

THE PINK GALAXY

How the Foro de São Paulo, the Grupo de Puebla, and their International Allies Undermine Democracy in Latin America

Updated edition

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Sebastian Grundberger



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Updated edition

FUNDACIÓN KONRAD ADENAUER
Plaza Independencia 749, of. 201,
Montevideo, Uruguay
Tel.: (598) 2902 0943/ -3974
E-mail: info.montevideo@kas.de
[@KASPartidos](http://www.kas.de/es/parteien-lateinamerika)

Director

Sebastian Grundberger
Sebastian.Grundberger@kas.de

Editorial Coordinator

Ángel Arellano

Spanish-English Translation

Mirtha Tovar

Cover Image

Barbudo Estudio

Design and setup

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Sebastian Grundberger

Since 2020, he has been director of the Regional Program on Political Parties and Democracy in Latin America at the Konrad Adenauer Foundation in Montevideo, Uruguay. Previously he was representative in Peru. In addition, he worked for the United Nations in New York, and Côte d'Ivoire; at the European Parliament in Brussels; the German Bundestag; and the Free University of Berlin. He studied political science and Latin American history at the Catholic University of Eichstätt-Ingolstadt and at the Pontificia Universidad Católica de Valparaíso, Chile.

A Note from the Editor

The Pink Galaxy was originally published in German and Spanish. In bringing this story to English readers, we've made some updates to reflect events that have unfolded since the previous publications. Additionally, the author took this opportunity to make some refinements to the story and characters, further enriching the experience for all readers. We hope you enjoy this English edition!

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FOREWORD

It is About Defending Dignity and Freedom

Miguel Ángel Rodríguez, former President of Costa Rica

I am grateful to my friend Sebastian Grundberger for the honor of inviting me to write the foreword for this important contribution to the analysis of Latin American political reality. *The Pink Galaxy* presents a well-documented explanation of the various constellations that make up this universe—how they have constituted, their main stars, their various shades, as well as their interrelationships. The Foro de São Paulo, the Grupo de Puebla, the Progressive International, the *Consejo Latinoamericano de Ciencias Sociales* (Latin American Council of Social Sciences), and others are different constellations. There are common features and centripetal forces that bind them together in the galaxy. In this universe, these constellations reinforce each other. Apart from the characteristics that make them part of the pink galaxy, each constellation has its own distinct features.

The author describes their origins, history, and integration; the consensus and ideological nuances of each constellation and its members; their organization, activities, and financing. The pink galaxy is not isolated from other galaxies; it both draws from and supports some of them. This work reveals the collaborative relationships between the Latin American pink galaxy and those of Russia, China, and Iran. Within the pink galaxy, its constellations support the regimes of Cuba, Venezuela, and Nicaragua, encourage the left-wing illiberal populist drift in other nations, and promote actions to weaken electoral systems, the rule of law, and the fundamental rights of citizens. Sebastian

Grundberger leads us to conclude that the actions formed within the pink galaxy pose a serious threat to liberal democracy, extending beyond the borders of our region.

Liberal democracy is characterized by fair electoral systems that, within a framework of public freedoms, ensure the expression and respect of citizens' decisions in selecting their leaders; by the institutional framework of the rule of law, which ensures governments subject to the law that respect citizens' property, political, and civil rights; and by a democratic culture that controls the state to prevent abuse, while a strong state controls society to prevent anarchy.

Political theory and historical evidence demonstrate to us that a society governed by such a constituted liberal democracy is the best guarantee that humans have found to defend the dignity and freedom of all people. However, democracy is always fragile because those who hold power are tempted to abuse it and turn the government into their personal servant, instead of serving the common good. Therefore, in every society, we must always be in the struggle to build, strengthen, and defend liberal democracy.

The Time During Which The Pink Galaxy Operates

The historical conditions we are experiencing today compel us to be particularly cautious in defending liberal democracy. When the Berlin Wall fell and communism collapsed in Europe, many believed in the definitive triumph of the values and social organization that humanity has been building for many centuries: freedom, dignity, equality, and fraternity of all people; electoral democracy and the rule of law; open and competitive markets; international institutions and relations among nations and their trade governed

by pre-established rules rather than mere force; pursuit of the common good and human development; national action and international cooperation to protect our planet.

However, the Great Recession between 2007 and 2009 laid bare the enormous differences among various interests and their manifestations. Freedom and respect for democracy have been declining worldwide, both in developed nations and elsewhere. Freedom House's *Freedom in the World 2023* report indicates that global freedom has declined for 17 consecutive years. For Latin America, the *Latinobarómetro* of that year reveals that while in 2010, 63% of respondents considered democracy preferable to any other form of government, by 2022, only 48% responded the same way.

Our region is not isolated. This work demonstrates it by analyzing the influences of Russia, China, and Iran in the pink galaxy. And transformations are occurring worldwide that profoundly affect our political reality.

The change of era radically modifies our circumstances. If these change, our actions, and their outcomes are impacted, which increases uncertainty. The process of change also uproots us. Political parties in many Western nations lose their ability to serve as crucibles where different group interests amalgamate into a shared vision of the future, into a conception of the common good. Defending sectoral interests and identity rights, parties fragment and multiply. Citizens lose their party roots.

People lose their trust in elites. In-person friendships are replaced by anonymous digital friends who provide neither security nor trust. Social networks facilitate confrontations. With the emergence and prevalence of social networks and their algorithms, unexpected communication is facilitated; messages are easily forwarded and *liked*.

Furthermore, networks divide us into closed and hostile groups and amplify the strength of nonsense, of fake news.

Increased uncertainty and uprootedness lead to frustration. The unknown scares us. Frustrated and scared, we become angry. Without the support of human and spiritual relationships that reassure us, confused and fearful, emotions, primarily anger, intensify, and envy and hatred take hold of peoples. These are conducive conditions for violence. Rationality and love are weakened in human action. These are factors present in the West in this era of change that profoundly affect politics. These elements are exploited by *The Pink Galaxy*, as indicated by Sebastian Grundberger: “By being in a permanent attack mode and appealing to negative primal emotions such as fear, anger, or frustration, the pink galaxy often manages surprisingly well to evade criticism of its own lack of democratic coherence.”

How to Protect Liberal Democracy from The Pink Galaxy?

Faced with accelerated change on all fronts and the magnitude of the problems we face, how do we act to avoid getting lost in the whirlwind of uncertainty? How do we protect liberal democracy from the pink galaxy? The fundamental values that govern human behavior allow us to construct an armor that provides stability amidst change and enables us to fulfill our responsibility in leading public institutions.

Respecting the dignity and freedom of all is the shield that can defend us from the danger posed by the pink galaxy. To respect dignity and freedom, we must defend their guarantee, which is liberal democracy. This structure of fundamental values developed through the evolution of

Judeo-Christian and Greco-Roman culture gives us solidity to maintain our most fundamental behaviors amidst the dialectic of change. It allows us to preserve essential characteristics of ourselves and our society. However, the pink galaxy seeks to exploit these circumstances created by the era of change to impose its harmful ideology, which requires us to adapt our response with intelligence, knowledge, and passion. Therefore, we must be agile, persevering, and deeply committed to defending the freedom and dignity of all people and the institutional framework that guarantees them. In other words, we must not relent; rather, we must prioritize the defense of liberal democracy. This forces us to act together against the constellations that, contrary to this institutional framework, unite within the pink galaxy.

Democratic Right and Democratic Left in the Face of The Pink Galaxy

In Latin America, democratic right-wing and centrist forces naturally oppose the pink galaxy. However, the confrontation has generally been individual and uncoordinated, except for isolated efforts that demand continuity and support, such as the Free America Forum held in Mexico City on October 26, 2023. This work by Sebastian Grundberger must serve as a compelling signal to put an end to individualized and occasional actions, and should be yet another reason for all Latin Americans who love freedom, dignity, and liberal democracy to face the pink galaxy. Unfortunately, in general, democratic left-wing voices have been silent in the face of the pink galaxy's attacks on liberal democracy, or worse yet, have provided them with support.

At times, strong anti-imperialist, anti-United States, anti-colonial, anti-Europe sentiments that still prevail without restraint in certain political and intellectual groups of left-wing socialists have prevented them from understanding the dangers of illiberal populisms with which the pink galaxy entices citizens. At other times, these dangers are recognized, but there is a reluctance to act for fear of losing passionately driven supporters.

It is time for the democratic left and the democratic right to recognize the urgency of defending the institutional framework of liberal democracy. It is time for groups committed to individual freedom, dignity for all people, and human rights to set aside their differences in other areas to join forces in the face of the danger posed by the pink galaxy. It is time to understand that liberal democracy is under threat and that we must unite our efforts to defend it. Once the threat of the pink galaxy has been overcome, there will be time and opportunities to address our differing views from the right and left regarding market efficiency and state intervention.

In response to the pink galaxy purposes and actions clearly outlined by Sebastian Grundberger, it is also time for freedom-loving democrats from the United States and Europe to support the united efforts of Latin Americans in defense of the freedom and dignity of people guaranteed by liberal democracy. Enough of surrendering to false revolutionary romanticism.

When Fidel Castro and his bearded young guerrilla members descended from the Sierra Maestra over six decades ago, the world, and particularly Latin America, accepted them as heroes. The enchantment reached its peak, making Che Guevara an icon, despite his role as the person in charge of executions and violence. Similar mythologizing

of false heroes occurred with the triumphs of Sandinism in Nicaragua and Hugo Chávez in Venezuela. This mythical admiration has been exploited by the Ortega-Murillo and Maduro regimes. While not reaching those extremes, leaders like Evo Morales in Bolivia, the Kirchners in Argentina, and Correa in Ecuador have followed their footsteps, enchanting, subjugating, and impoverishing many.

The rulers of Brazil, Mexico, and Colombia—the three most populous countries in Latin America—support and bolster these leaders, who are stars of varying magnitude within the constellations of the pink galaxy. The threat is real. These myths of false heroes have persisted among many individuals, party organizations, and leftist think tanks, disregarding the violations of freedom, dignity, and liberal democracy committed by these pink galaxy members. Disregarding the hardships imposed on their peoples. It is time to awaken from this enchantment and stop the despotism, violations of life, freedom, and many human rights, impoverishment, and loss of homes and homeland caused by the actions of the pink galaxy to so many Latin Americans.

PART 1 / Introduction



1. From the Pink Tide to the Pink Galaxy

When Tabaré Vázquez was elected President of Uruguay in 2004, marking the first decidedly leftist President in the country's history, American journalist Larry Rother coined the term pink tide in an article for *The New York Times*. This expression described the growing electoral victories of moderate leftists at that time. For Rother, these *pink*, moderately leftist governments were originally seen as a counterpoint to revolutionary Marxist *red* regimes.¹

However, the term quickly took on a different connotation in general use. The *pink tide* became the common expression referring to the leftward shift experienced in Latin America between 1998 and 2014, reaching its peak around 2010. The expression *pink tide* was soon used to refer to governments with very different democratic qualities, from regimes that quickly deteriorated into authoritarianism, like those of Hugo Chávez (Venezuela, 1999-2013) or Evo Morales (Bolivia, 2006-2019), to rather social-democratic left-wing governments like those of Michelle Bachelet (Chile, 2006-2010 and 2014-2018) or Tabaré Vázquez and José Mujica (Uruguay, 2005-2020). Whether some *pink tide* governments evolved into dark red (authoritarian-dictatorial) or pale pink (social-democratic) was often not evident until several years later.

Beyond whether it is justified to declare a second pink tide² due to the growing number of left-wing electoral victories since 2019, some similarities between the two waves of left-wing victories are striking. In both cases, there are enormous differences in the democratic quality of various

1 Sinaipar and Maya (2019).

2 Arellano (2022).

left-wing governments. The spectrum ranges from closed authoritarian systems in Cuba, Venezuela, or Nicaragua, through democratically elected left-wing leaders with varying degrees of authoritarian tendencies, like Andrés Manuel López Obrador (Mexico), Xiomara Castro (Honduras), or Gustavo Petro (Colombia), to left-wing governments like that of Gabriel Boric (Chile) situated within the democratic field.

All serious Latin American surveys, such as *LAPOP* or *Latinobarómetro*, indicate that democracy in the subcontinent has steadily lost prestige over the past two decades. In the *Latinobarómetro* 2023 survey, a majority of 54% of surveyed Latin Americans stated that they would also support a non-democratic government if it solved their problems. In 2002, this figure was 44%³. According to *The Economist*, since 2008 no region in the world has experienced as much decline in democratic quality as Latin America.⁴ During this time, the magazine observed a drastic increase in the number of *hybrid regimes*, from three to eight. For *The Economist*, these state structures situated somewhere between authoritarianism and democracy include countries as diverse as El Salvador, Mexico, and Peru.

The various left-wing governments during the so-called *pink tide* and their aftermath were essential players in the political development of Latin America at a time when a simultaneous erosion of democratic institutions took place. In searching for the causes of the loss of confidence in democracy, one cannot ignore the link between the *pink tide* and the democratic crisis. This text will demonstrate this relationship.

3 Grundberger and Arellano (2023).

4 Latin America is under authoritarian threat (2015).

The first pink tide has evolved into a *pink galaxy* comprising leftist actors, institutions, and associations that, behind a progressive facade, are actively working to undermine the Western-style liberal democratic principles. While this pink galaxy nominally includes both authoritarian and democratic actors, it is dominated by its more authoritarian *planets*. Furthermore, Russia, China, and Iran support this process from the outside and exploit the pink galaxy for their own geopolitical interests.

In this context, *authoritarian leftism* is understood as that which subordinates democratic order to other aspirations. It does not see democracy as an inherent value but as a means to attain and consolidate power (see also Chapter 11).

Transnational alliances⁵ such as the Foro de São Paulo, the Grupo de Puebla, the *Consejo Latinoamericano de Ciencias Sociales* (Latin American Council of Social Sciences, CLACSO), or the Progressive International (PI) act in highly coordinated ways when it comes to positioning their narratives internationally and making them socially acceptable. In this context, according to the thesis presented here, the pink galaxy operates in certain areas following the logic of a transnational authoritarian left party.

The phenomenon of *collaborations between democratic and authoritarian forces* is not limited to political leftism. Especially, in recent years, there has been a growing trend of similar projects emerging within the political right. These require, however, separate consideration due to their specific characteristics, such as weaker institutional

5 For an academic discussion on the phenomenon of these transnational alliances in the Latin American context, see the pioneering work of Fernando Pedrosa (2023a), which is a recurring reference in this text.

integration compared to the left and a very different historical formation.

There is a wide range of literature on the right-wing political spectrum. Many studies are produced from within the pink galaxy's ideological orbit. On the other hand, there is a lack of literature on left-wing authoritarian networks in Latin America. Nor is enough written about the influence of China, Russia, and Iran in this context.

The aim of this text is to provide an overview of the actors, connections, and objectives of the pink galaxy. First, each of the central actors in this network is examined before discussing the role played by authoritarian external powers like Russia, China, or Iran. Finally, the tactics and techniques of the pink galaxy as a whole are analyzed.

This research focuses first on recent past events, roughly from the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020. Attention is centered particularly on the year 2023, during which the activities of the pink galaxy were systematically observed. Instead, historical derivations are minimized to what is necessary to understand the context.

PART 2 / The actors



2. The Foro de São Paulo, Origin of the Pink Galaxy

At the XXVI Meeting of the Foro de São Paulo in Brasilia on June 29, 2023, the gathered left celebrated one of their own. None other than the President of Brazil, Lula da Silva, inaugurated the congress.⁶ The President rallied those present, stating, “I want to tell you that the Foro de São Paulo is a blessing that we have been able to create in Latin America.”

2.1. Origin and History

Lula’s appearance at the Foro de São Paulo was no coincidence. The Brazilian President is perhaps the most important historical figure of this organization. After consulting with Cuban dictator Fidel Castro, the union leader and politician of the Workers’ Party, who had been defeated for the presidency of Brazil in a runoff election the year before, invited like-minded individuals to the Meeting of Parties and Political Movements of Latin America and the Caribbean in São Paulo from July 2 to 4, 1990. The goal of the gathering was to “reflect on the aftermath of the fall of the Berlin Wall, and possible alternative and autonomous paths for the left in Latin America and the Caribbean.”⁷ Among other things, participants aimed to “advance with consensus proposals for anti-imperialist and popular action” and to establish a “new concept of continental unity and integration.” A total of 48 parties and organizations from 14 countries accepted this invitation. Subsequently, this group was renamed the Foro de São Paulo. Lula himself recalls:

6 Da Silva (2023). Complete original speech.

7 Brief background and fundamentals. Foro de São Paulo website.

We started talking with comrades from the Communist Party of Cuba and with comrade Fidel Castro, and we proposed the possibility of holding a meeting with all the Latin American left, many of whom at that time were fighting in very small parties trying to make the revolution. And then we decided to invite all organizations so that together we could discuss, through much organization of workers and the general public, the democratic path to conquering power in our countries. Thus, was born the idea of convening the first forum in São Paulo.⁸

The 1990 meeting took place in a changing global political environment. *Perestroika*, *glasnost*, and the fall of the Berlin Wall heralded the collapse of the *iron curtain* and inspired much of the world with dreams of a future of freedom and democracy. In China, Deng Xiaoping proclaimed *market socialism*, opening the country to the world. At the same time, Fidel Castro's regime lost its most important ally, the Soviet Union, which had financially supported the country for many years during the Cold War era.

Under the sponsorship of the Cuban dictator, the express goal of the Foro de São Paulo from the beginning was to gain power within democratic structures. The most successful phase of the Foro de São Paulo began in 1994 when the future Venezuelan head of state, Hugo Chávez, recognized the Forum as an ideal vehicle for his regional power projection. Starting in 1999, when Chávez was elected President of Venezuela, the country's oil wealth provided unprecedented financial resources. When Lula himself was elected President of Brazil between 2003 and 2010, during

8 Da Silva (2023). Complete original speech.

the commodities boom era and later the *Car Wash (Lava Jato)* corruption scandal, Brazil's financial power was added to the mix.

This was followed by the peak phase of the pink tide that covered Latin America with left-wing governments, most of which had close ties to the Foro de São Paulo. While the Communist Party of the one-party state of Cuba was the only participating political force leading a government when the Forum was founded in 1990, its friends and allies colored practically the entire region in various shades of red over the next twenty years. The spectrum ranged from social democratic heads of state like Michelle Bachelet in Chile (whose Socialist Party belongs to the Foro de São Paulo), through Rafael Correa (Ecuador), Cristina Fernández de Kirchner (Argentina), Ollanta Humala (Peru), Fernando Lugo (Paraguay), Evo Morales (Bolivia), to the regimes of Cuba, Nicaragua, and Venezuela.

2.2. Ideological Foundations

Since its foundation, the Foro de São Paulo has been responsible for numerous communiqués and documents. Three examples are mentioned here: the “São Paulo Declaration” (1990),⁹ which established the Forum; the “Consensus of Our America” (Managua, 2017) which sees itself as an international political program; and the final communiqué of the 2023 Forum Summit in Brasília.¹⁰ These three sources, spanning a period of 33 years, demonstrate that three central points of the Foro de São Paulo's political doctrine remain unchanged.

9 Declaración de São Paulo (1990).

10 Declaración Final del xxvi Encuentro del Foro de São Paulo (2023).

2.2.1. Unconditional Support for the Cuban Dictatorship

Since its foundation, the unconditional defense of the Cuban dictatorship has been a defining and formative element of the Foro de São Paulo's identity. As early as 1990, the Forum expressed "solidarity with the socialist revolution in Cuba." The working group that drafted the "Consensus of Our America" on behalf of the Foro de São Paulo dedicated it "to the exemplary and revolutionary consequence of Commander Fidel Castro." The 2023 final communiqué declares Cuba as "universal heritage of dignity."

Additionally, the Foro de São Paulo conducts campaigns to whitewash the Cuban regime internationally. For example, on August 10, 2023, it launched *Cuba vive y resiste* ("Cuba Lives and Resists"), an attempt to collect one million signatures through supposed *solidarity movements* to persuade the United States to remove the regime from the State Sponsors of Terrorism list.¹¹ On its website, the Foro de São Paulo openly promotes joint training courses with the Communist Party of Cuba.¹²

Since the success of the revolution in 1959, Cuba has been a single-party dictatorship with a strong cult of leadership around the late dictator Fidel Castro, who passed away in 2008. Independent media and political dissidents are systematically repressed and persecuted. A significant wave of repression against dissidents occurred after the anti-government protests of 2021. Dozens of protesters are still held in Cuban jails. Human rights organizations estimate that the total number of political prisoners could reach one

¹¹ CubaViveResiste (2023).

¹² El Foro de SP convoca para curso de formación en Cuba (2023).

thousand.¹³ The traditional repression against any form of political pluralism has not changed under Fidel Castro's successors, Raúl Castro and Miguel Díaz-Canel.

2.2.2. Opposition to U.S. Imperialism and Neoliberalism

Mônica Valente, the executive secretary of the Foro de São Paulo, described her organization's goal in a 2022 speech as follows: "To confront the common enemy of our peoples, U.S. imperialism and neoliberalism."¹⁴ Heavily influenced by Cuban government propaganda, the "Consensus" calls for the "the liberation of our peoples from imperialist and capitalist domination" and denounces "colonial domination." Imperialism is exclusively associated with the United States or Europe; Chinese or Russian imperialism is never mentioned. The 2023 final document condemns "the unilateral sanctions against Nicaragua and Venezuela, and interference in the internal affairs of these countries."

