and the different goals in the negotiations of the EU-LAT agenda would lead us to approach the association agreements under the premises of absolute instead of relative gains, which is a key concept in the debate between

realist (of any kind) and (any variant of) liberal scholars in International Relations. While the former emphasize that policy-makers will primarily be concerned with *relative gains*; the latter argues that *absolute gains* should be the priority of any cooperation, which means that the parties will be more focused on what they can get from any negotiation, regardless of the gains and power of the other party. This framework can be helpful and useful in explaining the agreements between two parties with different political and economic leverages (Baylis, and Smith, 2005: 343).

EU's Main Trade Partners in Latin American Partners					
Imports		Exports		Major Trade Partners	
Country	100% <sup>1</sup>	Country	100% <sup>2</sup>	Country	100% <sup>3</sup>
1. USA	13.9%	1. USA	23.7%	1. USA	18.0%
2. China	13.5%	2. Switzerland	7.7%	2. China	9.4%
3. Russia	9.1%	3. Russia	5.3%	3. Russia	7.3%
7. LAT.	5.5%	4. LAT.	5.1%	5. LAT.	5.3%
8. Mercosur	2.6%	15. Mercosur	1.9%	9. Mercosur	2.3%
10. Brazil	2.0%	17. México	1.6%	11. Brazil	1.8%
29. Andean Comm.	0.9%	18. Brazil	1.5%	22. Mexico	1.2%
30. Mexico	0.8%	29. Caribbean	0.8%	30. Caribbean	0.7%
32. Chile	0.7%	35. Andean Comm.	0.7%	35. Andean Comm.	0.8%
35. Caribbean	0.6%	39. Chile	0.4%	38. Chile	0.5%
38. Argentina	0.5%	38. Argentina	0.3%	40. Argentina	0.3%
46. Venezuela	0.3%	51. Venezuela		49. Venezuela	

1. 1174633 Mio €=100%  
2. 1061013Mio €=100%  
3. 2 235 645 Mio€=100%  
Source: Own Elaboration based upon EUROSTAT, DG Trade/Statistics, May 18, 2006.

### Association agreements: Why Mexico and Chile first?

On a number of criteria ranging from the size of their economies to the nature of their political evolution, there are outstanding differences between Mexico and Chile. Nonetheless, both countries have undergone

a simultaneous and gradual process of a erosion of political authoritarianism, and implementation of free market policies since the mid-1980s. Mexico has gone through a process of steady electoral democratization and has become one of the most open economies in Latin America since late 1980s. Chile, on the other hand, was welcomed to the family of democratic nations in the early 1990s and has made a significant progress in the normalization of the relationship between the civil and political society, on the one side, and the military class, on the other. In such processes, both countries implemented first a “perestroika” and later on in the 1990s “glasnost.”

Mexico was the first and strongest candidate to launch a new generation of EU Association Agreements with Latin American countries. On the Mexican side, the following objectives were crucial in the negotiations: to deepen the process of economic modernization and trade liberalization, and to improve the conditions for Mexican exporters’ access to the European market. On the European side, three reasons seem quite relevant: NAFTA as a catalyst for negotiations; ending the discrimination in the Mexican market against European investors and exporters as a result of NAFTA, and the prospects of a free trade area in the Americas as proposed in the 1994 Summit of the Americas (Zabludovsky and Lora, 2005).

In the case of Chile, this South American country managed to reinsert itself into the international community after years of relative isolation during the military regime and actually became a very active actor in a number of international fora (European Commission, 2006). Particularly in the economic realm, “Chile has distinguished itself in Latin America by its good economic performance (high growth rates, low inflation and public sector surplus). After a peaceful transition, Chile became the natural second candidate for an association agreement.

The relevance of the Association Agreements between the European Union and Mexico (2000) and the EU and Chile (2005) is based on the assumption that both agreements are significant for the EU-Latin American relationship due to two chief reasons: a) they are the first comprehensive –political, economic, and cooperation– agreements with countries in the region, and b) they set a precedent for future agreements with other countries or group of countries in the region. Certainly, the

association agreements are not a solution for Latin America's problems. Instead, they complement the political and economic reforms in Mexico and Chile and their overall impact is moderate.

