

HOW TO THINK ABOUT THE SUMMIT OF THE AMERICAS

RICHARD E. FEINBERG

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Convening in Lima, Peru on April 13-14, 2018, the eighth Summit of the Americas approved a final declaration tackling just one major theme—anti-corruption. This was appropriate: Systemic corruption in high places threatens to undermine the legitimacy of democratic institutions throughout the region. However, the summit failed to outline a rigorous plan of implementation, nor did governments pledge new resources for the anti-corruption agenda.

Summits of the Americas assemble not only heads of state and foreign ministries, but also a broad spectrum of citizenry, including from the corporate world and civil society. These parallel gatherings—well attended in Lima—signal a deepening of democracy and the community of the Americas.

Further, the Lima summit served as a platform where the larger, more powerful Latin American states reaffirmed their adherence to liberal democracy and categorically condemned its violation in Venezuela.

President Donald Trump canceled his attendance just a few days prior to the Lima summit. At the meeting, the United States became just one delegation among many, and an outlier on some core themes that had characterized previous Summits of the Americas.

Well institutionalized, Summits of the Americas will likely continue to take place every three years or so. The outcomes of future summits will depend upon effective leadership, diplomatic creativity, institutional capacities, and the abilities and desires of the governments of the Americas to learn from previous experiences and to find common ground.

INTRODUCTION

The eighth Summit of the Americas, which convened the region's presidents and prime ministers in Lima, Peru on April 13-14, 2018, differed from its predecessors in three important respects, reflecting the evolving political realities within and among its member states. In previous summits, the leaders considered declarations covering a broad range of political and social matters; in Lima, the official declaration tackled just one major theme—anti-corruption—dominating headlines throughout the hemisphere. For the first time, representatives of

civil society and the private sector directly addressed the assembled leaders, signaling the more inclusive reach of the region's democracies. And whereas the process of regional summitry had been initiated by the United States (in Miami, 1994), in Lima for the first time the U.S. president was absent.

Was the Lima summit a success or failure? Measured by the standard fare of such gatherings, the leaders did manage to approve a final communiqué with a substantive agenda for action on a critical issue of democratic governance. Further, as occurs at such periodic gatherings, leaders were able to make

efficient use of their time by meeting privately on the margins with their counterparts. Also in the positive column, the parallel nongovernmental meetings were well attended and, with the exception of one regrettable incident, proceeded smoothly. Less reassuring, the summit declaration failed to delineate a rigorous plan of implementation for the anti-corruption agenda.

Did the Lima summit make significant progress on the crisis unfolding in Venezuela, the hemisphere's most pressing political issue? Earlier, in an unprecedented diplomatic sanction, the Peruvian government had disinvited Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro for failing to meet the region's democratic standards. In Lima, 16 countries (the ad hoc Lima Group of Latin American nations plus the United States and the Bahamas) issued a joint statement criticizing Venezuela, but the plenary debates made clear that other governments either supported the incumbent regime in Caracas or objected to international "intervention" in a member state's internal affairs. Even less productive, the Lima gathering featured a contentious face-off between the representatives of the U.S. and Cuban governments. Nor did the U.S. delegation, led by Vice President Mike Pence and Ivanka Trump, make visible progress in narrowing the widening divide between Washington and many Latin American capitals on such issues as trade, migration, and climate change.

Summits of the Americas will and should continue, as the sole forum where hemispheric leaders meet to discuss common problems. Already, the United States has offered to host the next summit in 2021.

This paper concludes with recommendations for increasing the efficiency and productivity of future gatherings.

THE ANTI-CORRUPTION COMMITMENT

Taking firm control of the pre-summit deliberations, the Peruvian Foreign Ministry wisely circumscribed the agenda to one major issue: fighting corruption. At the three previous summits (2009 in Trinidad

and Tobago; 2012 in Cartagena, Colombia; 2015 in Panama City), the participating states had failed to reach a unanimous consensus on a declaration. Since reaching substantive consensus on a wide range of issues at the first summit in Miami in 1994, the hemisphere had become increasingly divided ideologically on key issues such as free trade and the definition of democracy. Venezuela, then led by Hugo Chávez, had catalyzed a coalition of governments critical of neoliberal economics, representative liberal democracy, and U.S. foreign policy more generally. In recent years, the Organization of American States (OAS), which plays a pivotal role in organizing summits, had become more critical of the Venezuelan government, driving a further deterioration in its relations with Caracas.