2.2.3. Ambivalent Relationship with Democracy

Although the Foro de São Paulo frequently uses the words democracy or democratic, it does so in its particular context. The "Consensus" calls for "a correlation of forces in favor of the popular democratic field to continue advancing toward a socialist horizon." Therefore, democracy is hierarchically subordinated to socialism or instrumentalized as a means to achieve the end of reaching it. The Foro de São Paulo, which proclaims itself "the most

¹³ Internationale Gesellschaft für Menschenrechte.

¹⁴ The FSP begins a cycle of discussions with PC China.

representative regional political construction of revolutionary, progressive, and democratic organizations of Latin America and the Caribbean,” demands in the “Consensus” that democracy must “necessarily deepen its popular, direct, participatory, and community character.” There has been no further development of this position since 1990 when it demanded “true social and mass democracy” as a replacement for “neoliberal capitalism, and its aftermath of suffering, misery, backwardness, and antidemocratic oppression.”

The concept of *liberal democracy* as such is rejected, and the construction of a different type of *democracy* is demanded, whose main component is not the free and sovereign decision of each citizen. The final declaration of 2023 advocates for *participatory democracy*. The Venezuelan Chavista regime has used the concept of “direct, participatory, and protagonist democracy” as an element to replace representative democracy and as an element of the deconstruction of the State.¹⁵

Therefore, the position regarding democracy is ambivalent. This is also showcased in two resolutions approved at the Foro de São Paulo Meeting in Brasilia. On the one hand, regarding the authoritarian style of governance by Nayib Bukele as President of El Salvador, the FSP denounces the “instrumentalization of public institutions to exert political control over political parties and social leaderships, NGOs, universities, [...] up to the modification of electoral rules, concentrating all power to change from a democratic model to that of a hegemonic party.”¹⁶ Although all this objectively also applies to Cuba, full support for the Cuban

15 Puerta (2022).

16 Social and political situation in El Salvador (2023).

Revolution is declared at the same time, based “on the principles of solidarity, social justice, internationalism, and the unity of our peoples.”¹⁷

Lula da Silva, who on May 29, 2023 dismissed the autocratic nature of the Venezuelan regime as a “narrative” and affirmed that there is “democracy” in Venezuela,¹⁸ intervened a month later at the Foro de São Paulo in Brasília and rejected criticisms of its antidemocratic orientation, labeling them as agitation from the extreme right:

How many times have we been accused; you know how much defamation and how many pejorative attacks are made against the left in South America. The fascist extreme right does not see us, neither in Brazil nor in the world, as democratic organizations. They treat us as if we were terrorists, accuse us of being communists, thinking that we are offended by it.

2.3. Organization, Activities, and Funding

The Foro de São Paulo defines itself as an association of “Latin American and Caribbean political parties and movements.”¹⁹ In comparison with traditional party organizations, it explicitly expands its focus to other political organizations and social movements. Thus, the Colombian guerrilla group, *Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia* (Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia, FARC),

17 Foro de São Paulo aprobó resolución de solidaridad con Cuba (2023).

18 *Lula da Silva* dijo que en Venezuela «hay democracia» y que en el mundo hay un «prejuicio muy grande» contra Nicolás Maduro (2023).

19 Foro de São Paulo.

engaged in armed struggle until 2017, also participated from the beginning in the Foro de São Paulo. According to their own information, the Foro de São Paulo today consists of a total of 123 parties and organizations from 27 countries (see Annex 1). Among these diverse member parties are the *Partido Revolucionario Democrático de Panamá* (Panama Democratic Revolutionary Party); parts of the coalition of the *Frente Amplio Uruguayo* (Broad Front in Uruguay); the *Partido de los Trabajadores de Brazil* (Worker's Party of Brazil, PT); the *Partido Socialista of Chile* (Socialist Party of Chile); parts of Gustavo Petro's government coalition in Colombia; the ruling Mexican party *Movimiento de Regeneración Nacional* (National Regeneration Movement, MORENA); Rafael Correa's party, *Revolución Ciudadana* (RC, Ecuador); the ruling party in Bolivia, *Movimiento al Socialismo* (MAS); the Communist Party of Cuba; the *Partido Socialista Unido de Venezuela* (PSUV); or the *Frente Sandinista de Liberación Nacional* (FSLN) led by Nicaraguan dictator Daniel Ortega. Until the election of Javier Milei as President of Argentina in 2023, 13 Latin American states were governed by parties affiliated with the FSP or coalitions including Foro de São Paulo forces. These included for the first time the five largest economies in the region: Brazil, Mexico, Argentina, Colombia, and Chile.

The Foro de São Paulo has a fixed organizational structure, described on its website. According to this, the executive secretariat is headquartered in São Paulo. There are three regional secretariats: for the Southern Cone based in Uruguay, for Central America and the Caribbean based in El Salvador, and for the Andean and Amazonian regions based in Colombia. There is also a permanent working group made up of representatives from 16 nationalities who meet periodically.

The most important body of the Foro de São Paulo is the Annual High-Level Meeting. A total of 27 such meetings have taken place since 1990. The one in Brasilia in June 2023 was the first since the pandemic. Depending on the political situation in Latin America, heads of state and government have been more or less active participants in the meetings. At the 2019 meeting in Caracas, Cuban dictator Miguel Díaz-Canel and Venezuelan ruler Nicolás Maduro took the stage at the closing event.²⁰

Since the inception of the Foro de São Paulo, the Workers' Party of Brazil (PT) has dominated its organizational structure. The general secretariat is headquartered in São Paulo, and the executive secretary is PT politician Mônica Valente. The prominent former union leader was also a member of the São Paulo city government and international secretary of the PT. In addition to her role in the Foro de São Paulo, Valente remains active within the PT. In 2022, she was part of Lula's government transition team in the area of international relations. In recent statements, on behalf of the Foro de São Paulo, she openly sided with Nicolás Maduro in his dispute with Venezuela's interim President Juan Guaidó and defended the detentions of opposition figures by Daniel Ortega's dictatorship in Nicaragua.²¹

There is little official information on the financing of the Foro de São Paulo. While, on the one hand, it is stated that financing is a matter for member parties,²² it can be assumed that governments support the organization of the annual meetings in their respective countries, such as Venezuela in

20 Presidents of Venezuela and Cuba Close 25th Foro de São Paulo.

21 Nicaragua: el Foro de San Pablo defendió al régimen de Daniel Ortega y justificó las detenciones a los candidatos opositores. (2021).

22 Fernandes (2023).

2019 or Brazil in 2023, in both cases with the participation of heads of state. There are also repeated reports of drug money flowing to the Foro de São Paulo. Reference is made to the fact that, as mentioned, the Colombian guerrilla group FARC, long active in the drug business, has been involved in the Foro de São Paulo from the beginning. Its successor party, Comunes, is also a member of the Forum (see also chapter 10.6).

The Foro de São Paulo has a very detailed website displaying numerous documents, resolutions, and programs from various meetings. It also has a Twitter/X channel (@ForodeSãoPaulo) that is regularly updated and has nearly 18,000 followers (January 2024). The Instagram channel, much newer, has around 2,000 followers.

2.4. Conclusions

According to political scientist Miguel Martínez Meucci, the foundation of the Foro de São Paulo by democratic union leader *Lula* da Silva and dictator Fidel Castro already highlights the great dilemma that still accompanies it today. The author notes a dangerous ambiguity and, referring to *Lula* and Castro, arrives at the following conclusion:

However, their different paths did not prevent them from getting along wonderfully to create an organization in which this controversial cohabitation persists over time, becoming a hallmark. What truly matters to everyone within this partnership is consolidating a continental left-wing hegemony, where those most respectful of democracy turn a blind eye to the misdeeds committed by their more brutal colleagues.²³

23 Martínez Meucci (2023a).

In some sense, this collaboration between democratic and authoritarian forces, exemplified by the cooperation between Lula and Castro, is not just a *hallmark* of the Foro de São Paulo but of the entire pink galaxy. Therefore, the Foro de São Paulo can be considered as its origin.

3. El Grupo de Puebla: A More Modern Packaging

Cuban Foreign Minister Bruno Rodríguez was not the only one acclaimed at the 9th Meeting of the Grupo de Puebla in September 2023, where he believed to recognize the “spiritual presence” of Fidel Castro, *Che* Guevara, and Hugo Chávez in the room. The Venezuelan Vice President also received thundering applause. Delcy Rodríguez complained about “permanent attacks” against the Bolivarian Revolution and various alleged foreign invasion attempts in Venezuela. None of those present discussed the systematic human rights violations and political prisoners in both countries. Neither former Spanish Prime Minister José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero, nor Mexican Foreign Minister Alicia Bárcena, nor any of the more than two hundred people who attended the meeting at the International Museum of Baroque in Puebla raised their voices.

3.1. Origin and history

Similar to the Foro de São Paulo, the origins of the Grupo de Puebla (GdP) lie in a process of left-wing self-reflection. However, this initially did not happen in the institutional context of a meeting but in a 2019 documentary. Former Chilean deputy and three-time presidential candidate Marco Enríquez-Ominami (known by his abbreviation ME-O),

also a journalist and filmmaker, searched throughout Latin America for the reasons behind the difficulties of the political left. In the context of electoral victories by Mauricio Macri in Argentina, Sebastián Piñera in Chile, and Jair Bolsonaro in Brazil, he interviewed various left-wing politicians for his documentary *Al fondo a la izquierda* (“At the Back and to the Left”).²⁴ The film, directed by Argentine Rodrigo Vázquez, was also made possible with the support of the Franco-German public channel ARTE. Among the filmmaker’s interlocutors were then-Bolivian President Evo Morales, former Ecuadorian President Rafael Correa, Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro, former Brazilian President Dilma Rousseff, and former Uruguayan President José *Pepe* Mujica.

ME-O promised a reflection “on the left, from the left.”²⁵ The film, premiered on February 19, 2019, does not offer real conclusions but rather more or less superficial dialogues and simplifications between good (the left) and evil (the “neoliberal” model). Venezuela is described as an “imperfect democracy”; possible criticisms are subtly launched and serve as an invitation for Maduro, Correa, or Morales to spread their narratives. Maduro can claim that Venezuela is a “democracy” because there have been more elections there in recent years than in the United States or Chile. No critical questions are posed. All interlocutors are grouped as “leftists” or “progressives,” regardless of whether they are autocrats (Maduro) or democrats (Mujica). The film ends with the phrase “The left must move forward. Despite the contradictions. Despite the mistakes. Otherwise, what?”

24 Available, for example, on Facebook.

25 Zúñiga (2019).

Just a few months after the premiere of the documentary *Al fondo a la izquierda* (“At the Back and to the Left”), on the initiative of ME-O, around thirty political left-wing figures gathered in Puebla from July 12 to 14 under the title “ProgresivaMente”. Among them were former Colombian President Ernesto Samper, former Ecuadorian Foreign Minister Guillaume Long, and Chilean communist deputy Karol Cariola. There, the so-called *Grupo Progresista Latinoamericano* (Progressive Latin American Group) was founded as a “space for reflection and political exchange in Latin America” to curb the “advance of conservative right-wing” forces.²⁶ Many other personalities quickly joined the original participants in the forum, which soon became known as the Grupo de Puebla. Except for Nicolás Maduro, all the politicians whom Enríquez-Ominami interviewed in his documentary joined the group. As the group expanded, it began to meet twice a year. During the pandemic, meetings were held virtually.

3.2. Ideological Foundations

The Grupo de Puebla regularly draws attention with final statements at its meetings. In addition, in 2021, it adopted the so-called *Manifiesto Progresista* (Progressive Manifesto) as a kind of basic program. There are also numerous statements from its key figures. In particular, ME-O grants interviews on behalf of the group. At least three consistent thematic axes can be identified.

26 Qué es el Grupo de Puebla, el nuevo eje progresista de América Latina al que apunta Alberto Fernández - Grupo de Puebla, (2019).

3.2.1. Negotiations with the Venezuelan Regime

In his interviews, Marco Enríquez-Ominami repeatedly characterizes the Grupo de Puebla as the opposite pole to the Grupo de Lima (*Lima Group*).²⁷ The latter was an alliance of states that, since 2017, promoted international isolation of the Maduro regime and a democratic opening in the Caribbean state. In contrast, the Grupo de Puebla called for the “need for dialogue in Venezuela.”²⁸ This clear opposition to the Lima Group gave the Grupo de Puebla its identity from the beginning. To a certain extent, the demand for an indulgent attitude toward the Venezuelan regime is the cornerstone of the Grupo de Puebla, just as defending the Cuban dictatorship is for the Foro de São Paulo. The communiqué from the 2023 GdP Meeting accuses internationally recognized former interim Venezuelan President Juan Guaidó of “coup attempts”, while the communiqué from the 2021 VII Meeting declares: “We support democracy in Venezuela and strongly reject interference attempts.”²⁹ In 2023, ME-O asserted on Chilean television that Nicolás Maduro was “the legitimate President of a country in democratic crisis.”³⁰

This strongly Venezuela-focused attitude generated a kind of obsession within the Grupo de Puebla with the person of Luis Almagro, the Uruguayan Secretary General of the Organization of American States (OAS). Since assuming office in 2015, Almagro has advocated for a consistent stance against the Maduro regime. Alfredo Serrano

27 Usi (2021, March 11).

28 Primer Encuentro. Puebla/México.

29 Declaración de la VII Reunión del Grupo de Puebla (2021).

30 Sin Filtros TV [YouTube] (2019).

Mancilla remarks in an article in the newspaper *Página 12* and on the Grupo de Puebla's website that the group's intention is to "end Almagro's OAS."³¹ At the September 2023 Grupo de Puebla Meeting, the book *La OEA en tiempos de Almagro* ("The OAS in Times of Almagro"), co-edited by CLACSO and CELAG, was presented. In it, Ernesto Samper, among others, accuses Almagro of defending "the *status quo* more than democracy" and demands the immediate resignation of the OAS Secretary General.³² However, all this opposition to the OAS as such, which ME-O fundamentally denies legitimacy in its current form,³³ does not prevent the Grupo de Puebla from demanding its intervention if it serves the group's political position. This was the case, for example, when much of the political right in Guatemala was reluctant to allow the democratically elected President, Bernardo Arévalo, to assume office in 2023.³⁴

The Grupo de Puebla extends its uncritical servility toward the Venezuelan regime to other autocratic governments in the region. The Progressive Manifesto³⁵ adopted by the Group in 2021 calls to "defend Cuba, Nicaragua, and Venezuela from aggressions and interferences by powers or third states." At the 2023 Meeting of the Group, Carol Kariola, a Chilean deputy of the Communist Party and early militant of the Grupo de Puebla, denounced that Cuba and Venezuela were "subjugated peoples." By this,

31 Serrano Mancilla (2021).

32 Samper et al. (2023).

33 Martínez (2021).

34 Statement. El Grupo de Puebla propone la aplicación de la cláusula democrática de la OEA en Guatemala (2023).

35 Grupo de Puebla Progressive Manifesto (Manifiesto Progresista del Grupo de Puebla) (2021).

she was not referring to *subjugation* by their respective regimes, but exclusively to the economic sanctions imposed by the United States.

3.2.2. Combat Against the So-called *Lawfare*

Since the 2019 Meeting of the Grupo de Puebla, combating so-called lawfare has been the second pillar of the group's activism. This compound word of "law" and "warfare" is seen as "judicial warfare", as stated in the communiqué of the first meeting in 2019. The founding of the subsidiary organization of Grupo de Puebla, the *Consejo Latinoamericano para la Justicia y la Democracia* (Latin American Council for Justice and Democracy, CLAJUD), is primarily dedicated to this issue. In a book on *lawfare* published by three Grupo de Puebla members, available on the Grupo de Puebla's website, Larissa Ramina and Carol Proner, members of CLAJUD, define the term lawfare as follows:

In Latin America, we verify that sectors of the Judiciary have been acting in a completely distorted manner from their original function, with the complicity of hegemonic media to undermine power projects alternative to neoliberalism, as well as progressive leaderships. This phenomenon is conventionally called judicial warfare or lawfare.³⁶

This definition limits the concept of *lawfare* exclusively to investigations targeting left-wing politicians on the continent. Consequently, in the final declaration of the

³⁶ Samper et al. (2023, p. 11).

2023 Meeting of the Grupo de Puebla, examples of victims of this kind of “persecution” are cited, including Cristina Fernández de Kirchner (Argentina), Gustavo Petro (Colombia), or Xiomara Castro (Honduras). Also portrayed as victims of *lawfare* are former Bolivian President Evo Morales, accused by the OAS of electoral fraud, former Ecuadorian President Rafael Correa, sentenced to eight years in prison for corruption in his country, and former Peruvian President Pedro Castillo, who on December 7, 2022, after an attempted self-coup, was removed by Parliament in a constitutional procedure. For the Grupo de Puebla, *lawfare* also threatens its own coordinator, Marco Enríquez-Ominami (Chile), President *Lula da Silva* (Brazil), and former Spanish judge Baltasar Garzón, the main promoter of CLAJUD. It is noteworthy that the *lawfare* narrative was also recently adopted by Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez when he accused the opposition Popular Party of *lawfare* during the debate on amnesty for convicted Catalan separatists.³⁷

It is striking that many members of the Grupo de Puebla are being investigated for various reasons (corruption, electoral fraud, blackmail, etc.) or have even been convicted, which the entire group denounces as *lawfare*. Apart from the imprisoned former Peruvian President Pedro Castillo, none of the mentioned individuals are currently in prison. In Cuba, Nicaragua, or Venezuela, however, members of the democratic opposition are in jail or systematically persecuted, prevented from exercising their political rights, or sent into exile. These blatant violations of all democratic principles are ignored or openly justified by the Grupo de Puebla. In this context, the deafening silence of the Grupo

37 González (2023).

de Puebla regarding the exclusion of María Corina Machado from the presidential elections in Venezuela, confirmed in February 2024, resonates heavily.

3.2.3. Ambiguous Relationship with Democracy

In principle, the Grupo de Puebla uses the word *democracy* or *democratic* more frequently than the Foro de São Paulo. In close relation to this rhetoric, its followers refer to themselves as *progressives* rather than *leftists* or *revolutionaries*. The Progressive Manifesto begins with moderate words:

As democratic and progressive citizens, gathered around the defense of the basic principles of freedom, equality, solidarity, sovereignty, and social justice, we declare our agreement in this Progressive Manifesto.³⁸

However, in the same document, the “neoliberal model” is accused of weakening democracy. Similarly, there is a demand to defend democracy against the “aggressive conservative and neo-fascist nationalism.” In addition to the fact that the Grupo de Puebla only perceives democracy as threatened from the right, it is also attempting, like the Foro de São Paulo, to redefine the concept of democracy. The Progressive Manifesto understands democracy as “a process to turn social relations of power inequality into bonds of shared authority,” and calls for advancing toward “participatory and radical democracies.” The 2023 Grupo de Puebla Meeting outcome document also calls for a “new democratic citizenship.” In an interview, ME-O relativized the universal character of democracy by placing democracy

38 Manifesto Progresista del Grupo de Puebla (2021).

challenges in the United States or Chile on the same level as in the “democratic model” in China (!):

My model of democracy, a legislative, and liberal one, is close to Venezuela, and not far from Venezuela. I have observations about the Chinese democratic model, the American democratic model, the Chilean democratic model. Human rights violations concern me in Chile and Venezuela. In both countries, it seems to me to be of utmost urgency.³⁹

It is noteworthy that at the beginning of its existence, the Grupo de Puebla did not openly include particularly authoritarian representatives in its circle. While it has been spreading narratives acceptable to authoritarian states since its founding, no politicians from Cuba, Venezuela, or Nicaragua appeared in the early meetings. Until 2021, ME-O claimed that there were no Venezuelan members in the group.⁴⁰ In this way, in the eyes of some observers, it was initially possible to maintain an appearance of democratic moderation and, particularly in the case of Venezuela, to give the impression of an honest broker by calling for “dialogue.” However, starting from the September 2023 Meeting, due to the prominent role of Delcy Rodríguez (Venezuela) and Bruno Rodríguez (Cuba), this pretense can be considered abandoned. Jorge Rodríguez, one of Maduro’s strongmen as President of the National Assembly of Venezuela, is now an official member of the Grupo de Puebla.

