

China's Coming Diplomatic Blitz in the Americas

The next few months will bring a series of high-profile multilateral engagements between China and Latin American countries, as Beijing seeks to capitalize on discontent with Trump.

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In the coming three months, China will have a number of opportunities to advance its multilateral engagement with the Americas, leveraging discontent among many governments in the region with the new posture taken by the U.S. government on tariffs and other issues. These opportunities include the China-CELAC (Community of Latin American and Caribbean States) [Fourth Ministerial Forum](#), to be held in Beijing in May; the [55th General Assembly of the Organization of American States](#) in Antigua and Barbuda in June; and the [BRICS summit](#) in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil in July.

The Fourth China-CELAC Ministerial Forum is overdue; it will be the first executive-level convening of the entity since the Third China-CELAC Forum [in Mexico in December 2021](#). Brazil's President Luis Ignacio Lula da Silva (commonly known as Lula) and President Gustavo Petro of Colombia, among other Latin American leaders, are expected to be [present for the forum in China](#), creating possibilities for multiple bilateral interactions advancing strategic coordination – with China's President Xi Jinping and with each other.

Traditionally, such meetings have been opportunities for China to present, and Latin American states to express concurrence with,

Beijing's agenda for engagement with the region for coming years. Although the resulting “[roadmap](#)” is usually vaguely worded, it highlights areas of emphasis for Beijing on approaches to global issues. The coming forum follows the [assumption of the rotating CELAC presidency](#) last month by Colombia's leftist president, [Petro](#).

Notably, it will be the first opportunity for China to coordinate activities and positions with the region without the United States at the table since the inauguration of U.S. President Donald Trump in January. His administration has implemented significant actions that directly impact the CELAC member states, including U.S. pressure on Panama over China's supposed influence [over the Panama Canal](#), attention to China's backdoor access to the U.S. market [through manufacturing operations in Mexico](#), and new tariffs levied on [China, Latin America, and the rest of the world](#).

Leading up to the China-CELAC summit, the annual summit of CELAC heads of government in April culminated in the [Tegucigalpa Declaration](#), whose relatively tepid tone and lack of specific actions suggest that Latin American and Caribbean governments are still struggling to find a

collective position in response to new U.S. policies. That could change, however, when they meet in Beijing in June, bolstered by China's likely encouragement and proposals that give them alternatives to the United States.

While some Latin American states will be more willing than others to embrace China at risk of provoking Washington, the roadmap issued after the China-CELAC forum is likely to reflect Beijing's heightened interest in agricultural and other commodity purchases from Latin America to offset its decreased imports of those items from the United States. The roadmap will also reflect China's need to build infrastructure and otherwise invest to increase the region's capacity to sell China more goods. Increased U.S. tariffs and other changes in the relationship with Washington are likely to make Latin American governments more open to such purchases and proposals on terms favorable to China.

Similarly, the roadmap will likely include initiatives that help China to expand its position in strategic sectors like [telecommunication and other digital](#) infrastructure, [electric vehicles](#), [renewable energy](#) generation and transmission, [space](#)

engagement, as well as greater “people-to-people” collaboration.

In prior roadmaps, the Chinese government committed to fund trips to China for over 10,000 people from the region in a three-year period. In the current environment of tension with the United States, Latin American governments may feel even less inclined to turn down Beijing’s offers in response to U.S. concerns.

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The inclusion of expanded space cooperation in the upcoming China-CELAC roadmap is likely and would be strategically significant. The China Space Launch and Tracking Control organization of the People’s Liberation Army (PLA) is already operating the Deep Space Radar facility in Neuquen, Argentina, with potential military applications, while Chinese

entities are also operating potentially dual-use space telescope facilities at [Ventarrones](#) in Chile and the [China Argentine Radio Telescope](#) in Rio Negro, Argentina. China is also working with Brazil to develop and launch new satellites, including the [CBERS program](#) and the quasi-commercial Chinese [Thousand Sails constellation](#). Beijing is using its proposed [International Lunar Research Station](#) as a carrot for expanding access to the region's space architecture and personnel, including working with the new Mexico-hosted [Latin America Space Agency](#), which will be a particularly interesting area to monitor.