### **Mexico and the Association Agreement**

Bilateral relations between the EU and Mexico are governed by the Economic, Political and Co-operation Agreement (Global Agreement), which was signed in Brussels on 8 December 1997 and entered into force in October 2000. The Free Trade Agreement (FTA), part of the Global Agreement, covers a broad spectrum of economic aspects and included a full liberalization of industrial products; substantial liberalization for agricultural and fisheries products; and, as regards rules of origin, a satisfactory balance between the EU's policy of harmonization and market access considerations. The FTA has also provided EU operators with access to the Mexican procurement and services markets under equivalent conditions to the ones offered to NAFTA partners. In the 5 years following the entry into force of the FTA, bilateral trade between the EU and Mexico grew by nearly 40 percent. While European exports to Mexico have risen by 30 percent, Mexican sales in Europe have grown by 19 percent. Thus, the association agreement certainly has brought new opportunities for both parties. Nevertheless, the magnitude of such opportunities is different for each party. In the Mexican case, the association agreement, and particularly the section on trade, has complemented the extensive network of free trade agreements that Mexico has concluded in the past 15 years.

As to the political sphere of the agreement, the EU has contributed to strengthening the consolidation of Mexican democracy. The deeply atavistic and orthodox views about the meaning of sovereignty in Mexico postponed any major negotiation of an association agreement in the early 1990s because of the "implications" of the Democracy Clause to Mexican sovereignty. Once such clause was accepted by the Zedillo administration, the EU supported the decision of the Mexican government to prohibit death penalty or the legitimacy of the contested electoral process in July 2006. Likewise, Mexico was one of three priority countries in Latin

America for the 2002-2004 European Initiative on Democracy and Human Rights. By the same token, the Association agreement facilitated the cooperation in a range of important areas such as tropical forests, NGOs, ECIP (European Community Investment Partners), ECHO (humanitarian aid), economic co-operation, demographic policies, and refugees and displaced persons.

One last element to be considered in the relationship between the EU and Mexico is the way the Joint Committee and other mechanisms of dialogue have helped to accelerate the cooperation between both parties. For instance, in the area of cooperation, both parties have intensified their efforts to reach a Horizontal Civil Aviation Agreement as well as to establish a form of cooperation in the context of the European Program for Global Navigation Services (Galileo). Likewise, both parties have discussed alternative options for assuring a follow up of the Dialogue with the Civil Society.

### **The Association Agreement EU-Chile**

In the context of the relations with Europe, Chile followed the steps of Mexico in pursuing an Association Agreement with the EU. Unlike the Mexican case, the relationship between Chile and the EU is a more recent one. The Community Cooperation Framework Agreement signed in 1990 was the main instrument that permitted the initiation of government level contacts after the re-establishment of democracy in 1990. This agreement was replaced by the Cooperation Framework Agreement signed in 1996, which has as a final aim the establishment of a political and economic association between Chile and the European Community and its member states (European Commission, 2002:6-7). Indeed, the EU and Chile began these negotiations in April 2000 and the Association Agreement was signed on 18 November 2002.

The Association Agreement has been in force since 1 March 2005 and covers the main aspects of EU-Chile relations, namely, political and trade relations and co-operation. Certainly, while the elimination of customs duties is clearly a major step forward, in view of the Commission the



agreements on services, market access and investment are the areas where the most important liberalization has been made (Planistat Luxemburg, 2002).

As a result of the bilateral cooperation, Chile has participated in Operation ALTHEA. In this regard, the Chilean President, Michelle Bachelet, is quite sensitive to the role of military forces in this type of operations because during her tenure as minister of defense in 2002, Bachelet modernized the armed forces and, most importantly, shifted them further away from the repressive role they played under Pinochet's regime toward an international peacekeeping one (Sanchez, 2006).

Likewise, a recent agreement is in order to facilitate transportation cooperation between the two parties: the EU-Chile Horizontal Agreement in the field of air transport was reached and there is a firm intention to move forward with Chile's request for liberalization of services in this area.

Along the same lines of establishing bilateral institutions of cooperation, the agreement sets in motion the Association Committee on Technical level, the Association Parliamentary Committee (European Parliament and National Congress of Chile), and the Joint Consultative Committee (channeling dialogue between the Social and Economic Committee of the EU and its the Chilean counterparts) (Patten, 2003). Both of these institutions are an innovation in comparison to the EU-Mexico Agreement.