39 Usi (2021).

40 Usi (2021).

3.3. Organization, Activities, and Funding

Regarding its organization, the Grupo de Puebla consciously takes a different path from the Foro de São Paulo. Political parties and organizations as such cannot be members of the Grupo de Puebla. Instead, it currently consists of 62 individuals from Latin America and Spain (see Annex 2). According to its coordinator, Enríquez-Ominami, the aim is to be “not just a think tank, but one of action.”⁴¹ This allows the Grupo de Puebla to act more flexibly than the Foro de São Paulo, which depends on the consent of its member organizations and has a reputation problem due to the formal membership of parties that support dictatorships. Prominent members of the Grupo de Puebla include the President of Bolivia, Luis Arce; his predecessor Evo Morales; former Spanish Prime Minister José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero; former Argentine President Alberto Fernández; Mexican Foreign Minister and former executive director of ECLAC, Alicia Bárcena; Brazilian Finance Minister Fernando Haddad; President of the Mexican party MORENA, Mario Delgado; and former Spanish Minister of Equality and Podemos politician, Irene Montero.⁴²

In addition, there is the so-called *Grupo Parlamentario Progresista Iberoamericano* (Ibero-American Progressive Parliamentary Group) as the parliamentary arm of the Grupo de Puebla, as well as its legal arm, the *Consejo Latinoamericano de Justicia y Democracia* (Latin American Council for Justice and Democracy, CLAJUD), with an influential role played by Spanish former judge and political activist Baltasar Garzón. Garzón gained international

41 Urreiztieta (2020).

42 Grupo de Puebla. Founders (2021).

recognition for his accusations against former Chilean dictator Augusto Pinochet. He now works on various cases as a lawyer for individuals associated with the Maduro regime,⁴³ such as Nicolás Maduro's son or Colombian businessman Alex Saab, who was extradited to Venezuela from the United States. In Spain, Garzón was sentenced in 2012 to eleven years of professional disqualification for resorting to unauthorized wiretaps during investigations. The former judge considers himself a victim of *lawfare*.

The Grupo de Puebla is led by a coordination council composed of ME-O, Ernesto Samper, former Argentine Secretary of Climate Change Cecilia Nicolini, and Brazilian lawyer Carol Proner. Meetings are usually held twice a year and remain the Grupo de Puebla's most important forum. Each meeting adopts a final declaration. The group also periodically drafts communiqués on current political issues and publishes books through CLAJUD.

Unlike the Foro de São Paulo, the Grupo de Puebla's website appears more modern. Social media channels are used more strategically, which is also reflected in the nearly 47,000 followers on Twitter/X (@ProgresaLatam) as of January 2024. The Grupo de Puebla is also significantly more active on Instagram than the Foro de São Paulo, with almost 13,000 followers. Additionally, it publishes a newsletter three times a year with the most relevant information.

The Grupo de Puebla does not provide information on the funding of its activities. It seems to be using infrastructure from Chile, for example, through the *Fundación Progresá*⁴⁴, closely linked to the Progressive Party (*Partido*

43 Alberto News (Website). Hijo de Maduro utilizó bufete de Baltasar Garzón (2022).

44 Fundación Progresá. Website.

Progresista) led by ME-O. The Grupo de Puebla and the *Fundación Progresista* are linked on their websites. Furthermore, both sites are surprisingly similar in structure, and the *Fundación Progresista* acts as a co-organizer of Grupo de Puebla meetings.

The Group successfully seeks international support for its events. In 2023 alone, two important meetings were held outside the usual framework. With much fanfare and considerable economic expenditure, the Argentine government hosted the Third World Human Rights Forum from March 20 to 24 in Buenos Aires. By using the logo of a local UNESCO center, an appearance of respectability and international validity was projected. However, the protagonists of the events were the members of the Grupo de Puebla, who rejoiced in the grand stage to promote their agenda.

While Alberto Fernández, a Group member, celebrated in his inaugural speech that the protection of human rights in Argentina was a “matter of State,” Evo Morales applauded from the front row, just two days after criticizing the International Criminal Court’s arrest warrant against his “brother” Vladimir Putin and expressing solidarity against “political accusations.”⁴⁵ The centerpiece of the so-called Human Rights Forum was an “act of solidarity” from the Grupo de Puebla with Cristina Fernández de Kirchner, sentenced to six years in prison and a perpetual ban from holding any political office due to corruption. She is also a key figure in a CLAJUD book presented on the occasion about the alleged *lawfare* against her.

The second example is the s&d Latin America Day⁴⁶ celebrated by the “Socialist and Democrat” caucus of the

45 Evo Morales (2023).

46 s&d Latin America Day. Website.

European Parliament, along with the Grupo de Puebla and the German Social Democratic Foundation Friedrich Ebert (FES), on June 6, 2023, at the European Parliament in Brussels, ahead of the EU-Latin America summit. Among others, Ernesto Samper, Marco Enríquez-Ominami, and Rafael Correa were included as speakers. The latter, criticized during his tenure as Ecuador's President for persecuting political opponents and lack of freedom of expression, took the podium to complain about alleged *lawfare* against left-wing politicians.

Politicians from the European social democratic left send greetings to the Grupo de Puebla. In 2023, Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez addressed participants at the Puebla summit. It remains a secret what exactly Sánchez meant when he thanked the Grupo de Puebla “for your fundamental contributions to achieving equality, prosperity, and social justice.”⁴⁷ PSOE MEP Javier López Fernández was also present at the meeting in Puebla. Given the close links between the Grupo de Puebla and the PSOE, it is not surprising that the Spanish government has vigorously pressed at the European level to review sanctions against the Venezuelan regime.⁴⁸ Conversely, the Spanish Prime Minister could repeatedly rely on favorable communiqués from the Grupo de Puebla and CLAJUD. This occurred in the context of the amnesty granted to several separatist leaders by Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez to secure his reelection.⁴⁹

47 Lozano (2023).

48 Ibidem.

49 Garzón (2023).

3.4. Conclusions

While the Foro de São Paulo boasts a solid political structure, the Grupo de Puebla functions as a coordinated group of activists. The Foro de São Paulo remains deeply entrenched in class struggle and anti-imperialist rhetoric; conversely, the Grupo de Puebla's discourse initially appears more modern. However, beneath an increasingly worn veneer, the Grupo de Puebla's orientation becomes apparent. The motto of the IX Meeting of the Grupo de Puebla in 2023, *En unidad avanzamos* ("In Unity We Move Forward"), encapsulates the group's slogan. True to the trademark of the 'pink galaxy', *unity* signifies cooperation between democratically legitimized political leaders and representatives of dictatorships and autocracies accused of crimes against humanity. They shower each other with applause and identify common «neoliberal» adversaries.

Even though authoritarian regimes seem to play a less central role in the Grupo de Puebla than in the Foro de São Paulo, both organizations share a similar orientation. Despite a more modern packaging, the content remains the same.

4. Progressive International, the Global Network

In times of trouble, good friends can be relied upon. When Colombia's leftist President Gustavo Petro was embroiled in domestic problems due to statements made by his son regarding alleged drug money during the electoral campaign, help was at hand. The Progressive International (PI) coordinated an international call

for solidarity, accusing Petro's opponents of attempting a "soft coup." Blame for Petro's political vulnerability was assigned elsewhere:

Less than a year into Petro's government, the combined institutional power of regulatory bodies, media conglomerates, and the country's judiciary is being deployed to halt his reforms, intimidate his supporters, overthrow his leaders, and tarnish his image on the international stage.⁵⁰

The statement also calls on "friends of democracy" to stand by Petro's side. According to the PI's portal, over four hundred individuals endorsed the call. Alongside well-known leftist figures from around the world such as former Greek Finance Minister Yanis Varoufakis, French leftist politician Jean-Luc Mélenchon, and former British Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn, numerous representatives from Latin American parliaments and unions have joined. Examples include the aforementioned Zapatero, Samper, ME-O, Correa, and the President of Brazil's PT party, Gleisi Hoffmann.

4.1. Origin and history

The Progressive International emerged onto the political scene around the same time as the Grupo de Puebla. While its origins lie outside of Latin America, it quickly began displaying notable activity in the subcontinent and integrated into the pink galaxy.

On September 13, 2018, former US Democratic presidential candidate and independent senator Bernie Sanders

⁵⁰ Progressive International. (2023).

published an article in the British newspaper *The Guardian* titled “A New Authoritarian Axis Demands a Progressive International Front.” Sanders sees the world in a “global struggle of enormous consequence” with “the future of the planet at stake.”⁵¹ In light of Donald Trump’s presidency in the United States, he identifies an international phalanx of right-wing authoritarian regimes. To combat this, he believes an “international progressive movement” is needed.

A few months later, Jane Sanders, wife of the former presidential candidate, co-founded this movement alongside the Sanders Institute associated with the couple. Together with the Movement for Democracy in Europe (DIEM25), led by left-wing former Greek Finance Minister Yanis Varoufakis, on November 30, 2018, the Sanders Institute called on the “progressive forces” of the world to “unite, organize, and mobilize.”⁵² A dramatically charged presentation video⁵³ of a new Progressive International reiterates Sanders’ text rhetoric and calls for an “own common front” of the “global left.”

On May 11, 2020, the Progressive International was formally founded as a platform of political parties, social movements and trade unions. The Progressive International called for a world described with the words “democratic, decolonized, just, egalitarian, liberated, feminist, ecological, peaceful, post-capitalist, prosperous, plural, and bound by radical love.”⁵⁴ An initial summit titled “Internationalism or Extinction,” planned for Reykjavik (Iceland), had to be moved to the virtual space due to the pandemic. The keynote speaker was renowned American leftist intellectual

51 Sanders (2018).

52 Dones (2018).

53 DIEM25. (2018).

54 Progressive International. Political Declaration (2020).

Noam Chomsky. From Latin America, participants from the outset included Fernando Haddad, former mayor of São Paulo and finance minister of Brazil, former Vice President of Bolivia Álvaro García Linera, former Brazilian Foreign Minister Celso Amorim, and Rafael Correa (Ecuador).

4.2. Ideological Foundations

The Progressive International derives its orientation from a declaration of principles adopted in 2020, as well as from numerous communications and resolutions published after 2020. The final declaration of the organization's Congress held in Havana in 2023 is also relevant.⁵⁵ Several conclusions can be drawn regarding its fundamental principles.

4.2.1. «Eradication» of Capitalism and Other Radical Leftists Tenets

The Progressive International's foundational 25-point declaration is imbued with rhetoric of class struggle and liberation, resonating with radical leftist ideals.⁵⁶ The organization persistently calls to “eradicate capitalism everywhere,” portraying capitalism as a “virus” inherently containing “exploitation, dispossession, and environmental destruction.” In the spirit of anti-imperialist internationalism, the Progressive International advocates for “unity through joint struggle” and a “planetary front with the strength to fight and win.” Its members see themselves as “peoples of the world rising up against the reactionary forces of authoritarian oligarchy.” Also, noteworthy is the demand

⁵⁵ Stancil (2023).

⁵⁶ Progressive International. Political Declaration (2020).

for “revolution, not regime change.” As “feminist policy”, it demands a break from the “binary gender structure” and calls to “break with the patriarchy.”

This extreme programmatic framework is particularly surprising given the Progressive International’s connections with left-leaning Democratic mainstream politicians such as Congresswoman Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez and Senator Bernie Sanders.

4.2.2. Representatives of Authoritarian Regimes as Full-Fledged Members of the “Progressive” Movement

Despite the original promise to work against an international authoritarian axis, the Progressive International does not apply the same standards to the left and right. In December 2023, the organization released a video produced with the American socialist magazine *Jacobin*, glorifying Cuba’s healthcare system and praising the export of doctors to other countries as a selfless act.⁵⁷ This overlooks international expert reports that have labeled this practice as “modern slavery.” Consistent with the propaganda, the video concludes with images of the late dictator Fidel Castro.⁵⁸

The Progressive International’s accommodating attitude toward the Cuban dictatorship is also evident in the admission in 2023 of Mariela Castro Espín, a member of Cuba’s single-party National Assembly and daughter of Raúl Castro, to the organization’s Council. Simultaneously, Mônica Valente, executive secretary of the Foro de São Paulo, was admitted. The choice of Havana as the venue for its January

57 *Jacobin* (2023).

58 ONG: los médicos cubanos en el exterior están en «condiciones de esclavitud» (2022).

2023 congress speaks for itself. While high-ranking Cuban government officials like Foreign Minister Bruno Rodríguez were warmly welcomed, there were no critical interventions toward the Cuban dictatorship. Instead, the focus was put on celebrating the “legacy of anti-colonial struggle,” calling for a revival of the Non-Aligned Movement, or praising the lessons of the Cuban Revolution as inspiration “to transform the international system in the broadest sense.”

4.2.3. Ambivalent Relationship with Democracy

Democracy plays, at best, a subordinate role in the PI’s propaganda. The word *democratic* appears only once in the 25-point declaration of principles, and is notably absent from the final declaration of the 2023 Congress held in Havana. Nonetheless, the importance of elections as steps toward “building popular power on a global scale” is acknowledged.

The PI’s political statement does not include a general condemnation of violent and anti-democratic regime overthrows. It simply states, “We oppose attempts to overthrow regimes to protect capital interests and advance imperial agendas.” Conversely, one could interpret this as: if a coup serves to implement the tenets of the Progressive International, it does not fall into the category of morally condemnable coups. This ambiguous attitude fits perfectly with the aforementioned pink galaxy *hallmark*.

4.3. Organization, Activities, and Funding

Unlike the Foro de São Paulo, whose membership is limited to political organizations, and the Grupo de Puebla, which

gathers individuals the Progressive International includes, according to its political declaration, “unions, parties, movements, publications, research centers, neighborhood associations, and individual activists in their solitary struggle” as members. Their website lists 76 member organizations from around the world. In Latin America, these include the *Convergencia Social* (“Social Convergence”) party, which is part of the government of Chilean President Gabriel Boric, the *Libertad y Refundación* (“Liberty and Refoundation”, LIBRE) party of Honduran President Xiomara Castro, the leftist *Frente Amplio* (“Broad Front”) party in Costa Rica, and the *Movimiento Semilla* (“Seed Movement”), the party of Guatemalan President Bernardo Arévalo. Numerous unions from the region, the *Movimiento Brasileño de los Sin Tierra* (“Brazilian Landless Workers’ Movement”), and CLACSO (see next chapter) are also part of the Progressive International. Additionally, the Democratic Socialists of America (DSA) participate.

The Progressive International has a ten-member *cabinet*, headed by General Coordinator David Adler, responsible for planning the organization’s activities. There is also a large Advisory Council,⁵⁹ which includes 66 left-wing individuals from around the world. While this body has new members since 2023, previous members are still listed on the website. In addition to the aforementioned individuals, the Advisory Council includes or has included recognized actors such as John Cusack and Gael García Bernal. The latter portrayed Ché Guevara in the Hollywood movie “The Motorcycle Diaries.”

The Progressive International places great importance on being funded solely by its members and not accepting

59 Council Progressive International. Website

corporate donations. The declaration of principles states: “We fund our activities exclusively through donations and member contributions. We do not accept money from for-profit institutions and the representatives of fossil fuel companies, pharmaceutical companies, big tech companies, big banks, private equity firms, hedge funds, agribusinesses, and the arms industry.” They encourage donations on their website.

Furthermore, numerous items are sold in a virtual store, including campaign posters, for example, with the message “Allende lives” in memory of the former Chilean socialist President. Stickers of various “legendary figures from our struggle for a better world,” including Fidel Castro, the Spanish communist and Stalin admirer Dolores Ibárruri (known as “*La Pasionaria*”), Karl Marx, or Vladimir Lenin, can be purchased for ten US dollars each.⁶⁰ The Progressive International places great importance on aggressive marketing. They send out weekly newsletters and special editions asking subscribers to collaborate and contribute. According to the declaration of principles, there are no fixed membership fees, and everyone should contribute what they can. Collaboration with other organizations is common. One such partner is the German Rosa Luxemburg Foundation.⁶¹

According to their statements, the PI General Coordinator, David Adler (USA), has worked, among other things, as a foreign policy advisor to US Senator Bernie Sanders and the DiEM-25 movement of Yanis Varoufakis. As a guest commentator, he has written for The Guardian, New Statesman, and the American socialist magazine Jacobin. In The Guardian, Adler celebrated, among other things, the first

60 Progressive International. Website

61 Progressive International. Rosa-Luxemburg-Stiftung (2023).

Chilean Constitution project identified with the left, which was overwhelmingly rejected in a referendum in September 2022, as “a visionary document that would not only update, expand and advance Chileans’ basic rights – to health, housing, abortion, decent work and a habitable planet – but also set a new standard for democratic renewal.”⁶² The United States, whose democratic identity he at least questions, should take this example. For the PI General Coordinator, the draft constitutes a document that “finally turns Chile in a full democracy.” Adler, who is a Spanish speaker, travels extensively throughout Latin America. For example, he participated in the IX Meeting of the Grupo de Puebla in Mexico and accompanied *progressive* US Democratic representatives Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, Nydia Velázquez, Maxwell Frost, Joaquin Castro, and Greg Casar on a trip to Brazil, Chile, and Colombia in August 2023, which included interviews with high-ranking government representatives.⁶³

The Progressive International has a website in multiple languages and a very active presence on various social media platforms. On Twitter/X (@ProgIntl) it has nearly 137,000 followers; its Spanish version (@ProgIntl_ES) has almost 19,500 (January 2024). It has 50,000 followers on Instagram.

4.4. Conclusions

In Latin America, the Progressive International essentially relies on the same group of actors as the Grupo de Puebla and the Foro de São Paulo. It constitutes an important international link between these forces and leftist circles in

62 Adler (2022).

63 Progressive Dems Visit Latin America Seeking «New Path» After Decades of U.S. Interference (2013).

the United States. It follows a marked anti-capitalist course filled with historical references to the rhetoric of the Non-Aligned Movement and anti-colonial liberation struggle. In particular, it criticizes actions by the United States. The expansion of liberal democracy is not one of the Progressive International's main objectives. Therefore, the organization fits perfectly into Latin America's pink galaxy and the characteristic collaboration between authoritarian and democratic leftists of its *hallmark*.

In the text mentioned at the beginning, Bernie Sanders rightly criticized "hostility toward democratic norms, antagonism toward a free press, intolerance toward ethnic and religious minorities" as characteristics of right-wing authoritarian regimes. However, if the left's response to this is to use the Progressive International to celebrate authoritarian regimes like Cuba, to which all of this also applies, the organization loses all credibility.

5. CLACSO, The Academic Voice

On January 26, 2023, Karina Batthyány, Executive Director of the *Consejo Latinoamericano de Ciencias Sociales* (Latin American Council of Social Sciences, CLACSO), was admitted to the Academy of Sciences of Cuba. The Uruguayan scholar expressed gratitude for this acceptance, describing it as an "tremendous honor." At the same time, in a country with universities aligned with the regime and lacking academic freedom, Batthyány asserted: "We are united by open, critical scientific knowledge with social impact."⁶⁴ During her time in Havana, the director of CLACSO also attended

64 Batthyány (2023a).

a meeting of the Progressive International, shared a photograph with Cuban dictator Miguel Díaz-Canel on Twitter/X,⁶⁵ and received an award from the “prestigious” University of Havana. Publicly, she did not utter a single word about the repression of research and education in Cuba.

5.1. Origins and history

This closeness to Cuba is not new. CLACSO is an international non-governmental organization founded in 1967 with associate status at UNESCO. Since its inception, Cuba has strategically maintained a presence within the organization and its leadership positions. From then on, CLACSO became an integral part of the Castro dictatorship’s efforts to “portray Cuba as an international ally in cultural, educational, and governmental matters.”⁶⁶ and thus lend international legitimacy to the regime. However, in the 1970s and 1980s, CLACSO also played an important and internationally recognized role as a refuge for academics persecuted by military dictatorships. It even received support from the U.S. government.⁶⁷

Since the 2000s, CLACSO has firmly stood by the Cuban dictatorship. In 2003, the so-called Black Spring (*Primavera Negra*) occurred, during which dozens of opposition activists fell victim to a wave of arrests and repression. Shortly thereafter, CLACSO held its Congress in Havana. Without expressing any empathy for the victims of persecution, it willingly echoed the regime’s propaganda.⁶⁸ The last four

65 Batthyány (2023b).

66 ¿Qué se esconde tras la anuencia de CLACSO hacia Cuba? (2023).

67 Stavenhagen (2014).

68 ¿Qué se esconde tras la anuencia de CLACSO hacia Cuba? (2023).

executive directors of CLACSO were Atilio Borón (Argentina, 1997-2006), Emir Sader (Brazil, 2006-2012), Pablo Gentili (Argentina, 2012-2018), and, since 2018, Karina Batthyány (Uruguay). All four share positions aligned with authoritarian left-wing ideology. Borón remains one of the most notorious defenders of the Cuban dictatorship in academic circles, while Sader seeks to present himself in the public arena as a combative Marxist intellectual. Gentili, who now holds a senior position at the *Corporación Andina de Fomento* (CAF), a Latin American Bank, worked as an advisor to Pablo Iglesias,⁶⁹ former leader of the left-wing Spanish *Podemos* party, and described members of the Grupo de Puebla as “immense figures illuminating the future of a Latin America that builds dreams of freedom, justice, and equality.”⁷⁰

5.2. Ideological Basis

As a nominally academic organization, CLACSO does not have foundational documents like the Foro de São Paulo, the Grupo de Puebla, or the Progressive International. The organization sets forth ten fairly general objectives, including “promoting social research for [...] strengthening human rights and democratic participation” or “stimulating the development and strengthening [...] of critical thinking in the poorest countries of Latin America and the Caribbean.”⁷¹

However, even a cursory study of CLACSO’s numerous texts and statements clearly reveals its left-wing political orientation. This applies to CLACSO’s Twitter/X account and

69 Pablo Gentili, el pijo argentino que domó a Pablo Iglesias (2019).

70 Gentili (2023).

71 CLACSO. Website.

that of its general director, encompasses the communiqués of the numerous working groups published on the institutional website, and applies to the topics of seminars and publications.