As with space, it will be telling to watch if the roadmap openly embraces growing collaboration with China [in the military and security sector](#). In recent months, such cooperation has been [suppressed by countries such as Mexico](#) to avoid provoking the current U.S. government.

Beyond China-CELAC, the Organization of American States (OAS), under new [General Secretary Alberto Ramdin](#), may present new opportunities for China's engagement. While not anti-U.S., Ramdin, a consensus-oriented professional with [deep experience in the OAS bureaucracy](#), may be more open than his predecessor, Luis Almagro, to allowing or

facilitating participation by China in entities of the inter-American system based on Beijing's status as an [OAS observer state since 2004](#). This could include participation in the Inter-American Defense Board and Inter-American Defense College, to which the PLA has [formerly sent a representative](#). Elevated participation by Beijing in the June 2025 [55th OAS General Assembly session](#) in Antigua and Barbuda, where China already has a strong commercial and political presence, could be an indication of expanded Chinese participation in other institutions of the inter-American system.

Building on such multilateral events, the 17th BRICS summit, to be [hosted by Brazil in Rio de Janeiro](#) on July 6-7, may present China with its best opportunity to rally a significant multilateral event involving the Americas to commit to significant anti-U.S. positions and collaborative projects that serve Beijing's strategic interests as a response to U.S. initiatives on tariffs and other areas. From Latin America, participants at the BRICS summit will include founding member Brazil; new partner countries [Cuba and Bolivia](#); and probably the leftist governments of [Mexico, Colombia, and Uruguay](#) as Brazil's invited guests. By the time the BRICS summit convenes, the fate of [bilateral tariff](#)

[negotiations](#) with the U.S. will be clearer, as the Trump administration's [90-day suspension of reciprocal tariffs](#) will just be expiring.

Beyond such considerations, the governments in attendance at the BRICS summit will also have had more time to coordinate their response to new U.S. policies, including the development of specific alternatives that may be manifested at the gathering. At the May 2025 China-CELAC summit, which has a larger body of participating nations, the vulnerability of some member states (whether economic or otherwise) to U.S. actions may temper an aggressive embrace of China or collective response to the United States. By contrast, at the BRICS summit in July, the smaller number of relatively large, generally less U.S.-friendly states involved may lead the group to a more aggressively anti-U.S. posture with a more concrete series of initiatives supporting Chinese interests.

Building on existing BRICS initiatives, potential outcomes could include proposed new commercial arrangements that offer alternatives to trade with a high-tariff U.S. market, [new financial mechanisms](#) circumventing trade in U.S. dollars and the SWIFT currency clearing system, and new financial proposals to back them, possibly

funded by the [BRICS New Development Bank](#). A successful BRICS summit with relatively unified anti-U.S. positions and concrete commercial alternatives to the United States would be a significant step in elevating BRICS as the de facto nucleus of the alternative to a U.S.-dominated international order.

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If, as has been reported, the U.S. government [substantially reduces funding](#) for its State Department, including its resources for [communications](#), [aid programs](#), and engagement through multilateral organizations, it may magnify opportunities for China to advance its interests in Latin America through multilateral diplomacy involving the region in the coming months.

Ironically, for some in the Trump administration, the purpose of increasing

tariffs, defunding aid programs, and de-emphasizing soft power and geographies other than Asia is to [give the United States more resources](#) for challenging China.

Beijing's likely achievements at CELAC, in the new OAS, and at BRICS in the coming months highlight the risk of such a strategy. In pursuit of short-term benefits, such a U.S. posture isolates and strategically disarms Washington in the "soft power" realm, facilitating China's efforts to outmaneuver the U.S. in the global strategic competition.

The risk is that if the U.S. is eventually forced to confront China, it will do so with fewer partners and at a great disadvantage.

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