Consequently, Peruvian negotiators decided to bypass these contentious ideological divides. Instead, the Lima communiqué would zoom in on one theme, without doubt the hottest in the hemisphere today: how to fight corruption. Indeed, systemic corruption in high places threatens to undermine the legitimacy of democratic institutions and to adversely impact the pace and quality of economic expansion. Governments throughout the region were under clouds of corruption, as civil society, the mass media, and in some nations the courts were leveling charges against prominent figures in both the public and private spheres. Leaders from at least 11 Latin American countries had been tainted by the Odebrecht scandal, after the large Brazilian construction firm confessed to paying hundreds of millions of dollars in bribes in exchange for contracts. By the time the summit convened in Lima, the former president of Brazil, Luis Inácio Lula da Silva, was jailed for corruption and money laundering. In a surreal development, Pedro Pablo Kuczynski was forced to resign the Peruvian presidency just three weeks before the convening of the anti-corruption summit, amid allegations related to illicit Odebrecht payments and vote buying.

In negotiating the Lima communiqué, Peruvian diplomats could invoke the 1994 Miami Plan of Action, whose anti-corruption clause had declared:

“The problem of corruption is now an issue of serious interest not only in this Hemisphere, but in all regions of the world. Corruption in both the public and private sectors weakens democracy and undermines the legitimacy of governments and institutions.”¹

The Peruvian diplomats could also build on the Inter-American Convention Against Corruption (CICC, for its Spanish acronym), adopted by the OAS in 1996 and which all but two small Caribbean islands have ratified. In its 28 articles, the CICC details a comprehensive compendium of corrupt acts in both the public and private spheres, sets forth a strong list of preventive measures, and recommends mutual assistance and technical cooperation “on the most effective ways and means of preventing, detecting, investigating and punishing acts of corruption.”² The 1996 convention was a pioneering document, the first such international anti-corruption accord that would inspire similar anti-corruption initiatives by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and the United Nations.

Unfortunately, deeds failed to follow words. In response, the 2001 Quebec summit created the Mechanism for Follow-up on the Implementation of the Inter-American Convention Against Corruption (MESICIC, for its Spanish acronym).³ Lodged in the OAS’ Secretariat for Legal Affairs, MESICIC gradually put into place a system of country reviews, eventually including on-site visits (only resisted by Nicaragua), with each review focusing on a subset of CICC measures. A comprehensive 2015 MESICIC study found that of 767 recommendations in the

country reports, 42 percent had been “satisfactorily considered” and 38 percent had seen “significant progress,” while the remaining 20 percent had languished “without information or progress.” However, these recommendations targeted laws and regulations; the country reports did not capture their effectiveness in preventing or sanctioning acts of corruption.

With the CICC in hand and already approved by member states, it was relatively easy for OAS’ Summit Implementation Review Group (SIRG), which negotiates the summit declarations, to reach agreement on a draft Lima commitment. In contrast to previous, more contentious summits, the pre-summit meeting of foreign ministers in Lima was blessedly brief, simply praising the draftsmanship of their staffs.

Still, not all countries were comfortable with attaching their names to a consensus document. In the summit plenary, several countries voiced concerns. Bolivian President Evo Morales argued that anti-corruption campaigns were being used to overthrow democratic governments, “as anti-communism had been used in the past,” a theme echoed by Cuban Foreign Minister Bruno Rodriguez. Several Caribbean islands protested against “unfair” provisions criticizing tax havens. As chair of the plenary, Peruvian President Martin Vizcarra shrewdly introduced the Lima Commitment and called for a quick vocal acclamation. He took the applause as approval and did not ask for abstentions or dissent. During the ensuing plenary discussions, although some leaders voiced concerns, none directly asked for a formal reservation or dissent.⁴ Thereby the Lima Commitment (entitled “Democratic Governance

1 “Summit of the Americas Plan of Action,” (Lima, Peru: Summit of the Americas, 2018), http://www.summit-americas.org/i-summit/i_summit_poa_en.pdf.

