

Ibero America Briefs

U.S. and Canada Force Russia Out as OAS Permanent Observer

On April 21, the Permanent Council of the Organization of American States (OAS) voted up a resolution co-sponsored by NATO members Canada and the United States, to expel Anatoly Antonov, Russia's Ambassador to the United States, as a permanent OAS observer. Russia has held that position for 30 years. The two NATO members pulled a few other regional allies into being co-sponsors and garnered 25 votes in favor of a [resolution](#) that Russia will remain expelled until it "ceases its hostilities, withdraws all its military forces and equipment from Ukraine within its internationally recognized borders and returns to a path of dialogue and diplomacy."

Notably, the eight countries that abstained included the "Big Three"—Argentina, Brazil and Mexico. The last two have consistently abstained from most anti-Russia resolutions in international bodies; Argentina has not, and there is a brawl taking place on this issue within the Alberto Fernández government, which is being squeezed by the Biden Administration to line up with the United States.

The expulsion was a NATO/State Department operation from the beginning, as Ambassador Antonov expressed very clearly in remarks reported by TASS. Antonov said that he was not allowed to speak either before or after the vote; the OAS "has lost a reliable friend," he said, and called the Permanent Council vote a "serious mistake." "We understand that our Latin American partners are facing un-

precedented pressure from the U.S. and its satellite countries.... We are being punished for defending our legitimate national interests and refusing to bend to others' will," TASS reported Antonov as saying.

In a statement on the Russian Foreign Ministry website April 22, its spokeswoman Maria Zakharova said she understood that the Latin American and Caribbean nations had been subjected to "unprecedentedly heavy pressure and arm-twisting."

Following the vote, Secretary of State Tony Blinken [boasted](#) that "we"—claiming to speak for all the Americas—"do not stand on the sidelines in the face of the Russian government's violations of international humanitarian law and human rights abuses. Our Hemisphere stands with Ukraine."

Argentina Agrees with India on Global South Development Priority

During his four-day stay in India ending April 28, Argentine Foreign Minister Santiago Cafiero agreed with Indian External Affairs Minister Subrahmanyam Jaishankar and Prime Minister Narendra Modi that their governments' participation in such multilateral fora as the G-20 provides an opportunity to focus attention on the needs of the nations of the "Global South." They emphasized that developing nations Indonesia, India and Brazil—in that order—will be leading the G-20 between now and 2024 with the expectation of addressing the pressing needs of developing nations more aggressively. With attention largely focused on Ukraine, promoting the agenda of the Global South is a

"challenge," they noted.

Cafiero, in an April 24 [interview](#) with Argentina's state news agency Télam, had pointedly asked, "What about Haiti?" While the world's attention is focused on the conflict in Ukraine, he said, Haiti's horrific humanitarian crisis hasn't disappeared, but no one is shining a light on it. In that same interview, Cafiero emphasized the futility of imposing unilateral sanctions on Russia. His own government, he said, doesn't consider that imposing sanctions on Russia will help lead to peace or reconciliation in Ukraine. While Argentina has voted for anti-Russia resolutions at the UN, it has rejected imposing sanctions on that country, as has India.

Cafiero said that what Argentina—like India—proposes on Ukraine "is dialogue, to pacify the situation, and honestly we don't believe that imposing sanctions or blockades will be productive in achieving peace.... This is the challenge we face today."

India is Argentina's fourth-largest trading partner, and Cafiero's trip was focused on revitalizing their bilateral "strategic association" and discussing where they can expand cooperation, particularly in the fields of science and technology, energy, defense, aerospace, mining and agriculture. Cafiero extended an invitation from President Alberto Fernández to Modi to visit Argentina (he also invited Jaishankar), to which Modi responded with an invitation to Fernández to visit India. In his private meeting with Modi, Cafiero indicated his government's commitment also to strengthening ties between India and the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC), of which Argentina is President *pro tempore*.

Lula Da Silva: Stop Putin-Hating; Start Ukraine Negotiations

In a wide-ranging [interview](#) with *Time* published May 4, former Brazilian President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, whose formal candidacy in the presidential 2022 elections would be announced May 7, insisted that world leaders, President Biden, President Zelenskyy, and the EU cut out the games, and get serious about negotiations.