5.2.1. Clear Alignment with Authoritarian Left

Far from the academic image it portrays, CLACSO stands out for its left-wing political activism, which questions its purported goals of promoting democratic participation and critical thinking.⁷² Clear indications of this are evident in the weblink on CLACSO's homepage to the Foro de São Paulo website and the membership of CLACSO in the Progressive International. Furthermore, the multiple working groups of the organization play a special role, often expressing themselves politically in explicitly activist terms far from academic vocabulary.

In November 2022, the “Critical Studies of Rural Development” working group asserted that the opposition in Bolivia was planning a “coup” and accused the “Bolivian right” of “fascist and neo-Nazi violence.”⁷³ In May 2021, the “Processes and Participatory Methodologies” working group expressed solidarity with the Colombian people in their struggle against “neoliberal measures imposed by the government of Iván Duque, measures that undermine the ‘good living’ and its essential basic elements.”⁷⁴ The social unrest and violence in Chile in 2019 were welcomed by the “Latin American Left” working group in November 2019:

72 Chaguaceda (2023a).

73 Grupo de Trabajo CLACSO Estudios críticos del desarrollo rural (2022).

74 Grupo de Trabajo CLACSO Procesos y metodologías participativas (2021).

“We celebrate the broad and transversal popular rebellion that has kept Chilean society in motion for the past fifteen days and the various forms in which street struggles is expressed” against the “effects of neoliberalism.”⁷⁵ The “Collective Memories and Practices of Resistance” working group expressed solidarity with the “legitimate and massive popular uprising” against “the brutal escalation of state repression ordered by Chilean President Sebastián Piñera” and “the atrocious exclusionary policies of neoliberalism.”⁷⁶

Simultaneously, the various working groups repeatedly express solidarity with authoritarian regimes in the region. For instance, in a “Communiqué in Defense of Venezuela Against U.S. Aggressions,”⁷⁷ published in April 2020, the “Legal Criticism and Sociopolitical Conflicts” working group criticized U.S. sanctions against Venezuela as “war by another name.” Similarly, the working group praises the Venezuelan regime, asserting that the “Bolivarian model has sought to be a counter-hegemonic alternative to transnational interests.” When U.S. President Donald Trump raised the possibility of military intervention in Venezuela in 2017, CLACSO’s executive secretary immediately responded with a statement backing Venezuela and declaring: “The time has come to put an end to U.S. interference in our internal affairs.”⁷⁸ This led Nicolás Maduro to publicly thank CLACSO for their support, and praise the “courage of a group of Latin American intellectuals.”⁷⁹

75 Grupo de Trabajo CLACSO Izquierdas Latinoamericanas (2019).

76 Grupo de Trabajo CLASCO Memorias colectivas y prácticas de resistencia (2019).

77 Grupo de Trabajo CLASCO Crítica Jurídica y conflictos sociopolíticos (2020).

78 CLASCO, Secretariado Ejecutivo (2017).

79 Bolívar (2017).

In July 2021, the “Studies on the United States” working group also published a “Declaration in Support and Solidarity with the Cuban People in the Face of Recent Provocative and Interfering Actions against the Cuban Revolution,” accusing the U.S. of “cynically and perversely” spreading “lies and slanders” that “seek to ignore and distort the massive popular will.”⁸⁰

5.2.2. Academic Publications Serving an Ideological Agenda

In April 2023, CLACSO published the volume *Crisis política, autoritarismo y democracia. Miradas latinoamericanas* (“Political Crisis, Authoritarianism, and Democracy: Latin American Perspectives”).⁸¹ About a dozen academics there claim that democratic governments of the center-right are supposedly restricting academic freedom, while portraying Cuba and Venezuela as victims of imperialism. The title of the article on Venezuela, *Impacto de la guerra económica* (“Impact of Economic Warfare”), is indicative of how the entire book serves as an example of a seemingly

Particularly noteworthy is the fact that these types of publications are often funded by European taxpayers. In the case of the aforementioned book, funding came from the state-owned Swedish Agency for International Development Cooperation (SIDA). With this funding, CLACSO has also published the anti-American volume *Estados Unidos - Miradas críticas desde Nuestra América* (“United States: Critical Perspectives from Our America”), or the aforementioned *La OEA en tiempos de Almagro* (“The OAS in Times

80 CLACSO Working Group on Studies on the United States (2021).

81 Salinas Figueredo y Torres-Ruiz (2023).

of Almagro”), with a prologue by Ernesto Samper.⁸² CLACSO also publishes studies from Grupo de Puebla circles on the topic of *lawfare*. Furthermore, since 2022, with funding from the Dutch Transnational Institute, CLACSO has published books by former Bolivian Vice President Álvaro García Linera.⁸³ Searching for the term “neoliberalism” on the CLACSO website yields almost 2,500 hits (January 2024).⁸⁴

5.3. Critique on CLACSO’s Political Activism

The unilateral political activism of this academic association was repeatedly criticized in vain. On July 18, 2021, numerous Latin American academics addressed donors and partners of CLACSO with an appeal published on the *change.org* platform. According to the signatories, a communiqué from CLACSO’s executive committee on protests in Cuba showed solidarity not with the oppressed people, but with the repressive state.⁸⁵ Among other things, CLACSO was accused of maintaining “a complicit position with the most recent actions of the Cuban State, turning the universal rights of individuals into a mere tactical matter that

82 CLACSO’s description of the book reads: “The book reviews Almagro’s actions in episodes such as the coup d’état in Bolivia; the blockade against Venezuela and the legitimization of self-appointed Government of Juan Guaidó; support for the repression of social protests in Chile, Colombia, or Peru; interests and abuses in supposed humanitarian missions; backing for judicial persecution against Rafael Correa, or interference in the autonomy of the Inter-American Court of Human Rights. See also ‘The OAS in Times of Almagro’ (2023).”

83 CLACSO Publications (2022).

84 CLACSO. Web search: «neoliberalismo».

85 Pronunciamiento frente a la campaña de manipulación contra Cuba (2021).

changes according to who violates them.”⁸⁶ The authors of the appeal called on CLACSO to correct its stance on the Cuban government, which they argue contradicts the organization’s founding principles.

In 2017, deans from several universities in Venezuela criticized a statement from CLACSO’s executive committee that unilaterally criticized Luis Almagro’s OAS and the United States. Regarding the latter, the statement said, “We condemn external interference in Venezuela, particularly that exerted by the U.S. government with its persistent and now renewed colonial and imperial ambitions over the region.”⁸⁷ Not a single critical word was mentioned about the authoritarian Maduro regime. In their response to the statement, the academics not only highlighted systematic human rights abuses in Venezuela but also criticized the executive committee for unilaterally ignoring massive Cuban interference in the country’s internal affairs.⁸⁸

5.4. Organization, Activities, and Funding

CLACSO is today the largest association of research centers in social sciences in Latin America. According to its own information, the organization brings together 883 research centers in the field of social sciences and humanities across 56 countries in Latin America and other continents.⁸⁹ The list of CLACSO members⁹⁰ includes prestigious academic

86 Noce (2021).

87 CLACSO [Facebook] (2017).

88 Universitarios responden al pronunciamiento de CLACSO respecto a crisis venezolana (2017).

89 CLACSO. Brochure (2023).

90 CLACSO. Centros miembros plenos, centros miembros asociados y organizaciones vinculadas. Website.

institutions such as the Latin American Institute of the University of Brasília, the Center for Studies of Conflict and Social Cohesion (*Centro de Estudios de Conflicto y Cohesión Social*) of the University of Chile, or the “Center for Research on Social Dynamics” (*Centro de Investigaciones sobre Dinámica Social*) of the Externado University of Colombia. The CLACSO website also mentions numerous *associated* research institutions in countries outside of Latin America, including the Ibero-American Institute - Prussian Cultural Heritage Foundation in Berlin (*Iberoamerikanisches Institut – Stiftung Preussischer Kulturbesitz*), the Ibero-American Institute at the University of Salamanca, and the Department of International Relations at San Francisco State University.

All member institutions pay membership fees. The exception to this rule is Cuban institutions, which are allowed to participate in CLACSO free of charge.⁹¹ According to information from 2020, Cuba was the sixth country with the most members, with 33 institutions, significantly disproportionate compared to its population. In all internal electoral processes, these institutions aligned with the interests of the Cuban dictatorship vote as a bloc. In doing so, they grant Cuba disproportionate influence, for example, in the election of the executive director, which in turn requires expressing special loyalty to Cuba.⁹²

CLACSO has a wide circle of sponsors. As already mentioned, activities are generously supported by taxpayer funds, especially from Northern European countries. The Swedish development agency SIDA concluded a three-year cooperation agreement with CLACSO on September 29, 2022, three

91 ¿Qué se esconde tras la anuencia de CLACSO hacia Cuba? (2023).

92 Ibidem.

weeks before the swearing-in of center-right Prime Minister Ulf Kristersson.⁹³ SIDA not only sponsors numerous CLACSO publications but also the “Info CLACSO” newsletter.⁹⁴ The French development agency AFD also recently signed an agreement with CLACSO. Its activities are also financed by state development agencies from Spain⁹⁵ or Norway.⁹⁶ Regarding the U.S. state development agency USAID, CLACSO prefers to write critically. In 2012, along with the German Rosa Luxemburg Foundation (RLS), CLACSO published a book accusing U.S. development aid of representing a “domination strategy.”⁹⁷ In addition to the RLS,⁹⁸ there has also been cooperation with the Friedrich Ebert Foundation,⁹⁹ the NGO Oxfam,¹⁰⁰ and numerous specialized UN organizations such as ECLAC, UN Women,¹⁰¹ and UNICEF.¹⁰² For Pedrosa, one of the reasons for this continuous funding of CLACSO is its historical function as a refuge against dictatorships.¹⁰³

Every year, CLACSO holds numerous seminars and training courses, maintains scholarship programs, and communicates professionally through various social media platforms. The Twitter/X account (@_CLACSO) has almost 75,000 followers, and the Instagram account has around 103,000 followers (January 2024).

93 CLACSO [X] (2022).

94 CLACSO [X] (2023).

95 CLACSO [X] (2023b).

96 CLACSO. Concurso de Becas (2014).

97 Zibechi et al. (2012).

98 CLACSO [X], (2023c).

99 CLACSO [X] (2023d).

100 CLACSO [X] (2023e).

101 CLACSO [X] (2023f).

102 CLACSO [X] (2023g).

103 Pedrosa (2023a, p. 16).

The aforementioned working groups play a special role in the CLACSO universe. According to the organization, these are interdisciplinary networks of researchers from around the world exchanging ideas on a relevant social theme or problem for the region. Currently (period 2023-2025), there are 87 CLACSO working groups with 4,584 members from 44 countries. They are divided into 21 main thematic categories.¹⁰⁴ Some working group names immediately indicate their ideological orientation: “Universities and Depatriarchalization,” “Anti-capitalisms and Emerging Sociabilities,” “History and Conjuncture: Marxist Perspectives,” “Lefts and Social Struggles in Latin America,” or “Marxisms and Resistances of the Global South.”

Working groups are the heart and soul of CLACSO. They regularly organize work meetings, events, publications, and issue statements on various political topics. The formation of a working group must be applied for a three-year period and then approved by the executive secretariat. In other words, the working groups do not emerge out of nowhere and without the consent of the organizational structure. The publications and communiqués of these groups are published on the CLACSO website and bear the organization’s logo.

5.5. Conclusions

Due to its relevance and fundraising capacity, CLACSO holds a special place within the pink galaxy. As clearly shown by the list of publications, the content of communiqués, seminar topics, and high-ranking officials’ declarations, any academic pretense is sacrificed in favor of a clear and

104 CLACSO. Website.

authoritarian left-wing ideological agenda. In its current form, CLACSO is a political actor, at least at the leadership level, and serves as a haven for authoritarian left-wing thinkers and politicians who want to give an academic touch to their positions. Given CLACSO's constant and obvious legitimization of authoritarian regimes, it is surprising how much financial support it is able to garner from European democracies in particular and how many serious think tanks maintain their membership in the organization.

6. Other Actors in the Pink Galaxy

The pink galaxy is constantly able to produce new stars. Some fade quickly, while others endure. In some cases, international institutions that do not actually belong to the pink environment are ideologically drawn into that orbit by placing allied individuals in key positions. Other international institutions were founded with a clear ideological mandate. The following is a list of some of the planets that also belong to the pink galaxy.

Another area of academic resonance for the left-wing authoritarian agenda is the Latin American Strategic Center for Geopolitics (*Centro Estratégico Latinoamericano de Geopolítica* - CELAG), also a member of CLACSO. Founded in 2014, it aims to analyze “political, economic, and cultural phenomena in Latin America.” CELAG, along with the Grupo de Puebla, CLAJUD, and ELAG (see below), edited the book *Objetivo Cristina. El lawfare contra la democracia en Argentina* (“Objective Cristina: Lawfare Against Democracy in Argentina”). Together with CLACSO, they financed the aforementioned book on the OAS under Almagro, funded by the Swedish government agency SIDA. CELAG also

organizes events with members of the Grupo de Puebla, for example, on March 6, 2024, at the former Mexican presidential palace “Los Pinos,” now converted into a state cultural center,¹⁰⁵ on the topic “The Role of the Media in Latin America.” This roundtable, attended by Rafael Correa, former Ecuadorian Parliament President Gabriela Rivadeneira, and ME-O, denounced the lack of media pluralism in Latin America to the detriment of the left.¹⁰⁶ The director of CELAG is the Spanish academic Alfredo Serrano Mancilla, author of numerous books on Latin American left-wing politics. On the CELAG website, Serrano also boasts of his role as a correspondent on *Russia Today* (RT). The deputy executive director is Gabriela Montaña, former Minister of Health of Bolivia during Evo Morales’ government and a parliamentarian for the MAS party, a member organization of the Foro de São Paulo. The Advisory Council of CELAG includes Rafael Correa, Álvaro García Linera, TelesUR director Patricia Villegas, Gabriel Boric’s government spokesperson Camila Vallejo, and two former CLACSO directors, Atilio Borón and Emir Sader.¹⁰⁷

Closely related to CELAG is the School of Latin American and Global Studies (*Escuela de Estudios Latinoamericanos y Globales* -ELAG). According to its own statements, it is “a platform for debate, training, analysis, and research on major issues of the public agenda in Latin America and the world” from a “progressive” perspective.¹⁰⁸ ELAG also produces publications and offers courses. The “academic council” of ELAG includes Grupo de Puebla members Dilma

105 Centro Estratégico Latinoamericano de Geopolítica (CELAG). Website.

106 Complejo Cultural Los Pinos [X].

107 CELAG. *Pensando Latinoamérica* (2022).

108 ELAG. Website.

Rousseff, Carol Proner, Álvaro García-Linera, Celso Amorim, Guillaume Long, and former CLACSO director Pablo Gentili. The ELAG website lists speakers such as Grupo de Puebla members Alicia Bárcena, José Luis Zapatero, and Ernesto Samper, among others.¹⁰⁹ ELAG publishes books from the Grupo de Puebla on the topic of *lawfare*.

The narratives of left-wing populism also received support with the founding of the International Feminista (Feminist International, IF) in Mexico City on April 1, 2023. Among the approximately 50 participants were the then Spanish Minister of Equality Irene Montero (Podemos); the communist mayor of Santiago de Chile, Irací Hassler; the then partner of Chilean President Gabriel Boric and former sociocultural director of the Chilean presidency, Irina Karamanos; the Minister of the Presidency of Bolivia, María Nela Prada; and the mayor of Mexico City and presidential candidate of Morena, Claudia Sheinbaum. The founding manifesto distributed enthusiastically by these women explicitly calls for the “transformation, eradication and overcoming” of “patriarchy and capitalism.” Shortly thereafter, a statement followed calling for an end to the “media and political persecution” against Cristina Fernández de Kirchner. The IF also participated with a delegation in the IX Meeting of the Grupo de Puebla.¹¹⁰

The pink galaxy would be incomplete without also mentioning the international organizations that, although they have lost much influence since the pink tide, still play a role. Among them are the *Unión de Naciones Sudamericanas* (Union of South American Nations, UNASUR),¹¹¹ which

109 ELAG, docentes y expositores/as. Website.

110 Internacional Feminista [X] (2023).

111 Pedrosa (2023b).

is in the process of reactivation and whose Secretary General from 2014 to 2017 was Ernesto Samper, as well as the *Alianza Bolivariana para los Pueblos de Nuestra América / Tratado de Comercio de los Pueblos* (Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of Our America - People's Trade Treaty, ALBA/TCP), significantly influenced by Venezuela. These multi-lateral organizations were established as mechanisms for international cooperation among center-left and left-wing governments as a counterbalance to the OAS and evolved into clubs of presidents with ideological affinity to support each other.

The *Comunidad de Estados Latinoamericanos y Caribeños* (Community of Latin American and Caribbean States, CELAC) was founded in 2011 at the height of the pink tide as a counterbalance to the OAS but has since been established within the framework of the EU-CELAC Summit as a forum for dialogue. Nevertheless, it is being used frequently by left wing-governments with a clear ideological agenda, recently so by Honduras' President Xiomara Castro at the helm of CELAC. The *Centro Latinoamericano de Administración para el Desarrollo* (Latin American Center for Administration for Development, CLAD), an international organization based in Caracas, showed ideological closeness with actors of the pink galaxy, for example, at the CLAD Congress in Havana in 2023 under its Spanish Secretary-General Francisco Velázquez. Under the new Secretary-General, Conrado Ramos, from Uruguay, proposed by the coalition of President Luis Lacalle Pou, this could change.

Regarding non-Latin American think tanks, the Center for Economic Policy Research (CEPR)¹¹² in Washington, D.C. is frequently mentioned as an ally of left-wing authoritarian

112 Centre for Economic and Policy Research. Website.

regimes. Its most prominent figure, the American economist Mark Weisbrot, also has connections with CLACSO as well as the Progressive International and is a constant advocate for authoritarian regimes on Twitter/X. CEPR employs former Ecuadorian Foreign Minister and co-founder of the Grupo de Puebla, Guillaume Long, as a Senior Policy Expert and is involved in the campaign against OAS Secretary-General Luis Almagro for his alleged role in the supposed “coup” against Evo Morales in Bolivia in 2019.¹¹³

In addition, it is pertinent to mention some relevant international media outlets belonging to the inner core of the pink galaxy. These include the Venezuelan international television channel *TelesUR*, one of the favorite projects of the late Venezuelan President Hugo Chávez, funded with petrodollars; the Chilean news portal *El Ciudadano*, a media partner of the IX Meeting of the Grupo de Puebla, or the *Noticias de América Latina* (NODAL) portal. In this context, the Cuban state news agency *Prensa Latina* stands out. Also, the Argentine newspaper *Página 12* or the Mexican newspaper *La Jornada* give a platform to authoritarian left-wing narratives. There are also Russian propaganda media outlets in Spanish, such as *Actualidad RT* and *Sputnik Mundo* (see Chapter 8), as well as the Iranian *HispanTV* (see Chapter 10). Finally, there are numerous publishers that can be attributed to the pink galaxy. One of these is *Ocean Sur*, based in Mexico, which is dedicated to the exaltation of Cuban revolutionary leaders and, in general, the dissemination of the “Latin American revolutionary thought.”¹¹⁴

113 Almagro’s Ethics Violations at OAS are the «Tip of a Big and deadly Iceberg» (2023).

114 Oceansur. Website.

This list is far from complete. In addition to the major planets and stars, the pink galaxy comprises an uncountable number of moons and asteroids, which Pedrosa describes as follows:

In Latin America, there are tens of thousands of organizations, ranging from small and recently established ones to large and traditional entities spread across the region. They interact on specific issues, connect with each other, and achieve a boomerang effect against the States at all levels, especially where the left does not govern.¹¹⁵

¹¹⁵ Pedrosa (2023a, p. 15).

PART 3 / The International Allies



7. Russia and The Pink Galaxy

In the last months of 2023, in some parts of Mexico, billboard advertising suddenly began to glow with the neon green of Russia Today (RT). RT's Spanish-language program advertised its "news" under the title *Las noticias no tienen fronteras* ("News Have No Borders"). RT has been particularly present for millions of public transportation users in Mexico City since October 2023. "While you wait for the metrobus, you can watch the news"¹¹⁶ cheerfully expressed RT's Spanish program director, Margarita Simonián. This massive wave of propaganda would be impossible without the approval of the city government, headed by Claudia Sheinbaum, the candidate of the ruling party MORENA for the presidency of Mexico. She is simultaneously a supporter of the Grupo de Puebla and a member of the Feminist International. RT rewarded the opening of these doors with positive coverage of Sheinbaum's election campaign.¹¹⁷

7.1. Russian State Media as a Propaganda Platform for the Pink Galaxy

One of the billboard advertisements on public transportation in Mexico City announced "Conversing with Correa" (*Conversando con Correa*), a program on RT hosted by the former Ecuadorian President. Most of his interlocutors are friends of the Grupo de Puebla: Ernesto Samper, Manuel Zelaya, Nicolás Maduro, Evo Morales, Cristina Fernández

116 RT en español llega a las estaciones de Metrobús en la Ciudad de México (2023).

117 «Claudia, el documental»: Sheinbaum presenta película sobre su vida en medio de precampaña presidencial (2023).

de Kirchner.¹¹⁸ In the first season of 2020, Correa interviewed on RT Alicia Bárcena, Celso Amorim, Fernando Haddad, Delcy Rodríguez, and the British musician Roger Waters, who has been repeatedly criticized for antisemitic statements and the dissemination of Russian propaganda. Journalists from RT and the state-owned Russian agency Sputnik are invited to meetings of the Grupo de Puebla and the Foro de São Paulo and report periodically, in detail, and favorably.¹¹⁹

On February 7, 2024, Mexican President Andrés Manuel López Obrador granted his first individual press interview since 2020, in the presidential palace, to Inna Afinogenova. The Spanish-speaking Russian journalist was the deputy director of *Actualidad RT* until 2022. Today, Afinogenova, who continues to spread Russian propaganda in Spanish despite having formally distanced herself from the war in Ukraine, works for the left-wing channel Canal Red, founded by the former vice President of the Spanish government and *Podemos* politician, Pablo Iglesias.