2 “Inter-American Convention Against Corruption,” Organization of American States, March 29, 1996, http://www.oas.org/en/sla/dil/inter_american_treaties_B-58_against_Corruption.asp.

3 “What is the MESICIC?” Organization of American States, 2011, http://www.oas.org/juridico/english/mesicic_intro_en.htm.

4 The United States accounted for the Lima Commitment’s one formal reservation, expressing its concerns with the document’s reference to support for the U.N.’s 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Against Corruption”) gained its consensus, even if it would not bear the signatures of the assembled leaders.⁵

At the inaugural meeting the previous evening, Vizcarra took note that the 1994 Miami declaration had included an anti-corruption initiative, but noted that “No se cumplió el compromiso” (“we did not implement the commitment”). The Peruvian continued, “We should not live with corruption as though it were inevitable or natural.” He called for “A Regional Alliance Against Corruption,” a call he would repeat when introducing the plenary the following morning. To demonstrate his own resolve, Vizcarra asserted that he would use the Lima Commitment as a reference point in Peru’s own anti-corruption campaign. He pledged that battling corruption would be the main theme of his young administration, as he worked to restore Peru’s social compact and popular confidence in democratic institutions.

Cynics could note that like previous inter-American documents, the Lima Commitment leaves implementation to national governments and contains no sanctions for non-compliance, nor country rankings according to the quality of their behavior. These soft characteristics are typical in inter-American diplomacy, with its respect for national sovereignty and non-intervention in the internal affairs of member states. Further, leaders were more prone to listing their nation’s previous anti-corruption initiatives than in detailing plans for future action. Most disappointing was the failure of member states to pledge new resources; rather, the Lima Commitment calls for “identifying resources to strengthen MESICIC’s operations.” In the plenary, the U.S. delegation was notably non-committal, as Vice President Pence mentioned the Lima Commitment only in passing, preferring

to focus his remarks on the previous day’s missile launches against Syrian chemical facilities, and other topics, including Venezuela.

ADDRESSING THE VENEZUELAN CATASTROPHE

At such international gatherings, governments naturally look for ways to join forces in addressing the most pressing crises of the moment. In Venezuela, the devastating economic decline and political conflict have produced a massive outpouring of desperate people seeking food, medicine, and jobs in neighboring countries. These angry exiles pressured governments to criticize the increasingly authoritarian regime in Caracas. In an unprecedented act, the Peruvian government, supported by the Lima Group (including the region’s major states) had disinvited President Maduro, invoking a democracy clause from the 2001 Declaration of Quebec City.⁶ Latin American diplomats generally prefer dialogue and inclusion; excluding a member state government was a rare sanction, suggesting the gravity of the situation and the region’s frustration with the Maduro government’s obduracy, particularly its decision to call snap elections on May 20.

During the summit plenary, Venezuela was the main topic of contention. Some leaders made strikingly strong statements condemning the slide toward dictatorship and the upcoming sham elections, while others voiced their preferences for a peaceful, negotiated return to democracy. Argentine President Mauricio Macri denounced “a process of uncontrolled corruption” in Caracas. Colombian President Juan Manuel Santos rejected “a spurious constituent assembly” and “an attempt to whitewash a dictatorship.” Pence labeled Venezuela a “failed state.” However,

5 “Lima Commitment: Democratic Governance Against Corruption,” (Lima, Peru: Summit of the Americas, April 14, 2018), http://www.summit-americas.org/viii/compromiso_lima_en.pdf.