Putin should not have invaded Ukraine, but “it is not just Putin who is guilty,” Lula said. “The U.S. and the EU are also guilty. What was the reason for the Ukraine invasion? NATO? Then the U.S. and Europe should have said: ‘Ukraine won’t join NATO.’ That would have solved the problem.” And on Biden. “I don’t think he made the right decision on the war between Russia and Ukraine. The U.S. has a lot of political clout, and Biden could have avoided the war, not incited it. He could have talked more, participated more. Biden could have taken a plane to Moscow to talk to Putin. This is the kind of attitude you expect from a leader. To intervene so things don’t go off the rails. I don’t think he did that.”

Asked whether Biden should have made concessions to Putin, Lula responded, “No,” but recalled how the Americans resolved the Cuban Missile Crisis of 1962. “Biden could have said, ‘We’re going to speak a bit more. We don’t want Ukraine in NATO, full stop.’ That’s not a concession.” And the Europeans “could have said: ‘No, now is not the moment for Ukraine to join the EU, we’ll wait.’ They didn’t have to encourage the confrontation.” Lula also chastised the EU/NATO for not trying to speak with Russia. “If you want peace, you have to have patience. They could have sat at a negotiating table for 10, 15, 20 days, a whole month to find a so-

lution. I think dialogue only works when it is taken seriously.”

The Brazilian leader ridiculed Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, who made appearances everywhere “as if he were waging a political campaign. He should be at the negotiating table.... He did want war.... I don’t think anyone is trying to help create peace. People are stimulating hate against Putin. That won’t solve things! We need to reach an agreement. But people are encouraging the war. You are encouraging this guy [Zelenskyy] and then he thinks he is the cherry on your cake. We should be having a serious conversation.”

Wang Yi, Nine Caribbean Nations Meet on Development Cooperation

Chinese State Councilor and Foreign Minister Wang Yi held a virtual meeting April 29 with the foreign ministers of nine Caribbean nations to commemorate 50 years of diplomatic relations and discuss cooperation in the framework of the Belt and Road Initiative, the Global Development Initiative, and the Global Security Initiative put forward by China’s President Xi Jinping. The participating nations included Dominica, Antigua and Barbuda, Bahamas, Grenada, Guyana, Jamaica, Suriname, Trinidad and Tobago, and Barbados.

Wang underscored that with the world facing great challenges in the areas of security and economic development, it is important for China and the Caribbean nations to strengthen solidarity and deepen their economic cooperation. “China will continue to provide economic and technical assistance to Caribbean countries with no political strings attached, support projects of concern to Caribbean countries and develop projects benefitting people’s livelihoods,” *Macau News Agency* quoted him as saying, “The

future and destiny of all countries are linked together as never before.”

In addition to ongoing assistance, China will continue to provide anti-pandemic and medical supplies to those Caribbean countries with which it maintains diplomatic ties; it will also set up a China-Caribbean disaster prevention and relief fund. According to Xinhua, the Caribbean ministers stated their support for the One China policy and defense of China’s territorial integrity, and hoped for a future national reunification with Taiwan. They indicated a desire to actively participate in “high-quality Belt and Road cooperation.”

Panama Ups Relations with China

Ignoring American harassment against working with an allegedly “malign” China, Panama’s Foreign Minister Erika Mouynes met her counterpart, Foreign Minister Wang Yi, April 4 in Tunxi, Anhui province, China, to discuss expanding trade and investment, political dialogue, and cooperation between their two countries. As reported by local analysts, this was the first high-level approach towards China by the Panamanian government since President Laurentino Cortizo took office in 2019 and, under American pressure, froze key infrastructure projects with China. That pressure has not lessened, but reality is sinking in. Mouynes described her meeting as “very productive,” saying “we are very happy with everything achieved on the visit.”

The two foreign ministers agreed to deepen cooperation in the Colon Free Zone on Panama’s Caribbean coast and improve connectivity generally. Restarting negotiations on a China-Panama Free Trade Accord is now also on the agenda. Agreements were also made on export of Panamanian agricultural products, rural infrastructure development and imports of Chinese electric buses.