With regard to the trade area, it is still too early to assess the economic effects of the agreement on the Chilean economy. However, the mere expectations of the association agreement since the end of the 1990s and the economic and political stability promoted confidence in investing and trading with that country. Unlike Mexico, Chile has a high degree of dependence on primary products that makes it vulnerable to external market fluctuations. This is the main challenge for Chile. Thus, traditional activities still have an important share in the country's GDP and export structure: during the first semester of 2003, mining (predominantly copper) still represented 46 percent of total exports, while agriculture, farming, forestry and fishing products combined represented 13.02 percent. In such a context, trade with the EU represents less than one-fourth of the overall Chilean external trade: 25 percent of its exports go to the EU

and 19 percent of its imports come from the EU (Patten, 2003).

It is expected, nonetheless, that the specific areas covered by the trade chapter of the agreement will contribute to the diversification of the Chilean economy. In this regard, the agreement establishes a free trade area covering the progressive and reciprocal liberalization of trade in goods over a maximum transitional period of 10 years. It also establishes a free trade area in services and provides for the liberalization of investment and of current payments and capital movements. Likewise, it includes rules to facilitate trade in wines and spirits, animals and animal products, plants, provisions in areas such as customs and related procedures, standards and technical regulations. Another important aspect is that it provides for the reciprocal opening of government procurement markets and for the adequate and effective protection of intellectual property rights.

In the context of the negotiations of the agreement, the cooperation offered by the EU to Chile is of the utmost relevance. Since 2000, 22 projects have been committed for a total amount of about € 7,790,000. The bulk of the funds (87 percent) committed so far have been allocated to NGO projects, 15 percent of the funds went to projects related to the European Initiative for Democracy and Human rights, and 3 percent went to a project in favor of the environment.

Similar to the Mexican experience, the political area of the agreement is significant. Having fresh memories of the recent past, the democracy clause in the agreement upholds the no-return to authoritarian practices, or at least raises the political cost if such regression takes place in the future. Thus, for Chile the respect for democratic principles, human rights and the rule of Law are essential elements of the Agreement.

In the field of co-operation, the association agreement explores new areas, which were not foreseen in the 1996 Framework Co-operation Agreement between the two parties. Likewise, an increased participation of civil society is suggested, and the EU and Chile will meet at regular intervals to exchange views on this topic.

### Who is next?

Based on the results of the association agreements between the EU and Mexico and Chile, it could be said that such instruments should be seen not as a panacea, but as a means to strengthen the current processes of implementation of free market policies and democratization in Latin American countries. Three main characteristics will be seen in the coming association agreements. First, they will be negotiated with regions instead of individual countries; this scheme of dealing with regions has been actually implemented by the United States in the negotiation of CAFTA. Second, Central America and the Andean Community are the regions that will most likely reach association agreements with the EU. In fact, on December 6, 2006, the European Commission proposed that the EU should start negotiations for Association Agreements with Central America and the Andean Community in 2007. In order to accelerate this process, the EU granted the Central American countries 7 million Euros to consolidate their customs union.

The third trend in the creation of association agreements is that the Mercosur-EU negotiation will not be completed before the end of the Doha Round. It is interesting to note that although the Mercosur-EU negotiations started in 1999, the progress has been slow due to the economic leverage of Brazil. Likewise, an element of uncertainty is the role that Venezuela can play in the strategies of Mercosur. In the meantime, some business groups have estimated that the cost of lost opportunities in trade of goods alone represents \$3.7 billion per year.

### Conclusions

The challenge for Latin America is to make use of the free trade agreements to improve and promote sustainable economic and social development as well as equitable distribution of the benefits of the association agreements with the EU. In the case of Mexico, there is an emergent consensus among the political establishment that free trade agreements are not enough for improving the standards of living. In the case of Chile,

former president Ricardo Lagos has accurately referred to this challenge and stated that while his country has followed the so-called “Washington Consensus” of free markets and deregulation, they have also tried to wed this to a network of social protection (Lagos, 2005).

Thus far, the evidence reflects that from the Latin American perspective the association agreements with the European Union should be negotiated under the premise that they will open windows of opportunity for investment, trade and political cooperation, but they do not substitute the domestic efforts for economic and political reforms. In fact, both countries attracted the attention of the EU once they proved that their free market reforms were moving forward and their political systems presented clear evidence of democratization.

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