6 The declaration states, “The maintenance and strengthening of the rule of law and strict respect for the democratic system are, at the same time, a goal and a shared commitment and are an essential condition of our presence at this and future Summits. Consequently, any unconstitutional alteration or interruption of the democratic order in a state of the Hemisphere constitutes an insurmountable obstacle to the participation of that state’s government in the Summit of the Americas process.” See “Declaration of Quebec City,” (Quebec, Canada: Summit of the Americas, 2001), http://www.summit-americas.org/iii_summit/iii_summit_dec_en.pdf.

not all participants concurred. Some Caribbean states, dependent upon Venezuelan oil subsidies, joined Cuba and Bolivia in decrying the exclusion of Venezuela from the proceedings; the Cuban foreign minister wished Venezuela “success” in its upcoming elections.

No new diplomatic initiatives and no new sanctions against the Maduro government were announced. In his bilateral meetings, Pence evidently failed to catalyze a regional response to the humanitarian crisis, despite his announcement of a \$16 million increase in U.S. assistance to Venezuelan refugees living in Colombia.⁷ Instead, the Lima Group, joined by the United States, issued a statement, similar to previous communiqués, expressing deep concern over the breakdown of constitutional order and the consequent humanitarian crisis, and vowed to reject elections that “will lack legitimacy and credibility.”

The Lima summit served as a platform where the larger, more powerful Latin American states reaffirmed their faith in liberal democracy as the only legitimate form of government in the Western Hemisphere and categorically condemned its violation—not just in a small, vulnerable country, but for the first time in recent memory in a major regional state. The summit’s exclusion of Venezuela from its proceedings hit home in Caracas, clearly irritating Maduro, who at one point vowed to attend regardless. The impact of the mounting external pressures on the regime’s internal cohesion is impossible to measure. As was evident in the Venezuelan crisis, regional diplomacy lacks an operational mechanism for addressing democratic collapses or internal political crises, so long as the government in question remains adamant in its refusal to accept effective international mediation.

INCLUSIVE SUMMITRY

Summits of the Americas assemble not only heads of state and foreign ministries, but also gather a broad spectrum of citizenry, including from the corporate world and civil society. These parallel gatherings aim to suggest a deepening of democracy, to consist not only of governments, but also of citizens pursuing their interests and ideals. Further, the summits facilitate constructive interactions between these private and public spheres. The parallel forums are also an excellent opportunity for social networking, for making real the concept of a community of the Americas.

The CEO Summit, organized by the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), consisted of two days of well-organized panels of corporate executives and thought leaders, interspersed with brief presentations by selected heads of state. Some 750 persons registered for the event. Large multinational corporations generally sent regional executive vice presidents. (In Lima there was no CEO of the stature of Facebook’s Mark Zuckerberg, who had addressed the 2015 Panama CEO Summit.)

The panels were built around a report by the Americas Business Dialogue (ABD, a forum for conversations between the region’s business executives and government officials, facilitated by the IDB). The 2018 report, “Action for Growth,” included a strong section on the role of businesses and governments in discouraging corruption.⁸ The ABD study underscored the costs of corruption, not only to the economy, but also in undermining public trust in institutions, and advocated for transparency in government procurement, corporate codes of ethics, and regulatory best practices, among other recommendations.

7 Mike Pence, “Remarks by Vice President Pence at First Plenary Session of the Summit of the Americas,” (speech, Lima, Peru, April 15, 2018), <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefings-statements/remarks-by-vice-president-pence-at-first-plenary-session-of-the-summit-of-the-americas/>.

8 American Business Dialogue, “Action for Growth: Policy Recommendations and 2018-2021 Action Plan for Growth in the Americas,” (Washington, DC: Inter-American Development Bank, 2018), <http://americasbd.org/ABD%20-%20Action%20for%20Growth%20Report.pdf>.

For a corporate event, several of the CEO Summit panels took on a remarkably progressive tone. Speakers from the natural resources and energy sectors emphasized the importance of engagement with community leaders and sustainable environmental practices, if for no other reason than to secure licenses to operate. Peruvian President Vizcarra recounted his own experience, as a provincial governor, in guiding a multi-billion dollar mining investment by an international firm toward agreement with local community leaders—a win-win-win, for the investors, the local population, and the federal treasury. A panel on women’s empowerment leaned toward “transitional” quotas in corporate management and boards, to correct stubbornly persistent gender inequalities, all too visible in the male-dominated audience. Numerous speakers hailed the promises of technological innovations (in information technology, alternative energy, and artificial intelligence) in driving efficiency, competitiveness, and productivity.