Among the journalists currently working at *Actualidad RT* are numerous individuals clearly identifiable with the Pink Galaxy.¹²⁰ RT news presenter María Isabel Ceballos (Ecuador) has ties to correísmo and was an advisor to Alberto Acosta, president of the Ecuadorian Constituent Assembly from 2007 to 2008 and later Minister of Energy in Correa's government. RT correspondent covering Venezuela, Jessica Sosa, has a 15-year career in Venezuelan state-controlled television and the Cuban Aliana Nieves Quesada, one of

118 Conversando con Correa en RT.

119 See, for example, «Reemplazar el modelo neoliberal»: El Grupo de Puebla pide avanzar en la desdolarización (2023).

120 RT. Equipo. Website.

the most well-known Spanish-speaking faces of RT, also has many years of experience in state propaganda media, as a correspondent for various Cuban state media outlets, including the newspaper *Granma*.¹²¹

The connection between authoritarian left-wing Latin American media and Russian state media is reflected not only in the biographies of journalists but especially in RT's coverage. María Isabel Puerta and Johana Cilano show how foreign Russian media outlets RT, Sputnik, and Ruptly are adopting narratives from the Venezuelan regime. Examples include alleged "hostile initiatives against Venezuela with the creation of the Lima Group" (RT), talking about the "legitimate government of Venezuela" (RT), and the assertion that Venezuela is a "vigorous popular democracy" (Sputnik).¹²² On the other hand, pink galaxy media adopt Russian narratives. Thus, the Venezuelan channel *Telesur* described the Russian aggression war in Ukraine as a "special military operation,"¹²³ celebrated the "liberation" of cities in Donetsk by the Russian army,¹²⁴ and noted the supposed presence of "neonazis" in Ukraine.¹²⁵

The Chilean private news portal "El Ciudadano", a media partner of the IX Meeting of the Grupo de Puebla 2023, also spreads Russian propaganda. Thus, it cited entirely uncritically a "study" by the Russian state agency Sputnik, according to which 54% of Europeans do not trust European media reporting on the conflict in Ukraine.¹²⁶ This was seen

121 Aguilera Vega (2022).

122 Puerta and Cilano (2022, p. 11).

123 Rusia reporta acciones militares en operación especial en Ucrania (2023).

124 Ejército ruso libera la ciudad de Krásnaya Gorá en Donetsk (2023).

125 Jofre Leal (2023).

126 Ubeda (2015).

as evidence of the “obvious reality” of the lack of objectivity of the most important Western media and their “manipulation of reality.”

Reports like this led the us Department of State to name “El Ciudadano” in a statement on November 7, 2023, along with the international news portal “Pressenza,”¹²⁷ which also operates in Latin America, as actors in an “ongoing, well-funded Kremlin disinformation campaign in the region.”¹²⁸ The main objective is an attempt “to persuade Latin American audiences that Russia’s war against Ukraine is just and that they can join Russia to defeat neocolonialism.”

The influence of RT’s Spanish-language programming in Latin America is significant. Although the broadcaster’s claim to be the “most-watched international news channel in Spanish in the world”¹²⁹ cannot be verified, it is indeed RT’s most successful overseas broadcaster.¹³⁰ Some figures speak for themselves. *Actualidad RT* claimed that in 2020 alone, its programs were viewed around 10 million times on YouTube. RT is the most shared source in Spanish on Twitter/X in Latin America on the war in Ukraine,¹³¹ surpassing *Infobae*, *El País*, or CNN. RT’s Spanish-language programming reached around 17 million followers on Facebook in January 2024, three million more than CNN’s Spanish-language programming. On Twitter, *Actualidad RT* has 3.5 million followers. In addition, there are 167,000 followers on Telegram, although this platform is not widely used in Latin America.

127 See, for example, Yasinsky (2022).

128 The Kremlin’s Efforts to Covertly Spread Disinformation in Latin America (2023).

129 RT en Español [X] (2023a).

130 Estefan and Agren (2024).

131 Pérez Colomé (2022).

For Cilano and Puerta, the reason for its success lies in RT's ability to optimally adapt to the viewing habits of the Latin American audience, for example, through anti-imperialist rhetoric or numerous scandal reports. Kremlin media skillfully exploit the widespread distrust in institutions and the media in Latin America.¹³² The know-how of the numerous Latin American journalists employed by these media outlets plays an important role here.

7.2. Political Connections

Tangible connections between the Kremlin and the Pink Galaxy extend beyond the realm of media and into the political sphere.

Particularly, since the beginning of the late Hugo Chávez's government in Venezuela, close ties have existed between Putin's Russia and authoritarian left-wing regimes, echoing the historical alliance between Cuba and the Soviet Union. Russian-made weapons have been used in suppressing democratic protests, although arms imports from Russia have also decreased since the invasion of Ukraine.¹³³ Since the start of the Russian aggression war, Russian soldiers have been visiting Isla Margarita in the Venezuelan Caribbean for vacations, using the direct 14-hour flight between Moscow and the island.

Nicaragua, in particular, relies heavily on Russia. Since 2007, Daniel Ortega has established a repressive dictatorship that persecutes dissidents, imprisoning or exiling them. Moscow leverages the international isolation of Ortega's regime to enhance its own influence. Consequently, Moscow

132 Estefan and Agren (2024).

133 Grundberger and Arellano (2023).

has been supplying military equipment to Managua since 2016 and has installed the strictly shielded Glonass antenna system in the country, which is evidently used for espionage and surveillance purposes.¹³⁴ In June 2022, Nicaragua authorized the presence of Russian troops on its territory. In October 2022, it signed an agreement with Russia to develop nuclear energy “for peaceful purposes,” and in January 2023, a cooperation agreement on cybersecurity between the two countries was concluded. Nicaragua also participated in 2022 with troops in a Russian military maneuver, alongside China, Belarus, and Syria.¹³⁵ Despite protests, Russian troops also marched in a military parade on Mexico’s Independence Day in 2023 in Mexico City, by friendly invitation from the local government linked to the Pink Galaxy.¹³⁶

In the scientific and cultural sphere, relations between Moscow and academics associated with the pink galaxy are equally close. On the Latin American side, CLACSO has played a special role for years. The former executive secretary of CLACSO and member of the CELAG directory, Atilio Borón, is one of the most prominent academic interpreters of Putin’s geopolitical melodies in Latin America. In a February 2022 column in *Página 12*, he accused the United States of “bullying” Putin and concluded regarding the war in Ukraine: “There is an aggressor side: the United States and NATO, and a side being aggressed: Russia. There can be no confusion about this.”¹³⁷

Since 2015, CLACSO has been holding biennial academic forums on Russia-Latin America dialogue in collaboration

134 Russia commissions GLONASS station in Nicaragua (2017).

135 Isachenkov (2022).

136 Ucrania protesta por participación rusa en desfile mexicano (2023).

137 Borón (2022).

with Russian partners at the University of St. Petersburg. The Russian aggression war has not deterred CLACSO from this practice, nor the increasingly clear instrumentalization of such formats for Russian geopolitical narratives. Thus, between October 4 and 6, 2023, for the sixth time, a symposium entitled *Rusia e Iberoamérica en el mundo turbulento. Historia e perspectivas* (“Russia and Ibero-America in the Turbulent World: History and Perspectives”)¹³⁸ took place. In addition to CLACSO, the Russian Academy of Sciences and the Sputnik news agency acted as co-organizers. According to the program,¹³⁹ among those present in St. Petersburg were Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Ryabkov, as well as CLACSO Executive Director Karina Batthyány and CLACSO Research Director Pablo Vommaro. They were joined by senior representatives from the University of Havana, Mexican politician Alejandro Encinas Rodríguez—who, among other roles, served as Deputy Minister under Mexican President Andrés Manuel López Obrador—María Fernanda Espinosa Garcés, former Ecuadorian minister under Rafael Correa and Lenín Moreno, and former Chilean Education Minister, socialist Sergio Bitar.

Although in the past this Russia-Latin America forum could be attributed a certain academic aspiration as a discussion arena, at least since the beginning of the Russian aggression war, it has been primarily used by the Russian dictatorship to obtain international legitimacy. An example of this is the greeting that Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov dedicated to the congress. In addition to emphasizing Russia’s willingness to support Latin America, he highlighted:

138 Chaguaceda (2023c).

139 VI Forum Program (2023).

All of us are witnessing tectonic transformations linked to the continuing emergence of a more just multipolar world order. Increasingly more countries and nations are choosing the path of a free and sovereign development based on national traditions and values. [...] We welcome our Latin American friends' striving to take the solution of emerging problems into their own hands.¹⁴⁰

A propaganda tool of the Kremlin directly targeting the political sphere was the international conference of parliamentarians “Russia-Latin America” held by the Russian State Duma from September 29 to October 2, 2023. The meeting, aimed at strengthening “cooperation between the legislative bodies of the Russian Federation and the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean,”¹⁴¹ bore the title *Rusia y América Latina: cooperación por un mundo justo para todos* (“Russia and Latin America: cooperation for a just world for all”). Numerous parliamentarians were not only invited to Moscow, but their travel expenses were also covered by the State Duma.¹⁴² Delegations from the authoritarian parliaments of Cuba, Venezuela, and Nicaragua were represented in the Russian capital, as well as representatives from Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Honduras, Peru, and Uruguay. In addition, delegates from the Central American Parliament, Parlacen, and the Mercosur Parliament, Parlasur, traveled to Moscow.¹⁴³

140 Lavrov (2023).

141 International Parliamentary Conference «Russia-Latin America» (2023)

142 Presidente del Congreso de Honduras trata de justificar el tour legislativo a Rusia (2023).

143 Algunos apuntes sobre la Conferencia Parlamentaria Internacional Rusia – América Latina (2023).

A delegation of parliamentarians from Costa Rica initially planned to participate but canceled their involvement following domestic public pressure.

The conference was inaugurated by Vladimir Putin himself. In his speech, published in Spanish by “El Ciudadano”,¹⁴⁴ he praised Fidel Castro, Salvador Allende, and Che Guevara and highlighted the aspiration for “autonomy and independence” of the Latin American states: According to the Russian leader, Latin America must contribute to creating a “multipolar system of international relations” through a “sovereign and independent foreign policy.” According to Putin, the BRICS, and the attempt to create a new international financial architecture are important steps in this direction.

In panels with titles such as “Equitable and mutually beneficial economic cooperation: the role of Parliaments” or “A just multipolar world: the role of parliamentary diplomacy,” representatives of the pink galaxy expressed positive views on the Kremlin leader’s advances. Jorge Rodríguez, a member of the Grupo de Puebla and President of the National Assembly of Venezuela, expressed solidarity with Russia against Western sanctions. The president of Cuba’s one-party Parliament, Juan Esteban Lazo, condemned NATO’s actions in the Ukraine conflict. However, Laureano Ortega, Nicaragua’s special envoy for relations with Russia—son of the dictator—outdid both in submission to Putin when he declared:

The noble objective of denazification and the defense of the Russian people’s fundamental rights to life and peace was the motive for the special military

144 Wari (2023).

operation. We trust that Russia's victory will be a victory over lies, light over darkness, and good over evil.¹⁴⁵

The vast majority of the parliamentarians or former parliamentarians present in Moscow came from the pink galaxy. This was the case for lawmakers from Cuba, Venezuela, Nicaragua, or Ecuador (*Revolución Ciudadana*, member of the Foro de São Paulo), Bolivia (MAS, Foro de São Paulo), Chile (Communist and Socialist Parties, both members of the Foro de São Paulo)¹⁴⁶, or Argentina (Kirchnerism).¹⁴⁷ The Kremlin must have been particularly pleased with the participation of some parliamentarians who do not necessarily align with this political space. Among them were the President of the Paraguayan Senate, Silvio Adalberto Ovelar (Colorado Party), the Vice President of the Brazilian Senate, Veneziano Vital do Rêgo Segundo Neto, and several members of a delegation of ten congressmen and -women from Peru, for whom a paid trip to Russia apparently paid off, even though it legitimized the Kremlin's narrative.

Due to the obvious proximity between the Putin regime and left-wing authoritarian governments in Latin America, certain statements by Latin American politicians about the Russian war of aggression in Ukraine are not surprising. The final declaration of the IX Meeting of the Grupo de Puebla contained the following passage: "We call on Ukraine and Russia to declare a temporary ceasefire and

145 The plenary session of the International Parliamentary Conference "Russia - Latin America" (2023) has concluded (duma.gov.ru) (2023).

146 Oposición y excancilleres critican visita de diputados chilenos a Moscú (2023).

147 Argentinos en el foro parlamentario Rusia América Latina: «Estamos en una etapa crucial de la humanidad» (2023).

explore the possibility of dialogue in pursuit of peace, following the proposals of various international leaders such as Xi Jinping, Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, and the pope.”¹⁴⁸ Russian aggression was not even mentioned, but “NATO interference and the exacerbation of geopolitical conflicts” were denounced.

The Foro de São Paulo followed the same line. In the final declaration of its 2023 Meeting in Brasilia, point 27 states: “We express our support for all ongoing initiatives seeking a political and diplomatic solution to the conflict in Ukraine. We reject threats to peace in the Pacific, and NATO’s attempts to advance in that region.”¹⁴⁹ Some members of the Grupo de Puebla clearly express their support for Vladimir Putin. Former Bolivian President Evo Morales greeted his “brother” Putin on his 70th birthday on October 7, 2022, and stated, “Dignified, free, and anti-imperialist peoples accompany his struggle against U.S. and NATO armed intervention.”¹⁵⁰ The Progressive International initially emphasized its solidarity with the “victims of the Putin government’s brutal invasion of Ukraine,” but simultaneously called for the dissolution of NATO, which they see as a threat to world peace.¹⁵¹ Since then, the Progressive International has mainly focused on criticizing NATO.¹⁵²

Governments and political movements of the Latin American left, with various shades of red, behind pacifist rhetoric, show at least a strategic ambiguity regarding the

148 Grupo de Puebla (2023).

149 São Paulo Forum (2023).

150 Morales [X] (2022a).

151 Progressive International. Statement from the Cabinet on the war in Ukraine (2022).

152 Progressive International. «We seek lasting peace while NATO prepares for perpetual war» (2022).

war against Ukraine. In many cases, this may reflect an attempt to position themselves vis-à-vis the West and authoritarian regimes like Russia or China from a kind of geopolitical neutrality.

In 2022, *Lula* da Silva stated in an interview that Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky was “as responsible for the war as Putin because in war there is not a single culprit.”¹⁵³ After the death of Kremlin critic Alexei Navalny in February 2024, Lula refused to hold Putin accountable. “Why rush to accuse?” he explained, speculating, “If he now judges and says I don’t know who ordered the murder and that it wasn’t him, then he’ll have to apologize.”¹⁵⁴ When asked about the possibility of supplying weapons to Ukraine, Colombian President Gustavo Petro responded, “Even if that becomes scrap in Colombia, we don’t provide those weapons to continue a war.”¹⁵⁵ Mexican President López Obrador declared that he did not want to supply weapons because he was a “pacifist.”¹⁵⁶ At the same time, Mexican Foreign Minister Alicia Bárcena, a member of the Grupo de Puebla, criticized Western states for supplying arms to Ukraine.¹⁵⁷

These and other similar statements were widely disseminated by RT and its Latin American satellites as evidence, so to speak, that Russia’s significant propaganda investment was successful, at least within the pink galaxy.

153 Lula: Zelenski es «tan responsable como Putin» de la guerra (2022).

154 Lula evitó condenar a Vladimir Putin por la muerte de Alexei Navalny: «¿Por qué apresurarse a acusar?» (2024).

155 Petro dijo que se negó a entregar armas rusas a EE.UU. para llevar a Ucrania (2023).

156 El Universal [YouTube] (2022).

157 Estefan/Agren (2024).

7.3. Conclusions

Russia's messaging to Latin America is perfectly aligned with the ideology of the pink galaxy. It is fundamentally based on two pillars: anti-imperialism toward the West and emphasis on the sovereignty and independence of states. All of this is sprinkled with anti-colonial rhetoric reminiscent of the Cold War era. Chaguaceda aptly summarizes:

This (selective) discourse of sovereignty is often directed against positions and measures taken by the United States, the EU, and some Latin American governments to protect democracy and human rights. [...] The [...] frequently represented principle of the free self-determination of peoples—i.e., autocratic states and populist governments—has allowed these countries to engage in coordinated political and diplomatic cooperation against criticism and sanctions from the international community.¹⁵⁸

8. China and The Pink Galaxy

On May 10, 2022, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) and the Foro de São Paulo met virtually for an exchange of ideas. According to the Foro de São Paulo, the seminar titled “*Las relaciones entre China y América Latina en la Nueva Era*” (Relations between China and Latin America in the New Era) aimed to “deepen party cooperation

¹⁵⁸ González Marrero and Chaguaceda (2022).

between the CCP and the Forum.”¹⁵⁹ In addition to the executive secretary of the FSP, Mônica Valente, representatives from thirty member parties from ten countries attended. Organized by the powerful International Department of the CCP and the executive secretary of the Foro de São Paulo, the meeting primarily served to unite against the common enemy: the United States.

Shen Beili, vice President of the CCP, thanked the parties of the Foro de São Paulo for supporting a statement condemning the “politicization” of the discussion on the origin of the covid-19 pandemic and, overall, for their rejection of American studies on the origin of the pandemic. Additionally, Ms. Beili celebrated the CCP’s “friendly exchanges” with Latin American parties “based on independence and self-determination, mutual respect, total equality, and non-interference in internal affairs, overcoming ideological and political system differences” and promised to take relations between the CCP and the Foro de São Paulo to a “new level” on its thirtieth anniversary. Mônica Valente complained that the United States wanted to start a “new Cold War” and wielded “the threat of a nuclear holocaust,” while Venezuelan deputy Roy Daza thanked State and Party leader Xi Jinping and the Chinese Communist Party for their “immense solidarity” with Latin America.

8.1. The Narrative of China as a Necessary Counterbalance to the United States

The “Basic Document” of the 2023 Foro de São Paulo Meeting mentions China only in a positive way. For the Forum,

159 The FSP begins a cycle of debates with PC China. Speeches and full video (2022).

China represents “a factor of stability and balance for the LAC region, manifest in its defense of the principles of International Law, in particular non-interference in the internal affairs of Latin American countries, to which it has also provided cooperation without political conditions.”¹⁶⁰ The Foro de São Paulo celebrates: “Chinese diplomacy is advancing in the world and increasing its influence for peace.” At the same time, it accuses the United States of waging a “new cold war through technology” by restricting technology transfer to China and “condemning our countries to technological dependence on the hegemonies of Europe and the United States.”

An important link between the Grupo de Puebla and China is former Spanish Prime Minister José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero. At the virtual meeting of the Grupo de Puebla in May 2020, he caused a stir with the following statement:

I want to emphasize the importance for the Latin American left to engage in dialogue with China to restore a multilateral order. Institutions such as the United Nations, the WHO, and the IMF, with more power, greater influence, and enhanced governance, need to pressure China, and hopefully the EU as well—many of us are working in that direction—to put the United States in an impossible position.¹⁶¹

José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero joined the chorus of those who, beyond their own geopolitical interests, see China as

160 Foro de São Paulo (2023b).

161 José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero calls for putting the United States “in a situation impossible.” (2020).

a counterbalance to the United States and as a guarantor of a multilateral world order. The former Spanish prime minister is also the chairman of the advisory board of the NGO Gate Center, founded in Madrid in 2022, which advocates for closer ties with China. In particular, Zapatero's former Minister of Industry, Tourism, and Trade, Miguel Sebastián, academic coordinator of the Gate Center, defends positions close to Beijing. In February 2023, Sebastián called on Europe to adopt a "neutral position" between China and the United States to benefit from China's imminent rise as a major economic power.¹⁶²

In 2021, Zapatero wrote as a guest columnist in the Chinese state newspaper *China Daily*, praising China's development and calling on the West to set aside "social or political biases" against China and work together to create a multipolar international order.¹⁶³ According to reports in the Spanish media,¹⁶⁴ Zapatero extensively uses his contacts to cultivate relations between the CCP and the Grupo de Puebla, influencing, for example, the invitation of a Chinese delegation to the VIII Grupo de Puebla Meeting in Santa Marta, Colombia, in November 2022. This was led by Rui Zhu, a senior official from the CCP's International Department, who joined the traditional group photo.¹⁶⁵ The Ambassador of China to Mexico, Zhang Run, attended the IX Grupo de Puebla Meeting in 2023.

