

spaces where US interests are at stake.  
3. The “starting from homeland” model signals that Washington will now pick and choose its overseas commitments with greater care. The Trump administration has made clear that its foreign interactions boil down to

two principles: “America’s interests first” and “cost-benefit calculation” — not shared interests with European, Asian, or Middle Eastern allies.  
4. America’s partners in Europe, the Middle East, and the Indo-Pacific should expect that some security guaran-

tees or assurances long taken for granted will no longer be automatically implemented. Instead, they will be reassessed against the benchmark of effectiveness in protecting the homeland. The permanent security umbrella, established post-World War II through alli-

ance agreements aimed at preserving the status quo — often irrespective of a direct link to US security — can no longer be considered absolute. There are indications that Washington has already taken steps in line with this strategy. A Pentagon official and a European diplo-

mat confirmed that the Pentagon will cut funding this year for the Baltic Security Initiative, which annually provides hundreds of millions of dollars to Latvia, Lithuania, and Estonia to help build their defense and military infrastructure. Moreover, NATO allies increas-

ingly anticipate that a portion of the approximately 80,000 US troops stationed in Europe will be withdrawn in the coming years.

*The article first appeared on the Institute for Political and International Studies website.*

# Death knell for Summit of Americas?

By Vijay Prashad  
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**OPINION**

The government of the Dominican Republic has announced that the X Summit of the Americas (SOA), scheduled to be held in Punta Cana on December 4–5, has been postponed to 2026. This is the first time an SOA has been postponed.

There is no reason to think that the conditions for holding such a meeting will be better three or six months from now, so it’s more likely the summit will be canceled. If so, this might very well ring the death knell of the SOAs, precisely at a time when they are more needed than ever, given the deep differences cutting across the hemisphere.

As the premier diplomatic event of the Western Hemisphere, the SOAs have been around for a little over 30 years. They provide a useful, some would say vital, forum for presidents and prime ministers from across the continent to get together and interact with the US president, whom they rarely meet in person. Indeed, the summits were established in the halcyon days of multilateralism in the 1990s, when international cooperation flourished after the end of the Cold War and the sky seemed the limit in terms of what could be achieved in transborder projects.

The first SOA took place in Miami in 1994, and the most recent in Los Angeles in 2022. Democratization and the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA) were the initial drivers for their agenda. Yet even after these faded, the idea that there is much to be gained by leaders from the Americas getting together to address common concerns kept them going. After all, it is difficult to say that some of the main challenges faced by countries in the Americas today, like the drug trade, illegal migration, organized crime, and climate change, do not need some form of collective response.

The SOAs, of course, build on the idea of Pan Americanism — the notion that there is something beyond the differences in language, history, and level of development that binds the countries of the Western Hemisphere, or the New World, and makes them different from the tired Old World across the Atlantic.

This can be a controversial concept. Many on the Left have denounced it as a non-transparent attempt to provide cover for US imperial designs to facilitate the exploitation of Latin America and the Caribbean to benefit American capital. However, this overlooks the fact that in a globalized and interdependent world, regions have their own dynamic, that there are “interna-



tional neighborhood” issues that need addressing, and that, in the end, it is by talking to each other that we can solve problems and find common ground. And those dialogues will be more fruitful and productive if they are institutionalized and structured, rather than undertaken in an ad hoc, spur-of-the-moment fashion.

President Trump dislikes multilateralism and international fora of various kinds — so much so that he skipped the VIII SOA in Lima in 2018, the first time a US president ever did so. And we all saw that after meeting with President Xi in Seoul on the sidelines of the APEC Leaders’ Summit, he left immediately, without attending APEC’s formal proceedings. Indications are that, at least one reason the SOA was postponed this time around, apart from the difficulties in agreeing on a final declaration,

which has been the official line, is because Trump was unwilling to commit to attending, which led to the host country’s decision to postpone, and effectively cancel it.

Still, the D.R. summit was already on the rocks. A few weeks ago, the Dominican government announced with great fanfare that it would not invite Cuba, Nicaragua, and Venezuela to the summit. This went down like a lead balloon in the region, with Mexican President Claudia Sheinbaum saying that under such circumstances, she would not attend, and Colombian President Gustavo Petro criticizing the announcement and saying he would not attend either.

In this non-invitation, the Dominicans were following the US playbook from 2022 when Washington’s exclusion of the group of countries John Bolton called “the troika of tyranny”

led to the ultimate fiasco of the Los Angeles SOA, with the attendance of a mere 23 leaders (out of 35) and no final declaration. Moreover, the D.R. had originally spoken about “an inclusive summit,” code for inviting Cuba et al, but later bowed to strong pressures from the State Department to toe the US line.

There is no doubt that this whole exercise is a big failure of Dominican diplomacy. You don’t attempt to play in the big leagues if you are not ready to carry the ball across the finish line. More importantly, however, it is also a significant failure of the US State Department. Both Secretary of State Marco Rubio and Deputy Secretary Christopher Landau are what is known as “old Latin American hands,” speak fluent Spanish (Landau spent part of his childhood in Chile) and have been managing many Latin Ameri-



Mounted police patrol the streets of Los Angeles before world leaders from the Western Hemisphere gather in California for the Summit of the Americas from June 6 to 10, 2022.  
● NBC

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Argentine President Javier Milei (R) talks to US President-elect Donald Trump at Mar-a-Lago in Palm Beach, Florida, on November 14, 2024.  
● JOE RAEDLE/GETTY IMAGES

can issues on the front burner of US foreign policy, including Panama, Venezuela, the effect of mass deportations, and the US-Brazil spat.

Part of their strategy has been to work closely with the smaller Central American and Caribbean countries, as well as with those in South America, like Argentina, Ecuador, and Paraguay, that are ideologically aligned with the Trump administration.

One result of that was a highly unusual and unorthodox recent statement signed by the US and a number of these countries celebrating the defeat of the MAS (or Movement for Socialism) ruling coalition in Bolivia and claiming that the election result will end “the economic mismanagement of the past two decades”.

This is a factually incorrect assertion, given that Bolivia from 2010–2019 had one of the best economic performances in the hemisphere, consistently growing above 4 percent a year, except for 2019, when it grew at 2.2 percent, a higher growth rate than that of the US.

The truth is that these efforts to “divide and rule” by building coalitions with the region’s smaller countries to counter the likes of Brazil, Chile, Colombia, and Mexico by pressing the former to follow Washington’s diktat to the letter were bound to end in epic debacles, like now with the 2025 SOA.

But the US self-sabotage of the SOA is especially puzzling for another reason. We have heard much about how Washington, in the second Trump administration, will be retreating from the “pivot to Asia” launched under Obama to prioritize instead the defense and strengthening of the Western Hemisphere. And yes, both Rubio’s initial visits abroad and the issues mentioned above all underscored how the Americas have been front and center in the US foreign policy agenda.

But how does this square with boycotting one of the key diplomatic hemispheric institutions, like the SOA? What comes next? Defunding the Organization of American States — as Deputy Secretary Landau did not rule out at the OAS General Assembly in Antigua earlier this year — or closing the Inter-American Development Bank?

It may well be that the SOAs have run their course and that the time has come to give them a decent burial. Many said that the 2022 Los Angeles SOA showed that they were on their last gasp. The problem is that pushing them over the cliff while insisting that, for the first time since World War II, Washington’s top foreign policy priority is the Western Hemisphere is a contradiction in terms.

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