The OAS organized several other forums for social actors: for youth, indigenous peoples, and civil society organizations. One spokesperson from each of these three forums (all three were women, it turned out), joined by a representative from the private sector (the president of the Peruvian business association, CONFIEP), were invited to make presentations to the leaders’ plenary. At previous Summits of the Americas, representatives of social actors had addressed ministers; this was the first time they were invited into the inner sanctum of heads of state.

In an attempt to secure greater order in the civil society forum—meeting in the days just prior to the leaders’ summit—the OAS had divided participants into some two dozen “coalitions,” each addressing one topic, such as transparency, corruption,

sustainable development, gender equity, and human trafficking.⁹ After the coalitions met to complete the drafting of their statements, they had the opportunity to make presentations to a panel of government officials; the OAS secretary general, Luis Almagro, chaired this wrap-up plenary. However, a sizeable delegation of Cuban GONGOs (government-affiliated NGOs, flown in by the Cuban government), were angered by the presence of some Cuban-American “mercenaries,” particularly the dissident Rosa María Payá (Pence’s private meeting with her was widely publicized).¹⁰ With prolonged shouting, the agitated Cuban GONGOs drowned out the exchange between social actors and government officials. In the end, Almagro moved a rump assembly into a side room, with attendance reduced to just one representative per coalition and the remaining government officials. The disruptive Cubans won few points with the other civil society participants, only demonstrating the isolation of the island from civil democratic practices.¹¹

At future summits, the organizers of the civil society events will need to reconsider their relations with the Cuban GONGOs. The Peruvians did find ways to channel peaceful if spirited street demonstrations by sympathizers of the Cuban and Venezuelan governments away from summit venues, and a non-disruptive “counter-summit” convened at San Marcos National University.

FACE-OFF BETWEEN THE UNITED STATES AND CUBA

Regional summits can serve to deepen the bonds among states, but they can also become battlegrounds where states air their grievances against each other. Previous summits had witnessed confrontations over long-standing border

9 “Participation of Social Actors in the Activities of the Summits of the Americas Process,” (Lima, Peru: Summit of the Americas, 2018), http://www.summit-americas.org/cs/coalitions_list_en.pdf.

10 Mike Pence, “Remarks by Vice President Pence in Meeting with Cuban Dissident,” (speech, Lima, Peru, April 15, 2018), <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefings-statements/remarks-vice-president-pence-meeting-cuban-dissident/>.

11 For a critique of the Cubans’ behavior, see Lennier Lopez, “Encumbrar la Intolerancia,” *El Toque*, April 18, 2018, <https://eltoque.com/encumbrar-la-intolerancia/>. For the official Cuban perspective, see Yisell Rodríguez Milán, “Quince preguntas y respuestas sobre lo que pasó con Cuba en Perú,” *Granma*, <http://www.granma.cu/viii-cumbre-de-las-americas/2018-04-15/quince-preguntas-y-respuestas-sobre-lo-que-paso-con-cuba-en-peru-15-04-2018-20-04-47>.

disputes between Chile and Bolivia, and between Nicaragua and Costa Rica. In Lima, the deepening deterioration in relations between the United States and Cuba was on full display.

The centerpiece of the previous summit in Panama in 2015 had been the dramatic reconciliation between Presidents Barack Obama and Raúl Castro, meeting face-to-face for the first time and holding a cordial bilateral meeting. In sharp contrast, Donald Trump had shifted U.S. policy into reverse, as administration officials adopted an increasingly hostile tone toward Havana. The United States issued an alarming travel advisory (after asserting that some two dozen U.S. diplomats had suffered injuries from “attacks of an unknown nature”)¹² forced a mutual drawdown of embassy personnel, and prohibited U.S. businesses and citizens from engaging in monetary transactions with military-owned enterprises on the island. Initially, the Castro administration responded cautiously, hoping that the hotelier in Trump would sideline the Miami-based, Cuban-American Republicans who have lobbied for a return to the status quo ante. The strident plenary remarks of the Cuban foreign minister, however, signaled that Havana had given up on the Trump administration and was digging in for a renewed freeze in U.S.-Cuban relations.