Chinese allies may have been particularly pleased that the final declaration of the 2023 Grupo de Puebla Meeting called for the "de-dollarization" of international economic

162 Miguel Sebastián en IMEX (2023).

163 Rodríguez Zapatero (2021).

164 Cembrero (2023).

165 Lozano (2022).

relations. This aims to break the international dominance of the dollar, which, according to Ernesto Samper, the United States uses as a “political weapon.”¹⁶⁶ Instead, the document proposes that international trade should be conducted in local currencies. This requirement corresponds exactly to China’s longstanding covert diplomatic offensive.¹⁶⁷ The Grupo de Puebla’s support for the BRICS as an “alliance that has reaffirmed its commitment to multilateralism, and against opposition to unilateral sanctions and trade barriers”¹⁶⁸ also aligns with the Chinese narrative. Due to the dominant role of the Brazilian PT in the Foro de São Paulo, it is not surprising that it is also an enthusiastic supporter of the BRICS initiative. Mônica Valente was part of a delegation from the Brazilian PT to Beijing in early 2023 with the aim of strengthening bilateral relations and the BRICS.¹⁶⁹

The Progressive International celebrated the expansion of the BRICS as a means to “dismantle the Northern hegemony.”¹⁷⁰ The organization attributes a central role to the BRICS Development Bank, which has been headed by former Brazilian President Dilma Rousseff since 2023, another key figure in the pink galaxy. The Progressive International not only enthusiastically supports the idea of moving away from the dollar as the international reference currency¹⁷¹ but also includes the so-called “Quiao Collective” as a member organization since 2020, which, according to the

166 Ernesto Samper, ex-presidente de Colombia: «El mundo va hacia la desdolarización» (2023); Wen (2020).

167 Zoe Liu (2022).

168 Grupo de Puebla (2023).

169 «PT e PC chinês participam de reuniões para fortalecer relações» (2023).

170 «Dismantling Northern hegemony BRICS by BRICS». PI Briefing, n. ° 34 (2023).

171 Becerra Rebolledo (2023).

Progressive International, is a “diaspora Chinese media collective challenging U.S. aggression on China and promoting socialism and internationalism.”¹⁷² Thus, Qiao has harshly criticized democratic demonstrations in Hong Kong in the past.¹⁷³

The G77 + China summit, held in Havana on September 15 and 16, 2023, was also an ideal opportunity for China to present itself with an anti-imperialist international discourse and to claim leadership of the global south. Li Xi, a high-ranking member of the CCP’s Politburo, attended the meeting along with members of the pink galaxy holding government positions: Alberto Fernández, Gustavo Petro, Nicolás Maduro, *Lula da Silva*, Daniel Ortega, Xiomara Castro, Alicia Bárcena, and Miguel Díaz-Canel. In a clear reference to the United States, the final declaration of the G77 + China rejected, among other things, technological monopolies and sanctions against developing countries and criticized the “unjust” international order.¹⁷⁴

8.2. The Narrative of China as a Superior Political and Economic System

CLACSO also has close connections with China. Alongside Chinese state actors and Latin American academic partners, it co-organized the *VI Diálogo de Civilizaciones entre China y América Latina* (“VI Dialogue of Civilizations between China and Latin America”), held on September 11, 2023, in Buenos Aires under the theme *Implementación de la Iniciativa para la Civilización Global y Construcción de la*

172 Progressive International. Qiao Collective.

173 Klion (2022).

174 Romano (2023).

Comunidad de Futuro Compartido China-ALC (“Implementation of the Initiative for Global Civilization and Building the China-LAC Shared Future Community”).¹⁷⁵ Within this framework, the *Alianza de Medios y Think Tanks entre China y ALC* (“Alliance of Media and Think Tanks between China and LAC”) was founded. CLACSO spearheaded its establishment, represented by Research Director Pablo Vommoro. The fact that in China (as well as in Cuba) there are no independent media or think tanks apart from the state apparently did not hinder CLACSO from building this alliance.

CLACSO also took the opportunity to present the Spanish version of the book *Breve historia de la República Popular China 1949-2019* (“A Brief History of the People’s Republic of China 1949-2019”), which it published with the “Contemporary China Publishing House” in 2023. As expected, when cooperating with a Chinese state institution, the book does not contain a serious academic discussion of modern Chinese history but presents the Chinese narrative of a “different model of modernization” and the “admirable change” that China, according to the preface, achieved “under the leadership of the Chinese Communist Party.”¹⁷⁶ This publication is not the only means through which CLACSO aids the CCP in disseminating Chinese narratives.¹⁷⁷

It is important to emphasize that the relationship between China and members of the pink galaxy is part of a complex network of relationships between the Middle Kingdom and various actors in world politics. To understand

175 vi Diálogo entre las Civilizaciones de China y América Latina y el Caribe (2023).

176 *Breve Historia de la República Popular China* (2023).

177 See also: *Pensamiento social chino sobre América Latina* (2018).

this, Clive Hamilton and Mareike Ohlberg's book "Hidden Hand – Exposing How the Chinese Communist Party is reshaping the world"¹⁷⁸ is recommended. On the other hand, Juan Pablo Cardenal has described the political dimension of Chinese influence in Latin America.¹⁷⁹ Among other things, Cardenal points out that the Chinese leadership's strategy of explicitly focusing on parties is anything but ideologically selective. In its type of party cooperation, the CCP reaches out to numerous democratic parties of various tendencies, making it very successful. The core of the strategy would be the exaltation by the CCP leaders of "China's authoritarian model and the strengths of the single party, extending it also to the struggle to eradicate poverty," [...] a narrative that "has an indubitable trajectory in Latin America."¹⁸⁰ Cardenal points out how China benefits from the significant information deficit regarding its operating logic and geostrategic interests among Latin American political elites. Thus, Beijing often manages to place its narratives in Latin America with minimal resistance.¹⁸¹

Cardenal also emphasizes how important exchanges with other "parties" are for the self-legitimization of the CCP, which likes to present itself as a "party among parties." Beijing "not only wants global support for the idea that the CCP is the only party capable of governing China, but also wants the world to recognize that China's political and economic system is superior to Western democracy and the liberal capitalist economic order."¹⁸²

178 Hamilton y Ohlberg (2020).

179 Cardenal (2021a).

180 Cardenal (2021a, p. 10).

181 Cardenal (2021b).

182 Cardenal and Grundberger (2021).

In December 2017, at the first global high-level meeting of political parties in Beijing, head of state and party leader Xi Jinping called for a “new model” of inter-party relations in which parties focus on their “common points” and mutual respect, rather than emphasizing their differences. For China, one aspect of this mutual respect seems to be the acceptance of non-democratic parties.

It is no coincidence that the CCP feels especially comfortable working with autocratic state parties in Latin America. The same applies to cooperation with party organizations such as the Foro de São Paulo, where democratic orientation is not a criterion for participation. In their understanding of the unity between State and party, the CCP and the state parties of Cuba and Nicaragua are particularly similar. Therefore, support for the regimes of Cuba or Nicaragua always means support for the respective state party, and vice versa. The CCP also understands very well the pretension of these forces to prevent any democratic opening and challenge to their own monopoly of power. Parties associated with the Foro de São Paulo have been among the most loyal participants in Chinese “party cooperation” events for years. A recent example is the virtual meeting between the CCP and political parties on March 15, 2023, with the participation of Xi Jinping, Nicolás Maduro, and Daniel Ortega.¹⁸³

For the Chinese Communist Party, regimes supported by autocratic state parties are more predictable than democratically legitimate governments of various party tendencies and are therefore more suitable for asserting long-term geopolitical power aspirations.

183 Presidente de China inaugura encuentro mundial con partidos políticos (2023).

Cardenal describes invitation trips for Latin American politicians not only from the left as a particularly effective means of placing one's own narratives in Latin America.¹⁸⁴ The degree of seduction of Chinese propaganda can be seen in some statements of Latin American politicians. Thus, Chilean government spokeswoman Camila Vallejo, a member of the Communist Party, stated in an interview on the return flight from China: "In Chile, anti-communists argue that communism brings poverty and the most common caricature from the radical right is that they are lazy, and there is nothing further from that than the Chinese process led by the Communist Party."¹⁸⁵ Argentine congressman and former President of the Justicialist Party (Peronism) José Luis Gioja even went so far as to affirm: "China is a democracy in its own style."¹⁸⁶

8.3. Conclusions

In comparison to Russia, whose media and propaganda apparatus play a crucial role in engaging with the pink galaxy, Chinese relations are oriented toward the long term and are characterized more strongly by diplomatic and, above all, economic relations.¹⁸⁷ When it comes to opposition to the United States and advocating for a multipolar world, the narratives of China and the pink galaxy are largely congruent. For China, a "multipolar world" is nothing but a new world order with a dominant position for China.

184 Cardenal (2021b).

185 Browne (2023).

186 José Luis Gioja: «Venimos charlando con el partido comunista chino» (2020).

187 Sobre el papel económico de China en América Latina, ver Sangmeister (2022).

Russia and China lend weight and international legitimacy to the pink galaxy and its narratives. On the other hand, China, Russia, and other authoritarian actors can hardly wish for a better anchoring spot for their narratives than an ideologically prepared ground by leftist authoritarian actors.

9. The Pink Galaxy, The Gaza War, and Iran's Influence

When it comes to geopolitics, the pink galaxy tends to take a position opposed to that of the United States or the West in general. One example is the declarations regarding the war in Gaza. In the fight against the common adversary, the United States, striking international alliances emerge.

9.1. The Pink Galaxy Reacts to Hamas' Terrorist Attack

On October 7, 2023, the world was shocked by Hamas's brutal attack on Israeli cities and towns, triggering a further bloody escalation of the conflict in the Middle East. Actors within the pink galaxy swiftly aligned themselves with Israel's enemies. By October 10, the Advisory Council of the Progressive International released a communiqué signed among others by the Executive Secretary of the Foro de São Paulo, Mônica Valente.¹⁸⁸ This communiqué downplayed Hamas's terrorist attack as an "October 7 operation from inside the Gaza Strip." Simultaneously, the communiqué expressed admiration for Palestinian "resistance" and unilaterally blamed the West for the Middle East conflict.

188 Progressive International (2023a).

The Progressive International further labeled Israel's offensive in response to the attack as "genocide."¹⁸⁹ A declaration by the organization denies the legitimacy of the State of Israel, asserting that: "The Zionist project is colonial in nature, built on stolen land, and sustained by the systematic exclusion, exploitation, and extermination of the Palestinian people."¹⁹⁰ Among the organizations signing this declaration are the Chilean portal El Ciudadano, mentioned multiple times in this book, and organizations linked to the Venezuelan regime.

The directive of CLACSO issued a communiqué on October 30, 2023, characterizing the escalation of violence as the "result of fifty-six years of Israeli occupation of the Palestinian territories of Gaza and the West Bank, in blatant violation of international laws and treaties signed between representatives of Israel and Palestine, all with the support of the United States and Western powers."¹⁹¹ Meanwhile, a CLACSO working group labeled the Israeli offensive as "genocide."¹⁹²

The Foro de São Paulo has long disseminated the narrative of an Israeli "genocide" against the Palestinian people.¹⁹³ In the context of the Gaza war, several authorities used the term *genocide*, including Nicolás Maduro,¹⁹⁴ Lula da Silva,¹⁹⁵ Evo Morales,¹⁹⁶ Ernesto Samper,¹⁹⁷ and Gustavo Petro.¹⁹⁸ The

189 Patel (2023).

190 Progressive International (2023b).

191 Comité Directivo de CLACSO (2023).

192 Grupo de Trabajo CLACSO «Pueblos Indígenas y Disputas Epistémico-Territoriales» (2023).

193 «No to the genocide of the Palestinian people», by the PRD (2014)

194 Maduro acusa a Israel de «genocidio» en Gaza (2023).

195 UOL (2023).

196 Morales [X] (2023b).

197 Salazar (2023).

198 Reynoso, Laborde and Raziel (2023).

Colombian head of state attracted special attention when he compared the Nazi mass murder in Auschwitz with Israel's conduct of the Gaza war,¹⁹⁹ sparking a storm of diplomatic protests. Lula also took the same argumentative line, comparing Netanyahu's alleged "genocide" and his "war between a well-prepared army and women and children" with the time when "Hitler decided to kill the Jews."²⁰⁰ This led to Israel declaring Lula *persona non grata*.

9.2. Iran: A Theocratic State as an Ally of the Latin American Left

The pink galaxy's harsh criticism of Israel surely pleased another international actor whose activities in Latin America are much less known than those of Russia and China: the Islamic Republic of Iran. The late Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi carefully chose the stops on his trip to Latin America in June 2023. In addition to Venezuela, Cuba and Nicaragua were also part of the program. In Caracas, on a stage alongside Nicolás Maduro, Raisi declared: "The relationship between Iran and Venezuela is not a normal diplomatic relationship, but a strategic relationship between two countries that have common interests, common visions, and common enemies."²⁰¹ Maduro responded that Iran and Venezuela were "on the right side of history," while Iran has a "stellar role as one of the most important emerging powers in the new world."²⁰² Over the past years, during which

199 Petro [X] (2023).

200 Lula acusó a Israel de emular a Hitler, y también pidió no sacar «conclusiones precipitadas» sobre el caso Navalny (2024).

201 Gamba and Zafar Mehdi (2023).

202 Ibidem.

Maduro and Raisi met in person six times, bilateral economic cooperation has expanded enormously, particularly through Iranian investments in the Venezuelan oil sector.²⁰³ Both parties plan to raise bilateral trade volume from the current \$3 billion to \$20 billion.

Since 2010, the Center for Intercultural Exchange in Latin America has also been operating in Caracas. According to a report by the Foundation for Defense of Democracy,²⁰⁴ it is a branch of the International University of al-Mustafa in Qom, Iran's most important tool for recruiting personnel for the Iranian Revolutionary Guard, for terrorist propaganda, and for indoctrinating foreigners converted to Shia Islam. For this reason, al-Mustafa University is on the sanctioned lists of the United States and Canada.

University cleric Mohsen Rabbani is considered the chief strategist of Iran's expansion in Latin America.²⁰⁵ For decades, he has been building a network of Iranian cells on this continent. He temporarily operated from Buenos Aires, where he was accredited, among other things, as a cultural attaché at the Iranian embassy. Reports coincidentally link him to several acts of terrorism. According to Argentine investigations, he played a crucial role in the bombing of the Jewish cultural center AMIA in Buenos Aires on July 18, 1994, which claimed 85 lives.

Following the mysterious death in 2015 of Alberto Nisman, the prosecutor investigating the AMIA attack, public debates erupted over the links between Iran and the government of former Argentine President and ally of the Grupo

203 Lipin (2023).

204 Ottolenghi (2022).

205 How Iran Exports its Ideology (2023).

de Puebla, Cristina Fernández de Kirchner.²⁰⁶ The Brazilian magazine *Veja* reported in 2015 that Iran had co-financed Fernández de Kirchner's election campaign and, in return, had obtained impunity for the AMIA attack.²⁰⁷

Even beyond the numerous activities of Iran's ally, the Hezbollah militia, and its involvement in all kinds of illegal transactions,²⁰⁸ it seems clear that Iran has a huge interest in the region and is showing notable activity there.

Since 2011, Tehran has maintained a Spanish-language news channel, *HispanTV*,²⁰⁹ whose "news," particularly about the Gaza war, disseminate Hamas terrorist group's narrative in Latin America and speak of the need for the "destruction" of Israel.²¹⁰ *HispanTV* can be received via cable in virtually every Latin American country. In particular, the program *Nexo Latino* is repeatedly used as a platform by politicians from the pink galaxy's environment. In the past, Nicolás Maduro, Gustavo Petro, Manuel Zelaya, Rafael Correa, Ernesto Samper, Evo Morales, and Celso Amorim have appeared on *HispanTV*. The former Vice Spanish Prime Minister and President of the Podemos party, Pablo Iglesias, even hosted the debate program *Fort Apache* on *HispanTV* between 2012 and 2019.²¹¹ Iglesias only ceased to host this program when he assumed as Vice Prime Minister.

In an extensive investigation, Sergio Castaño²¹² describes the permanent and systematic approach of *HispanTV*'s

206 Quién es Mohsen Rabbani, el cerebro del atentado a la AMIA según la Justicia argentina (2023).

207 Coutinho (2015).

208 García Casas (2023).

209 HispanTV. Website.

210 HispanTV [X] (2024).

211 Fort Apache [YouTube].

212 Castaño Riaño (2022).

program to authoritarian left-wing actors, as well as the dissemination of fake news through the Iranian channel and its sensationalist journalistic style, quite similar to that of RT. Regarding the apparent contradiction of a community of interests between a theocratic regime and Latin American “progressive” governments, he reaches the following conclusion:

There is no clear commitment to left-wing parties in Latin America and Spain beyond Iran’s political interests in gaining support and, at the same time, generating instability in countries contrary to its interests. Iranian values are far from the proposals of the Bolivarian left and the Spanish left. However, both find common ground in anti-capitalism and anti-imperialism, which lead them to deploy synergies to advance their respective purposes.²¹³

213 Castaño Riaño (2022, p. 54).

PART 4 / Strategies



10. Pink Galaxy Strategies

So, how does the pink galaxy function in everyday Latin American politics? How do different actors work together? Many lines of action have been described in previous chapters. Below are six core strategic lines that can be observed with some regularity.

10.1. Authoritarian Manipulation of Democratic Structures

Renowned Cuban dissident and democracy activist Dagoberto Valdés describes a sort of script for the new authoritarian regimes, which fits perfectly with the actors of the pink galaxy, but also with figures like Nayib Bukele.²¹⁴

According to Valdés, recent authoritarian regimes typically do not emerge from a coup d'état, as happened in the past. On the contrary, they seek to gain power within the framework of democratic structures with the help of messianic leadership figures. “They exploit frequent cases of corruption to sow the narrative that all parties are corrupt, all politicians opportunistic and dishonest, and that everything before has been a failure,” emphasizes Valdés.

Messianic political leaders win internationally recognized democratic elections with an anti-elite discourse and the promise to “purify and reinvent the democratic system,” only to undermine democracy from within. Firstly, they fill all three branches of the State - Executive, Legislative, and Judicial - with subordinates to “clean them up.” Next, with the help of internal conflicts and polarizing actions, they create a contentious or even violent atmosphere in which

²¹⁴ Valdés (2023).

old and traditional institutions as such are attacked with the aim of transforming them.

Once the legitimacy of the institutions has been sufficiently eroded, a new Constitution is often drafted as a *redemptive coup*, renewing the institutions in the spirit of the new regime and consolidating its continuity. Such constitutional processes took place in numerous countries, aiming nothing less than the *refoundation* of the respective States and imposing the desired orientation. Examples of this are Ecuador, Bolivia, and Venezuela, where the latter two even changed the name of the State. In Chile, the attempt to establish a new left-wing identity institutionally through a constitutional proposal failed due to the democratic defenses present in society. In addition, calls for new constitutions can also be heard from figures such as Colombian President Petro or from parts of the Peruvian left.

For Valdés, constant, deliberately accepted or fomented conflict is an essential tactic of authoritarian forces. This populist division of society and polarization against a corrupt elite and an obsolete system or “partyocracy” constantly accompanies the governments of the pink galaxy. Not all venture into a closed authoritarian state system. However, attempts to deactivate institutional democratic checks and balances can be frequently observed. Examples include Andrés Manuel López Obrador’s disputes with Mexico’s independent electoral authority or Gustavo Petro’s conflicts with Colombia’s Judiciary.

However, if democratic institutions and organized democratic civil society are strong enough, it is possible to frustrate at least some attempts by autocrats to accumulate personal power. States often find themselves trapped in a space between autocracy and democracy, and develop toward the *hybrid regimes* described earlier.

10.2. One for All, All for One

The pink galaxy acts in a highly coordinated manner. Personal overlaps between the various actors are not the exception but the rule. In the case of individuals like Celso Amorim, Alicia Bárcena, Rafael Correa, Marco Enríquez-Ominami, Alberto Fernández, Álvaro García Linera, Baltasar Garzón, Carol Kariola, Guillaume Long, Dilma Roussef, Ernesto Samper, Mônica Valente, or José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero, linkages can be observed with most of the pink galaxy actors described in this text. It is noteworthy that the three political networks of the pink galaxy described are led by Mônica Valente (Foro de São Paulo), ME-O (Grupo de Puebla), and David Adler (Progressive International), individuals whose personal political importance in their country is currently rather limited but who dedicate all their energy to maintaining contacts and the ideological cause.

The pink galaxy works to provide concrete assistance to the personalities associated with it. The case of Ecuadorian former Vice President gained international prominence after Ecuadorian forces in April 2024 entered the Mexican Embassy in the country to arrest him. Glas was twice sentenced to several years in prison for accepting over \$13.5 million in bribes following the Odebrecht scandal, although he managed to be released through repeated habeas corpus petitions. In December 2023, he went to the Mexican embassy and requested asylum on grounds of alleged political persecution. The person responsible for granting him asylum before he was arrested by Ecuadorian security forces was Alicia Bárcena, Mexico's Minister of Foreign Affairs and a member of the Grupo de Puebla. In a statement, the Grupo de Puebla described Glas as a victim of a "lawfare

strategy and political persecution.” The Grupo de Puebla also launched an international campaign to pressure Ecuador into handing Glas over to Mexico, despite his existing sentence for corruption.