Perhaps anticipating the fireworks that would upend the earlier Panama détente, just prior to the Lima summit, Raúl Castro decided to send in his stead his seasoned foreign minister, Bruno Rodríguez. For over 12 long minutes (plenary interventions were supposed to be limited to six minutes each), Rodríguez lambasted U.S. foreign and domestic policies. In a clear reference to Donald Trump, Rodríguez observed:

“In the electoral campaigns there are no ethical limits, candidates stoke hatred, division, egotism, slander, racism, xenophobia, and lies; neo-fascist tendencies proliferate and they promise walls, the militarization of borders, massive deportations including of children.”¹³

Speaking shortly thereafter, Pence did not respond directly to Rodríguez’s polemic, but reading from his prepared text devoted three full paragraphs to condemning Cuba. Pence forcefully denounced “the tired communist regime in Cuba,” and asserted “Cuba’s dictators have also sought to export their failed ideology across the wider region.” In response, Rodríguez asked for the floor and launched into a second 10-minute broadside against the United States. As the Cuban began his retort, Pence abruptly stood up and walked out of the hall. This intemperate act violated summit norms honoring patient dialogue, and struck some as an atavistic return to Cold War behavior, with a global superpower overreacting to the predictable rhetorical riposte of a small island state. The passive plenary chair did not intervene to shorten either of Cuba’s prolonged interventions, nor any other that extended beyond the stated six-minute limit.

THE U.S. DELEGATION: DIVERSE REACTIONS

President Trump canceled his attendance just a few days prior to the Lima summit, citing the obligations of overseeing a military response to Syrian President Bashar Assad’s use of chemical agents against civilians. In Lima, some felt Trump was showing his disinterest or disdain for Latin America, or perhaps his fear that the Latin Americans might gang up on him. In this regard, in their remarks to the CEO Summit and the leaders’ plenary, various leaders did advocate for free trade against protectionism, for bridges not walls—indirect references to Trump—but there was no strenuous pile-on against the U.S. delegation. Had Trump been present, the decibel level might have been a function of his own behavior, whether benign or belligerent. More than one participant recounted to this author a trope circulating at the CEO Summit: that the meetings were better off without “los dos payasos” (Spanish for “the two clowns,” a reference to Trump and Maduro)—freeing participants to concentrate more on issues rather than personalities.

12 Rex Tillerson, “Actions Taken in Response to Attacks on U.S. Government Personnel in Cuba,” (speech, Washington, DC, September 29, 2017), <https://www.state.gov/secretary/20172018tillerson/remarks/2017/09/274514.htm>.

13 Yisell Rodríguez Milán, “Quince preguntas y respuestas.”

The senior U.S. delegation consisted of Vice President Pence; Ivanka Trump, adviser to the president; Wilbur Ross, secretary of commerce; Acting Secretary of State John Sullivan; and Ray Washburne, president of the Overseas Private Investment Corporation (OPIC). Senator Marco Rubio (R-FL) also attended, accompanied by nine members of the House of Representatives, who maintained an active schedule of bilateral meetings with a number of leaders.

Pence delivered the major U.S. address at the summit plenary. The text and delivery were more assertive than Pence's characteristic performance. The vice president echoed administration themes and values (in ways that grated on many Latin American ears), code words for abandoning climate change commitments, engaging in trade protectionism, and the massive deportation of undocumented immigrants:

"That's why, in America, I'm pleased to report to our friends and allies present that this administration has been rolling back burdensome regulations in record numbers, we've been unleashing our boundless natural resources. ... [W]e recognize that there is still tremendous opportunity to forge stronger and more balanced trade relationships across this region. ... [W]e're securing our borders, enforcing our laws, removing dangerous drug dealers and violent criminals from our streets as never before. ... [A]nd let us have that other kind of faith ... remembering, as the Good Book says, that 'where the spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom.'"¹⁴

Pence made only passing reference to the summit's anti-corruption theme, failing to highlight any specific initiatives, nor did the United States offer any additional financial or technical assistance to MESICIC or to countries implementing the Lima Commitment. Pence's hard-hitting attacks on the governments of Venezuela and Cuba echoed Manichean Cold War oratory that demonizes

opponents and wraps the speaker in God's blessings. To at least some in Lima, Pence's pale monochrome visage masked a belligerent if *passé* worldview. Pence further surprised the plenary by proposing that the United States host the next Summit of the Americas in 2021.