Former Argentine President Alberto Fernández, a member of the Grupo de Puebla, signed an open letter from the highest state office together with Evo Morales, Rafael Correa, and José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero, accusing the Chilean judicial system of lawfare against ME-O, accused, among other things, of illegal financing of his party. This caused diplomatic tensions with the leftist government of Gabriel Boric.²¹⁵ In 2023, the Progressive International launched an international campaign in support of Honduran President Xiomara Castro under the slogan “Honduras Resists.”²¹⁶

In 2022, CLACSO awarded Alicia Bárcena, a member of the Grupo de Puebla, along with Cuban singer and apologist for the local dictatorship, Silvio Rodríguez.²¹⁷ As mentioned, David Adler (PI) participated in the IX Meeting of the Grupo de Puebla in 2023 and in the same year incorporated the Executive Secretary of the Foro de São Paulo, Mônica Valente, into the PI Council. The Democratic Socialists of America (DSA), members of the Progressive International, act as disseminators of Cuban dictatorship propaganda in the United States,²¹⁸ support statements by the Grupo de Puebla regarding EU sanctions against Cuba,²¹⁹ and sent a delegation to the 2023 Foro de São Paulo

215 Alberto Fernández firmó una carta donde denuncia “lawfare” en Chile y provocó un reproche diplomático (2023).

216 Honduras Resiste (2023).

217 CLACSO [Instagram] (2022).

218 Cuban Embassy in US [X] (2023).

219 DSA International Committee [X] (2020).

Meeting in Brasilia.²²⁰ There, they proudly proclaimed to have “learned” from Maduro’s PSUV experience “how to fight against media wars led by the far-right to criminalize the left and stigmatize socialist parties throughout the American continent.”²²¹

The ELAG or CELAG guilds feed on people from the Foro de São Paulo and Grupo de Puebla circles. Their members appear together, for example, in book presentations on lawfare. The Feminist International participates in Grupo de Puebla meetings. ELAG is a CLACSO member organization, and the latter is a member organization of the Progressive International. Both work together on a project to expose a “reactionary international.”

This overlap means that the pink galaxy finds it easy to find signatories to solidarity resolutions at a wide variety of parliamentary and journalistic levels. Like Rafael Correa, Marco Enríquez-Ominami, or Pablo Iglesias, they interview each other and spread their comrades’ narratives to all corners of Latin America through associated media outlets. *Telesur*, *Prensa Latina*, *El Ciudadano*, RT, *Sputnik*, *HispanTV*, and others publish everything from a condescending perspective. Due to the scarcity of professional international journalists with experience in Latin America in Western media, many narratives of the pink galaxy are also adopted without verification by prestigious media outlets in the United States or Europe.

Russia, China, or Iran only need to bring up certain topics such as anti-imperialism or doubts about the democratic constitution of Western systems to efficiently inject their disinformation poison into these channels. Interestingly, at

220 DSA International Committee [X] (2023a).

221 DSA International Committee [X] (2023b).

least for Russia, this works just as well on the far-right side. This was evident in the interview of American journalist Tucker Carlson with Vladimir Putin in February 2024, for which the term “flattery” is probably a rather prudent description.

10.3. Corporate Power Instinct

The authoritarian left in Latin America is not simply formed by an informal network of actors. On the contrary, the connections, overlaps, and common objectives are so close that one can speak of an actor in its own right. This actor, referred to here as the “pink galaxy,” operates in many ways according to the logic of an authoritarian transnational left-wing political party. As described, it has a sufficiently broad common content base as well as tightly formalized coordination channels. But above all, it has a corporate power instinct.

This corporate power instinct of the authoritarian left and the unconditional willingness to fill any position with political influence are evident at all levels of political and social life. The focus is on positions in academic and cultural organizations, as well as government positions and positions in international organizations such as the United Nations. Pedrosa points out:

What unites these disparate groups is the immediate pursuit of power within the structure they are contesting, whether it’s a school’s student council, a small local NGO, a country’s government, or the leadership of regional organizations like UNASUR.²²²

222 Pedrosa (2023a, p. 15).

At the same time, NGOs not thematically related to the pink galaxy, for example, in the areas of indigenous communities, environmental protection, women's rights, or the fight against poverty, are often hijacked and incorporated into their own discourse and integrated into their own phalanx against the neoliberal adversary. An example of this is the attempt to combine indigenism and Marxism, particularly by former Bolivian vice President and member of the PI council, Álvaro García Linera. In this way, the pink galaxy penetrates different social spheres with its own multipliers. In this context, Pedrosa concludes:

Within this cultural, academic, and artistic sphere, the strengthening of populist left-wing ideologies has encountered less opposition and competition and has garnered limited interest among its adversaries.²²³

10.4. Crafting Narratives and Occupying Concepts

The pink galaxy is bound together by common narratives. These include, as previously explained in detail, the dissemination of authoritarian propaganda from Cuba, Venezuela, Russia, or China, and the utilization of the term “lawfare.” Other narratives involve the alleged oppression of the world by American imperialism and neoliberalism, as well as a resurgence of anti-colonial rhetoric. Closely related to this is the *surglobalismo* (“south-globalism”), which positions the imaginary space of the global South as a whole against Western industrialized nations.²²⁴

²²³ Ibidem.

²²⁴ Chaguaceda (2023b).

However, the coordination of narratives in terms of content also operates in concrete political affairs of everyday life. Current examples of this are the reactions surrounding the election of Javier Milei as President of Argentina and in relation to his initial measures, particularly the first massive package of decrees to liberalize the economy. The aim is to briefly outline how the entire pink galaxy spread the narrative that Milei's electoral victory "would endanger Argentine democracy."

As early as October 24, shortly after the first round of presidential elections, the Foro de São Paulo celebrated the first place of Peronist candidate Sergio Massa with the words "Democracy has made it to the second round."²²⁵ This implicitly questioned the democratic convictions of opposition candidate Javier Milei. The Progressive International also warned in a statement published before the runoff that there was an "existential threat from Javier Milei to Argentine democracy."²²⁶ This was justified, among other things, by the fact that Milei's party "openly aligns with antidemocratic forces from all over South America, North America, and Europe." From the perspective of the Progressive International, these forces include Vox (Spain), José Antonio Kast (Chile), and Eduardo Bolsonaro (Brazil). The statement was signed by numerous parties, including Spanish left-wing parties Podemos and Sumar, the Broad Front of Uruguay, and several parties from the Chilean government coalition led by Gabriel Boric.²²⁷

The narrative of a "threat to democracy" gained new momentum following the publication of Milei's initial decrees.

225 Foro de São Paulo [X] (2023).

226 «La democracia argentina está bajo ataque» (2023); Progressive International [X] (2023).

227 «La democracia argentina está bajo ataque» (2023).

On December 23, 2023, for example, the Grupo de Puebla issued a communiqué claiming that Argentine democracy was at “high risk” due to the Executive decree and commissioned CLAJUD to investigate the case.²²⁸ David Adler, General Coordinator of the Progressive International, spoke of Milei’s “legal coup.” Mônica Valente, Executive Secretary of the Foro de São Paulo and member of the Progressive International Council, also adopted the narrative by stating: “Milei’s perverse decree, which punishes the people, prevents the sovereign development of the brotherly country, attacks democracy, and social rights.”²²⁹ On December 19, 2023, CLACSO organized a debate event on the political situation in Argentina,²³⁰ which was broadcast through the organization’s social media networks. On that occasion, Executive Director Karina Batthyány called for “resistance mechanisms” against the Milei government and pointed out that CLACSO’s role is “undoubtedly in resistance.”

It is certainly legitimate to question to what extent Javier Milei’s performance as President respects current democratic legal norms. However, it is striking that individuals who express concern about the future of Argentine democracy unreservedly defend the Cuban dictatorship and the actions of other authoritarian regimes inside and outside Latin America.

10.5. Legitimation Through International Donors

Having described the narratives and anti-democratic action logics of the pink galaxy, it is striking how it repeatedly manages to find international donors for some of its planets.

228 Grupo de Puebla (2023).

229 Valente [X] (2023).

230 CLACSO TV [YouTube] (2024).

Particularly lucrative in financial terms is access to the development funds of Western Europe. The most striking example is the funding of CLACSO's activities by the Swedish SIDA. The narrative of the exploitation of Latin America by American imperialism and the persecution of social reformist politicians through *lawfare* is apparently easy to *sell* in Western industrialized countries, precisely under the guise of social postulates. The appropriation of the term *progressive* by actors of the pink galaxy suggests a connection with European democratic left-wing forces. The anti-democratic and anti-Western bias of pink galaxy organizations negligently goes unrecognized or is deliberately ignored.

For pink galaxy actors, cooperation with partners from Western industrialized countries and recognized development aid organizations, in addition to the financial aspect, has another enormous advantage. Such partnerships allow them to give themselves an international appearance of legitimacy and respectability that does not correspond to their true identity.

Ironically, the pink galaxy is also demonstrating international relevance through its demonstrative links with Russia, China, and Iran. These authoritarian states clearly define the red lines within which any cooperation must take place.

10.6. Links with Drug Trafficking

A delicate aspect is the links of at least parts of the pink galaxy with organized crime and drug trafficking, even though these are generally firmly rejected by the respective actors. This ranges from a half-hearted fight against drug cartels, through deliberate turning a blind eye in exchange for financial favors, to institutionalized and systematic

participation in drug trafficking to finance the state and political parties. Alejandro Peña Esclusa, for example, has compiled some information on this issue in relation to the Foro de São Paulo.²³¹

It was only at the beginning of 2024 that reports of investigations by the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) caused a stir, according to which the first campaign of current Mexican President Andrés Manuel López Obrador was financed with drug money.²³² A similar situation occurred in Colombia when, in 2023, the son of Colombian President Gustavo Petro declared that part of his father's 2022 election campaign had been illegally financed by a former drug lord.²³³

There is a wealth of information on the Venezuelan regime's links to illegal drug trafficking. In 2020, the United States offered a total of 55 million dollars in exchange for information leading to the arrest of Maduro himself and his top political partners Diosdado Cabello, Tareck El Aissami, Hugo Carvajal, and Cliver Alcalá Cordones.²³⁴ Then-US Attorney General William Barr stated, "For more than 20 years, Maduro, and a number of high-ranking colleagues allegedly conspired with the FARC, causing tons of cocaine to enter and devastate American communities."²³⁵ He estimated the amount between 200 and 250 tons of cocaine per year. The United States also accused this circle around Maduro of being prominent figures in the "Cartel de los

231 Peña Esclusa (2022).

232 Golden (2024).

233 Osorio and Reynoso (2023).

234 Goyret (2023).

235 Nicolás Maduro Moros and 14 Current and Former Venezuelan Officials Charged with Narco-Terrorism, Corruption, Drug Trafficking and Other Criminal Charges (2020).

Soles” within the Venezuelan armed forces, of personally enriching themselves through drug trafficking, and of making state airports and port infrastructures available for the illegal drug trade.

Furthermore, in the case of the “Narco Nephews” (*Caso Narcosobrinos*), two nephews of Maduro’s wife were arrested during a DEA anti-drug operation in Haiti in 2015. The nephews had attempted to organize cocaine smuggling from Venezuela through Honduras to the United States, using Venezuelan diplomatic passports. During the trial, one of the nephews stated that the drug money was intended for Maduro’s wife’s election campaign.²³⁶

Former Ecuadorian President Rafael Correa has also been repeatedly accused of an alliance with drug trafficking in his country. For example, Correa is being investigated for illegally receiving money for his election campaign from the Colombian FARC guerrillas.²³⁷ The serious security situation in the country, largely caused by international drug cartels, is often attributed to political decisions made by the Correa government. These include, for example, the closure of the US military base in Manta in 2009,²³⁸ the pardon of around three thousand people legally prosecuted for drug trafficking in 2017,²³⁹ the prohibition of extraditing Ecuadorian citizens to the United States, and the repeal of the visa requirement for entry into the country.

The involvement of close officials to former coca grower and Bolivian President Evo Morales with drug cartels

236 Nicolás Maduro, sus protegidos «narcosobrinos» y los vínculos con el Cartel de los Soles (2023).

237 Sánchez de la Cruz (2024).

238 Matern (2024).

239 Antes de dejar la presidencia, Rafael Correa indultó a 3.000 presos vinculados al narcotráfico (2017).

was also international news. In January 2022, the former head of the Special Force to Fight Drug Trafficking (*Fuerza Especial de Lucha contra el Narcotráfico*), Maximiliano Dávila Pérez, appointed during Morales' tenure, was arrested for links to drug cartels. The US Attorney's Office accuses Dávila of smuggling illegal substances into the United States along with Bolivian drug lords. It is said that Dávila used his position to prevent the detection of airplanes loaded with drugs for transfer through third countries.²⁴⁰ Other former Morales government officials, including the Minister of the Presidency, Carlos Romero Bonifaz, are also being investigated for links to organized drug trafficking.²⁴¹

11. General Conclusions: Ideology Instead of Democracy

In an interview with the Uruguayan newspaper *El País* on December 30, 2023, historian Fernando López D'Alessandro²⁴² made an important distinction regarding the Uruguayan left that can be extrapolated to the Latin American space. The academic, who identifies with the more moderate forces within the Uruguayan left-wing coalition *Frente Amplio*, differentiates in history between "orthodox left" and "democratic left." The former remains strongly characterized by the Cuban Revolution and "a vision where conspiracies play and, above all, imperialism is the determining factor in all international reality."

240 Asmann (2022).

241 Radwin (2020).

242 De Armas (2023).

López D'Alessandro reproaches this sector for “continuing to desperately search for that scenario that no longer exists from the Cold War: on one side the good and, on the other, the bad.” He relates this to the orthodox left’s attitude toward current geopolitics: “The Russian attack and the occupation of Donbass and Crimea put you in check regarding the issue of Palestine. How do you accept a territorial invasion by a foreign power of a small country and, on the other hand, stand up against Israel because it occupies Palestinian territory?” López D'Alessandro compares the attitude of this orthodox left with an intolerant conception of religious faith: “Orthodoxy rejects those who do not share its faith, and that was seen in all the debates on international politics that took place in the *Frente Amplio* in the last year and a half, especially in the invasion of Ukraine and now with Hamas’s terrorist attack in Israel.”

With these statements, López D'Alessandro returns to a classification that has long occupied analysts. For example, Álvaro Vargas Llosa in 2006 had differentiated between a “carnivorous left” and a “vegetarian left”, separated by their position against liberal democracy and the market economy.²⁴³

These definitions are very useful for understanding the logic of the pink galaxy and its geopolitical positioning. Essentially, the pink galaxy is an alliance between authoritarian left and democratically legitimized left. This association serves above all the objectives of the *orthodox*, *carnivorous*, and ultimately anti-democratic left. The growing influence of Russia and other authoritarian external actors has reinforced this tendency.

243 Vargas Llosa (2006).

Although democratic stars are not always fully aware of it, the pink galaxy is controlled from the most authoritarian planets. Thus, the entire galaxy constitutes a containment wall for authoritarian regimes. A clear example of this is the central role that the Cuban dictatorship continues to play in this structure. Havana, one of the favorite venues for major international conferences, is seen by generations of Latin American leftists as a sort of socialist Vatican, whose dogmas must not be questioned.

What can happen when a left-wing representative publicly questions certain dogmas of the pink galaxy was experienced by Chilean President Gabriel Boric when, in a speech at Columbia University in New York in September 2023, he stated:

It really bothers me when you are on the left and then condemn human rights violations in Yemen or El Salvador, but you cannot talk about Venezuela or Nicaragua. [...] It doesn't matter if you're extreme right or extreme left. They are civilizational mandates. Respecting human rights cannot have a double standard.²⁴⁴

Although many would have liked Boric, whose government coalition includes people from the inner circle of the pink galaxy, to have equally clear words about Cuba, these statements are a notable break with the usual appeasing rhetoric. For his apostasy, the young Chilean head of state was immediately subjected to intense attacks from various spheres of the authoritarian galaxy immediately after these statements. Venezuelan parliamentary President Diosdado Cabello called Boric “ridiculous”; Nicaraguan Chancellor

244 Ibidem.

Denis Moncada accused him of “treason”; and Evo Morales accused him of repeating Donald Trump’s aggression against the Venezuelan people.²⁴⁵ In a similar case, Lula da Silva ridiculed Boric as a “thirsty and hasty young man” for his criticisms in the context of the Russian invasion of Ukraine.

The pink galaxy continues the internationalist tradition of the orthodox left. Pedrosa writes: “One of the advantages that the left has when it comes to strategies that go beyond the national level is that internationalism is part of its political identity.”²⁴⁶ For Pedrosa, this tradition also includes the fact that the transnational political networks of the left “were not only partisan or political; they also included intellectuals, artists, unions, religious groups, and even armed groups.”

It is clear that not all individuals in the nebula of the pink galaxy are automatically anti-democrats. Many members of their networks can fall into the category of *democratic* or *vegetarian* leftists. Although many of them accept the rules of democracy and the market economy at the national level, they dance to the tune of authoritarianism on the international stage. The lifelong internationalist activism of *Lula da Silva*, who internally is mostly a pragmatic ruler, is perhaps the most impressive example of this.

The enormous success of the pink galaxy within Latin American left-wing politics has made it increasingly difficult for moderate factions of the (social-) democratic left to assert themselves against the discursive superiority and cooperative power instinct of the orthodox. An example of everyday politics is the recent refusal by Mario Bergara, a politician from Uruguay’s *Frente Amplio* who is considered moderate,

245 Maureira (2023); Cifuentes (2023); Laborde (2023).

246 Pedrosa (2023a, p. 13).

to publicly label Cuba as a dictatorship.²⁴⁷ Similarly, the former spokesperson for the Spanish Government and current minister of the PSOE, Isabel Rodríguez García, refrained from making such a qualification.²⁴⁸ It seems particularly illogical that the orthodox left has appropriated the term *progressive*, which in reality refers to a liberal and democratic left, and has filled it with authoritarian content without encountering decisive resistance from the true progressive left.

Miguel Martínez Meucci accuses Latin American social democratic left-wing parties not only of openly flirting with authoritarian left-wing regimes, but also of cooperating with them.²⁴⁹ This trend is not limited to Latin America. Numerous European social democrats not only engage in exchanges with individuals from the pink galaxy but also consider organizations like the Grupo de Puebla as ideologically close cooperation partners. In this way, they become part of the authoritarian containment wall. This undermines the position of Latin American social democrats, who distance themselves from authoritarian regimes on the basis of fundamental democratic convictions.

A decisive role in the shift of European social democracy from the social democratic left to the orthodox left was played by the Spanish PSOE, which, since the time of José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero's government (2004-2011), has not only attempted rapprochement but also partial integration into authoritarian left-wing networks. Meanwhile, traditionally more social democratic parties in Latin America,

247 Bergara evitó definir a Cuba como una dictadura, pero dijo que no se identifica «con modelos de partido único» (2024).

248 La nueva portavoz del Gobierno se niega a llamar dictadura a Cuba porque no quiere comprometer «al Gobierno» (2021).

249 Martínez Meucci (2023b).

such as the Chilean Socialist Party, have begun to align themselves with the more radical left.²⁵⁰

The authoritarian forces that set the tone for the pink galaxy understand politics through a tribal logic: on one side, there are the good, the *revolutionaries*, the *leftists*, the *anti-capitalists*, or the *progressives*; on the other side, there are the bad, namely, the *neoliberals*, the *capitalists*, the *imperialists*, or the *extreme right*. According to the principles of identity politics, belonging to one side or the other becomes a dogmatic matter of faith that admits no shades of gray. For the orthodox left, democratic conviction plays no role in this distinction.

The term *democracy* is primarily used by the pink galaxy to attack the other side, knowing full well that attacks on the democratic convictions of the political adversary will undoubtedly resonate with the majority of the Latin American population, despite all signs of crisis. By constantly being in attack mode and appealing to negative primary emotions such as fear, anger, or frustration, the pink galaxy often manages to remarkably evade criticism of its own lack of democratic coherence.

In 2021, the coordinator of the Grupo de Puebla, Marco Enríquez-Ominami, provided a good example of the strange logic of many actors in the pink galaxy. The Spanish program of Deutsche Welle asked him whether for the Grupo de Puebla, their own ideology was more important than democratic principles when it came to Venezuela. His response to the question was:

That's what the right does in Latin America [...].
In the case of the Lima Group [...] it's exactly that,

250 El ps deja la centroizquierda (2023).

an ideological foreign policy vision, whereas we are the complete opposite. Foreign policy must be more about politics and less about ideology.²⁵¹

This contradictory attitude also applies to the legal persecution of political opponents. Of course, this is not an invention of the pink galaxy and has a long and sinister tradition in Latin America. The phrase “For my friends, everything; for my enemies, the law” (*Para mis amigos todo, para mis enemigos la ley*) is attributed to the former Mexican President Benito Juárez (1858-1882). However, this phrase is used in an especially systematic manner by regimes linked to the pink galaxy and legitimized by the Grupo de Puebla, the Foro de São Paulo, the Progressive International, CLACSO, and their allies. Also, in this case, they also go on the offensive, claiming “lawfare” against “progressive” leaders, thereby diverting attention from the flagrant human rights violations committed by their own ranks.

In summary, it can be concluded that the pink galaxy systematically serves to relativize and redefine democratic principles, subjecting them to their own ideology and appetite for power. In this way, it contributes to a diminishing acceptance of democracy in Latin America. The planets of the pink galaxy form an international structure which works in parallel to official diplomatic channels and at times interferes with it. In their joint and coordinated action, the “pink” actors have a sufficiently broad common base in terms of content, tightly coordinated and formally institutionalized channels, and a corporate sense of power.

Authoritarian regimes in Latin America, but also in Russia, China, and Iran, are internationally legitimized by the

²⁵¹ Usi (2021).

pink galaxy and repeatedly positioned collectively against Western democracies. The assistance from Beijing, Moscow, or Tehran is warmly welcomed, as is the development cooperation from European nations.

In conclusion, the pink galaxy must by no means be trivialized as a phenomenon limited to Latin America. On the contrary, it poses a serious threat to the multilateral order based on values and rules. The pink galaxy's response to the Russian aggression in Ukraine has starkly demonstrated this.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The threat to Latin American democracy posed by authoritarian narratives and networks is a significant focus of the Regional Program on Political Party Dialogue and Democracy in Latin America, by the Konrad Adenauer Foundation (KAS). Between 2020 and 2024, this theme was consistently present in the events and publications of this program.

Particularly within the framework of the multimedia portal *Diálogo Político*, studies were conducted on the influence of Russia, China and Iran in Latin America. Additionally, *Diálogo Político* addressed individual actors within what is called the pink galaxy and the activities of specific authoritarian regimes in Latin America.

In the first edition of the *Foro América Libre* held in October 2023, more than 30 organizations from 25 countries came together to form a centrist alternative to authoritarian left-wing networks.

This text is an attempt to summarize the results of numerous work processes within KAS projects, in which many individuals participated, playing important roles through research, advice, conversations, reviews, source searches, texts, or contributions to debates. In representation of all, I wish to mention here, in alphabetical order: Ángel Arellano, Paola Bautista de Alemán, Luis Blanco, Hans Blomeier, Armando Briquet, Armando Chaguaceda, Johanna Cilano, Doris Filipovic, Evelyn Gaiser, Mariana Gómez del Campo, Juan Carlos Holguín, Johannes Hügel, Kristin Langguth, Miguel Martínez Meucci, Rodrigo Melgar, Jonathan Neu, Fernando Pedrosa, María Soledad Pérez Tello, Frank Priess, Fernando Rodríguez Doval, Juan Martín Rodríguez, Henning Speck, and Manfred Steffen. It is a

special honor count on the prologue by Don Miguel Ángel Rodríguez. My sincere thanks go to them and many others.

The opinions expressed are of a personal nature and cannot be considered institutional positions of the Konrad Adenauer Foundation. I express my particular gratitude to KAS, and specifically to the Department of Latin America, led by Dr. Jan Woischnik, for their support of this project and all aspects related to its content. I would also like to thank the team of the KAS in Uruguay and my family.

Montevideo, June 2024.

Sebastian Grundberger

ANNEXES



1. Member Organizations of the Foro de São Paulo

Argentina

Frente Grande

Frente Transversal Nacional y Popular

Movimiento Evita

Movimiento Libres del Sur

Partido Comunista

Partido Comunista–Congreso Extraordinario

Partido Humanista

Partido Intransigente

Partido Obrero Revolucionario–Posadista

Partido Socialista

Partido Solidario

Unión de Militantes por el Socialismo

Aruba

Democratic Network Party

Barbados

People's Empowerment Party

Belize

Belize Popular Front

Bolivia

Movimiento al Socialismo

Movimiento Bolivia Libre
Partido Comunista de Bolivia

Brazil
Partido Democrático Trabalhista
Partido Comunista do Brasil
Partido Comunista Brasileiro
Partido Socialista Popular
Partido dos Trabalhadores

Chile
Izquierda Ciudadana
Movimiento Amplio Social
Movimiento de Izquierda Revolucionaria (MIR)
Partido Comunista de Chile
Partido Humanista
Partido Socialista
Movimiento del Socialismo Allendista
Revolución Democrática
Partido Igualdad
Poder Ciudadano
Partido Progresista de Chile
Izquierda Libertaria

Colombia
Marcha Patriótica
Movimiento Progresista
Partido Alianza Verde
Partido Comunista Colombiano

Polo Democrático Alternativo
Presentes por el Socialismo
Unión Patriótica
Movimiento Poder Ciudadano
Comunes

Costa Rica
Partido Frente Amplio
Partido Vanguardia Popular–Partido Comunista

Cuba
Partido Comunista de Cuba

Curaçao
Partido Pueblo Soberano

Dominican Republic
Alianza por la Democracia
Fuerza de la Revolución
Movimiento Izquierda Unida
Partido Alianza País
Partido Movimiento Patria para Tod@s
Partido Comunista del Trabajo
Partido de la Liberación Dominicana
Partido de los Trabajadores Dominicanos
Partido Revolucionario Dominicano

Partido Revolucionario Moderno

Ecuador

Movimiento de Unidad Plurinacional Pachakutik–Nuevo País

Movimiento Alianza PAIS

Movimiento Popular Democrático

Partido Comunista del Ecuador

Partido Comunista Marxista-Leninista del Ecuador

Partido Socialista-Frente Amplio

Partido Comunista Ecuatoriano

Movimiento Acuerdo Nacional Revolución Ciudadana

El Salvador

Frente Farabundo Martí para la Liberación Nacional

Guatemala

Tejiendo Pueblo

Movimiento Político Winaq

Unidad Revolucionaria Nacional Guatemalteca

Haiti

Organización del Pueblo en Lucha

Honduras

Partido Libertad y Refundación (LIBRE)

Martinique

Parti communiste pour l'indépendance et le socialisme
(PKLS)
Conseil national des comités populaires

Mexico
Movimiento de Regeneración Nacional (MORENA)
Partido de la Revolución Democrática
Partido del Trabajo

Nicaragua
Frente Sandinista de Liberación Nacional

Panama
Partido del Pueblo
Partido Revolucionario Democrático
Frente Amplio por la Democracia

Paraguay
Frente Guasú
Partido Comunista Paraguayo
Partido Convergencia Popular Socialista
Partido del Movimiento Patriótico Popular
Partido del Movimiento al Socialismo
Partido País Solidario
Partido de la Participación Ciudadana
Partido Revolucionario Febrerista
Partido Popular Tekojoja

Peru

Ciudadanos por el Cambio
Partido Comunista del Perú-Patria Roja
Partido Comunista Peruano
Partido Nacionalista del Perú
Partido del Pueblo
Partido Socialista del Perú
Tierra y Libertad
Partido Humanista Peruano
Partido Pueblo Unido
Perú Libertario

Puerto Rico
Frente Socialista
Movimiento Independentista Nacional Hostosiano
Partido Comunista de Puerto Rico
Partido Nacionalista de Puerto Rico

Saint Lucia
Partido Laborista de Santa Lucía

Trinidad and Tobago
Movement for Social Justice

Uruguay
Asamblea Uruguay
Compromiso Frenteamplista
Corriente de Unidad Frenteamplista

Frente Amplio
Movimiento de Liberación Nacional-Tupamaros
Movimiento de Participación Popular
Movimiento Popular Frenteamplista
Partido Comunista del Uruguay
Partido Obrero Revolucionario
Partido por la Victoria del Pueblo
Partido Socialista de los Trabajadores
Partido Socialista del Uruguay
Vertiente Artiguista

Venezuela
Liga Socialista
Movimiento Electoral del Pueblo
Partido Comunista de Venezuela
Partido Socialista Unido de Venezuela
Patria para Todos

Source: www.forodesaopaulo.org [consulted on: 2.23.2024].

2. Members of the Grupo de Puebla

Argentina
Cecilia Nicolini
Eduardo Valdés
Alberto Fernández
Jorge Enrique Taiana
Carlos Alfonso Tomada

Bolivia

Luis Arce

David Choquehuanca

Álvaro García Linera

Evo Morales Ayma

Adriana Salvatierra

Brazil

Celso Luis Nunez Amorim

Gleisi Hoffmann

Lula da Silva

Fernando Haddad

Aloizio Mercadante

Dilma Rousseff

Carol Proner

Chile

Karol Cariola

Marco Enríquez-Ominami

Camilo Lagos

Carlos Ominami

Colombia

Iván Cepeda

David Racero

Clara López Obregón

María José Pizarro

Ernesto Samper

Dominican Republic
Leonel Fernández

Ecuador
Rafael Correa
Guillaume Long
Gabriela Rivadeneira
Ricardo Patiño
Andrés Arauz Galarza

El Salvador
Hugo Martínez

Guatemala
Ana Isabel Prera

Honduras
Manuel Zelaya

Mexico
Alicia Bárcena
Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas
Mario Delgado
Beatriz Paredes
Maximiliano Reyes
Zoé Robledo Aburto
Carlos Sotelo García

Panama



1. Lula da Silva at the 1990 São Paulo Forum meeting. São Paulo, Brazil.

Source: noticias.uol.com.br.



2. Lula in opening speech at the 26th São Paulo Forum of 2023. Brasilia.

Source: *Partido dos Trabalhadores*.



3. The São Paulo Forum and its unrestricted support for the Cuban dictatorship in 2023.

Source: X / @ForodeSaoPaulo.



4. Poster for the documentary *Al fondo a la izquierda* (2019) in which the founder of the Puebla Group, Marco Enríquez-Onimami, interviews leaders such as Nicolás Maduro, Rafael Correa and Evo Morales.



5. Meeting of the Puebla Group 2023 in Mexico. Among others, Evo Morales (Bolivia), Delcy Rodríguez (Venezuela), ME-o (Chile), Bruno Rodríguez (Cuba), Ernesto Samper (Colombia), David Adler (Progressive International, USA).



6. s&D Latin America Day, event of the socialist bench in the European Parliament with the Puebla Group, 2023.



7. Rafael Correa denounces lawfare against left-wing leaders from the European Parliament (2023).

Source: X / @ProgresaLatam.



8. Example of Progressive International's anti-capitalist propaganda (2023).

Source: X / @ProgIntl_ES.



9. Progressive International celebrates the incorporation of Mariela Castro, daughter of ex-dictator Raúl Castro and deputy of the Cuban National Assembly (2023).

Source: X / @ProgIntl_ES.



10. The director of CLACSO, Karina Batthyány celebrates 'scientific, critical knowledge with social impact' as a member of the Cuban Academy of Sciences.

Source: Instagram / @karinabatthyany.



11. The director of CLACSO, Karina Batthyány with the president of Cuba, Miguel Díaz.

Source: X /@kbatthyany.



12. Nicolás Maduro thanks CLACSO for its support against us 'interference' in Venezuela (2017).

Source: X / @PresidencialVen.



Seguir ...

🎉 Hoy celebramos la firma de un importante acuerdo de cooperación con la división de América Latina de la Agencia Sueca de Desarrollo Internacional -ASDI @Sida- en el que trabajaremos durante los próximos tres años 🇸🇪



👤 Sida y Karina Batthyány

1:14 p. m. · 29 sept. 2022

13. SIDA, a Swedish state agency, signed a new agreement with CLACSO three weeks before a new centre-right government took office in the country (2022).

Source: X / @_CLACSO.



Citlalli Hernández M 
@CitlaHM

Seguir 

Hoy nos encontramos de diversas partes del mundo para dialogar entre mujeres de izquierda en el ejercicio del poder, para instalar la Primera [@IntFeministaF](#).

Nuestra postura es clara: somos feministas, antipatriarcales, anticapitalistas, antineoliberales, antiracistas, anticlasistas, transincluyentes, comunitarias, ecologistas y populares.

Haremos un llamado a más feministas con esa visión a sumarse y encontrarnos.



 Irací Hassler Jacob y 6 más

14. Mexican senator and Morena secretary, Citlalli Hernández, comments on the creation of Feminist International.

Source: X / @CitlaHM.



Gustavo Petro 
@petrogustavo

Seguir



Ya estuve en el campo de concentración de Auschwitz y ahora lo veo calcado en Gaza.



BluRadio Colombia  @BluRadioCo · 9 oct. 2023

"Invito a Petro al campo de concentración de Auschwitz": embajador de Israel por trino sobre Gaza #MañanasBlu bluradio.com/nacion/invito-...

11:33 a. m. · 9 oct. 2023 · **4,7M** Reproducciones

15. Colombian President Gustavo Petro compares Auschwitz and Gaza (2023).

Source: X / @petrogustavo.

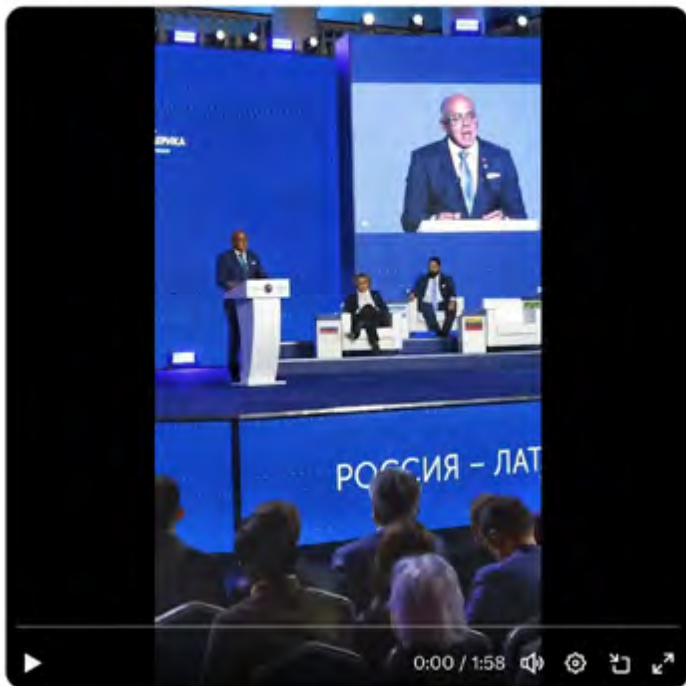


Jorge Rodríguez 
@jorgerpsuv

Seguir



Participamos en la Conferencia Parlamentaria Internacional Rusia - América Latina, donde abogamos por la defensa de la soberanía y por la unión de los parlamentos para el desarrollo de nuestros pueblos. ¡Sólo unidos resistiremos!



5:05 a. m. · 3 oct. 2023 · 13,6 mil Reproducciones

16. Jorge Rodríguez, president of the Venezuelan National Assembly, participates in a parliamentary conference organized by the Kremlin in support of Russia (2023).

Source: X / @jorgerpsuv.



Evo Morales Ayma ✓
@evoespueblo

Seguir



Muchas felicidades al hermano presidente de Rusia, Vladimir Putin en el día de sus cumpleaños. Los pueblos dignos, libres y antiimperialistas acompañan su lucha contra el intervencionismo armado de EEUU y la OTAN. El mundo encontrará paz cuando EEUU deje de atentar contra la vida



1:33 p. m. · 7 oct. 2022

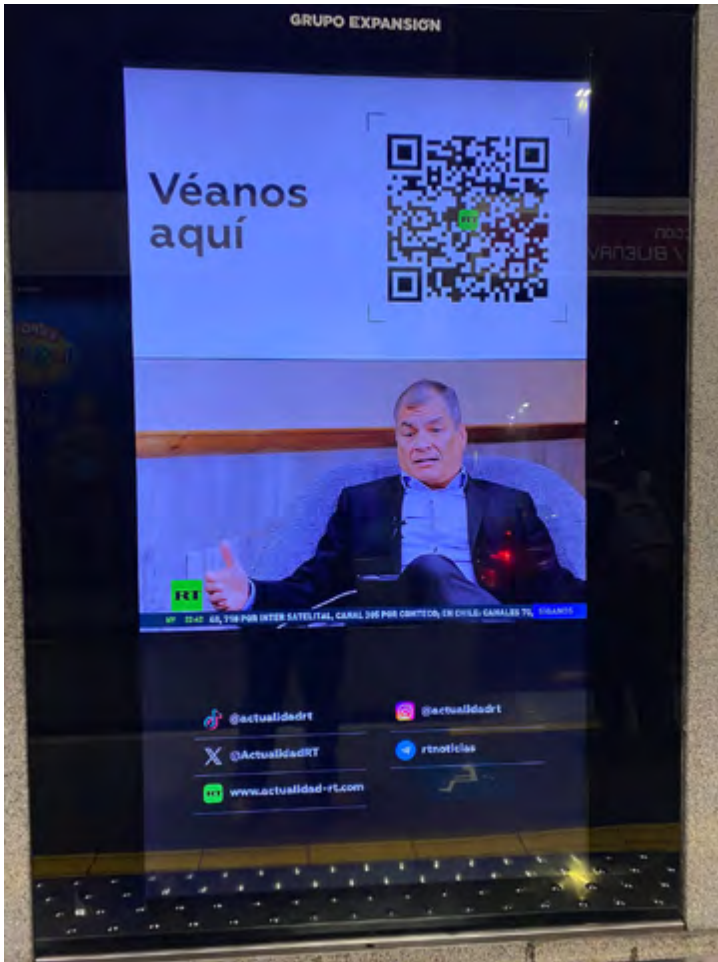
17. Former Bolivian President Evo Morales congratulates Vladimir Putin on his birthday (2022).

Source: X / @evoespueblo.



18. RT advertising campaign in Oasis Coyoacán shopping mall, Mexico City (2023).

Source: Armando Chaguaceda.



19. Poster announcing Rafael Correa's programme on RT in the Mexico City underground subway. (2023).

Source: Armando Chaguaceda.

SOURCES

Paraguay
Esperanza Martínez
Fernando Lugo



Peru

Aída García-Naranjo
Verónica Mendoza

Portugal
Francisco André
Maria Manuel Leitão Marques

Spain
Adriana Lastra
Pilar Cancela
Irene Montero
José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero

Uruguay
Carolina Cosse
Fernando Pereira
Yamandú Orsi
Daniel Martínez
José Mujica
Rafael Michelini
Mónica Xavier

Venezuela

Jorge Rodríguez

To this list are added the members of the *Consejo Latinoamericano de Justicia y Democracia* (Latin American Council for Justice and Democracy) and the *Grupo Parlamentario Progresista Iberoamericano* (Ibero-American Progressive Parliamentary Group), linked to the Grupo de Puebla.

Source: www.grupodepuebla.org [consulted on: 2.23.2024].

3. Photographic Appendix

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Glossary

AFD	Agence Française de Développement
ALBA-TCP	Alianza Bolivariana para los Pueblos de Nuestra América-Tratado de Comercio de los Pueblos
ALC	América Latina y el Caribe
AMIA	Asociación Mutual Israelita Argentina
BRICS	Brasil, Rusia, India, China, Sudáfrica
CAF	Corporación Andina de Fomento
CELAC	Comunidad de Estados Latinoamericanos y Caribeños
CELAG	Centro Estratégico Latinoamericano de Geopolítica
CEPAL	Comisión Económica para América Latina y el Caribe
CEPR	Center for Economic Policy Research
CLACSO	Consejo Latinoamericano de Ciencias Sociales
CLAD	Centro Latinoamericano de Administración para el Desarrollo
CLAJUD	Consejo Latinoamericano de Justicia y Democracia
DEA	Drug Enforcement Administration
DIEM25	Democracy in Europe Movement
DSA	Democratic Socialists of America
DW	Deutsche Welle
ELAG	Escuela de Estudios Latinoamericanos y Globales
EU	European Union / Unión Europea
FARC	Fuerzas Armadas Rebeldes de Colombia
FES	Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung

FSP	Foro de São Paulo
GdP	Grupo de Puebla
IF	Internacional Feminista
KAS	Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung e.V.
KP	Kommunistische Partei
LIBRE	Partido Libertad y Refundación
MAS	Movimiento Al Socialismo, Bolivia
ME-O	Marco Enríquez-Ominami
MORENA	Movimiento Regeneración Nacional, México
OEA	Organización de Estados Americanos
ONG	organización no gubernamental
Parlacen	Parlamento Centroamericano
Parlasur	Parlamento del Mercosur
Parlatino	Parlamento Latinoamericano
PI	Progressive International / Internacional Progresista
PP	Partido Popular
PSOE	Partido Socialista Obrero Español
PSUV	Partido Socialista Unido de Venezuela
PT	Partido de los Trabajadores, Brasil
RC	Revolución Ciudadana, Ecuador
RLS	Rosa-Luxemburg-Stiftung e.V.
RT	Russia Today
S&D	Socialists and Democrats
SIDA (ASDI)	Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency
UNASUR	Unión de Naciones Suramericanas
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNICEF	United Nations Convention on the Right of the Child

THE PINK GALAXY

When the pink tide of leftist governments swept through Latin America at the turn of the millennium, many expected greater political participation. Two decades later, this democratic hope has given way to disappointment. Support for democracy is at an all-time low. The former pink tide has turned into a pink galaxy in which authoritarian and democratically legitimized actors join forces. Organizations such as the Foro de São Paulo, the Grupo de Puebla, the Progressive International or the Latin American Council of Social Sciences (CLACSO) are dominated by their most authoritarian planets.

They thus constitute a platform of support for dictatorships. At the same time, external actors such as Russia, China and Iran are positioning the pink galaxy in the geopolitical power struggle against Western democracies. This book provides an overview of the actors, objectives, allies and forms of action of the pink galaxy and sheds light on its influence on Latin American democracy.