In his rather laconic speech before the CEO Summit, Ross concentrated on two themes: a disparagement of Chinese economic relations with Latin America (the United States "will not cede leadership in our hemisphere to authoritarian countries that ... exploit the region's rich natural resources")¹⁵ and criticisms of Latin American economic performance across a number of indicators. The speech was poorly received: how could the United States, whose firms had for so long invested in the region's natural resources, now criticize the Chinese for doing the same?; and the sustained criticism of Latin American economies came across as rather condescending and behind the times (in light of the region's improved performance).

In sharp contrast to Pence and Ross, Ivanka Trump was a breath of fresh air. She addressed the CEO Summit on her signature theme at international gatherings: women's empowerment through micro-enterprise credit. The topic was safely mainstream—it had been addressed in the Plan of Action of the 1994 Miami summit—but fit well with the contemporary focus on gender equality. However, the atmospheric around Ivanka's competent appearances struck some as jarring: Was it appropriate for the young "adviser" to be introduced by a cabinet secretary (Wilbur Ross)? And did the moderator of her panel, an assistant secretary of state, need to be quite so unctuous in her unceasing praise? To some Latin American eyes, the treatment of Ivanka by the U.S. delegation seemed more appropriate to a royal court than to a representative democracy.

14 Mike Pence, "Remarks by Vice President Pence at First Plenary Session of the Summit of the Americas."

15 "U.S. will not cede leadership in Latin America to 'authoritarian' states: commerce chief," *Reuters*, April 12, 2018, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-amers-summit-business-ross/u-s-will-not-cede-leadership-in-latin-america-to-authoritarian-states-commerce-chief-idUSKBN1HJ3LQ>.

Over all, in Lima, the United States became one delegation among many, and an outlier on some core themes that had characterized the Summits of the Americas over the years. Indeed, in the absence of the U.S. president and a stand-in with limited international experience or charisma, other leaders stood out. With only three weeks in office, Peruvian President Vizcarra did remarkably well, turning his liability—the corruption scandal that had defenestrated his predecessor—into an asset, making anti-corruption his domestic focus. Vizcarra brilliantly drove through the Lima Commitment “by acclamation,” avoiding a vote that would have spoiled the consensus. Meanwhile, Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau made a credible bid for hemispheric leadership, reaffirming Canadian commitments to free trade agreements, adherence to international accords on global climate change, and lauding inter-American cooperation. Newly re-elected Chilean President Sebastián Piñera made energetic appearances at both the CEO Summit and in the plenary. Other presidents, however, were hampered by their domestic difficulties or approaching elections; the two largest Latin American nations, Mexico and Brazil, remained in the shadows.

The tragedy of Lima is this: it could well have been the most productive summit since the 2001 Quebec meeting. A number of key Latin American nations had elected leaders from the center or center-right, the disruptive authoritarian populists were in eclipse, and the Peruvian hosts exerted capable leadership. But this golden opportunity for policy convergence was discarded by a U.S. administration that has moved far outside of the mainstream of inter-American diplomatic cooperation.

LOOKING FORWARD

Well institutionalized, Summits of the Americas will and should continue every three years or so. Hence, it is worth pondering lessons learned from the Lima meeting:

- The Peruvian decision to reduce the number of issues on the table and to focus on one

or a few select themes worked well. At first blush, tackling the explosive issue of anti-corruption seemed like a risky venture, but previous summits had opened pathways toward consensus.

- Advancing from words to deeds remains a core challenge. In the case of anti-corruption, the established MESICIC monitoring process provides a tool for execution, but the Lima summit failed to elicit pledges of additional resources, placing the entire venture at risk. Future summit organizers should press hard to fulfill prior resource commitments and identify entities responsible for implementation.
- The plenary proceedings need to be rethought. Pre-written speeches by each leader eat up all the time, catalyzing little genuine dialogue. In Lima, extended plenary interventions forced the chair to cancel the private luncheon, one of the few occasions for leaders to dialogue informally. As a corrective, the 11 small-island states of the Caribbean should appoint one or two spokespersons. A system of green, yellow, and red lights could add discipline to leaders' remarks. The chair could more actively guide discussion around summit issues.
- To encourage full attendance, nations not represented by heads of state and government could be denied participation in the plenary's opening round of remarks.
- The presentations by social actors to the leaders' plenary is an important innovation and should be retained. Ideally, the social actors could be granted access to the SIRG during the drafting of the summit communiqué, not just at the summit plenary after the communiqué has been finalized, as is currently the case. In addition, the summit's follow-up mechanisms could report to the SIRG, perhaps on an annual basis, on implementation of the social actors' recommendations.

- If the Cuban delegation to the civil society forum continues to threaten to disrupt the proceedings, the organizers should negotiate terms of behavior with the Cubans or find ways to circumscribe their attendance.

Currently, Summits of the Americas suffer from a problem that summits themselves cannot resolve: the shortage of strong leadership in inter-American affairs. For the United States to resume a leadership role, it would have to alter policies, many deeply offensive to Latin America, adopted primarily for domestic political advantage and driven by fears of “unfair” international, especially multilateral, arrangements. This policy transformation seems unlikely in the medium term. Canada appears poised to lead; in 2021, 20 years after having chaired the successful 2001 summit, Canada could again serve as a broadly acceptable venue. Other acceptable summit hosts include Costa Rica and Jamaica. Brazil has yet to host a Summit of the Americas.

At this writing, Mexico, Brazil, and Colombia are in the process of electing new leadership, and it is too soon to foresee the impacts on regional dynamics. The rejectionist governments in Venezuela and Nicaragua are facing mounting domestic difficulties, as is Cuba.¹⁶ Thus, it is unusually difficult to foresee where the hemisphere will be in 2021, after the next U.S. presidential election, in its alternating rhythms of policy convergence and discord.¹⁷

In these turbulent circumstances, perhaps coalitions among Latin American governments can best advance specific initiatives, as is already occurring in international trade accords. In Lima, several Latin American leaders praised regional trading arrangements such as the Trans-Pacific Partnership (after Donald Trump boisterously withdrew, the accord was renamed the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for

Trans-Pacific Partnership) and the Pacific Alliance; Chilean President Piñera held out the prospect of stronger ties between the Pacific Alliance and a more open Mercosur. The specter of China as a major economic challenge could add to renewed interest in Western Hemisphere trading arrangements that bolster regional competitiveness.

At the 2021 summit, the hemisphere will want to take stock of progress on combatting corruption and in resolving the Venezuelan crisis. Predictably, new issues will arise to challenge the region. Future successes will depend upon effective leadership, diplomatic creativity, institutional capacities, and the abilities and desires of the governments of the Americas to learn from previous experiences and to find common ground.

16 Richard E. Feinberg, Emily Miller, and Harold Trinkunas, “Better than you think: Reframing inter-American relations,” (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution, 2015), <https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/Better-Than-You-Think-Reframing-InterAmerican-Relations.pdf>.

17 Richard E. Feinberg and Javier Corrales, “Regimes of Cooperation in the Western Hemisphere: Power, Interests and Intellectual Traditions,” *International Studies Quarterly* 43, no. 1 (March 1999): 1-36.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Richard E. Feinberg was a principal architect of the first Summit of the Americas (Miami, 1994) and has attended seven of the eight triennial regional summits. He is the author of *Summitry in the Americas: A Progress Report* (Peterson Institute for International Economics, 1997) and most recently, *Open for Business: Building the New Cuban Economy* (Brookings Institution Press, 2016). He is on the faculty of the School of Global Policy and Strategy, University of California, San Diego.

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