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China in Latin American Studies

The data is overwhelming: in 2021 the total value of trade between China and Latin America and the Caribbean increased by 41.1% compared to 2020, registering a new record in transactions, worth 451,591 million dollars. And all this contributes to the creation of the multipolar and multicultural world that is being formed in the twenty-first century.



The independence processes in Latin America allowed the constitution of the new States, whose primary exporting and basically pre-capitalist economies maintained reduced internal markets, while internationally, during the nineteenth century, trade relations with Europe grew. Trade with Asia was always marginal and even zero between countries. Chinese immigration to Peru was exceptional (the "coolies", exploited in latifundia and in obtaining guano) and stood out among the republics of the region. It was normal to

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marginalize the "Chinese", seen as enigmatic and dangerous settlers. Between 1889 and 1945 Chinese immigration to Ecuador was prohibited, which constantly had to do with the pressure of merchants who did not want "despicable" and "opiómanos" competitors.

In the twentieth century Latin America turned from Europe to the USA. Its imperialist expansion over the resources of the region initially did not contribute to modernizing the economies either, because capitalist development in most countries occurs slowly, although it accelerates in the second half of that century. Still, the U.S. in the lead and Europe afterwards continued as dominant trading centers and suppliers of the largest foreign investments.

The processes quickly outlined have been studied by several researchers dedicated to economic history and also by ECLAC, an exceptional institution in contributions to Latin American economic theory and thought. In any case, the world has changed rapidly in the second half of the twentieth century. The capitalist take-off of Latin America has inevitably caused that, for business reasons convenient to its entrepreneurs and also by agreeing states and governments according to their political orientations, the old economic relations are gradually altered. Even during the Cold War era, the US failed to prevent some Latin American countries from initiating ties with the USSR. And with China they were facilitated following the recognition that the UN made in 1971 about the unique and legitimate representation of the PRC, as well as the visit that Richard Nixon made to that country the following year. With the collapse of Soviet-type socialism, ties with [Russia and China](#) have increased and today Latin America maintains diversified relations with these and other countries, which the new military monroism wants to exclude with the label that they constitute "threats" to the American continent).



Towards a new globalization



The "economy of the property" in China

Relations with China have motivated growing interest in Latin America's academic sectors. In March (2022) I referred to the work of the CLACSO Working Group on "[China and the Map of World Power](#)", under the coordination of Gabriel Esteban Merino, Lourdes María Regueiro Bello and Wagner Tadeu Iglecias, who recently published *China and the New Map of World Power* (2022). You can follow the Group's Newsletter and get several of the publications as e-books. And I can tell you that the rich information and ideas that are shared within the group keep, on a daily basis, updated on the subject of China, which includes Latin America's relations with this power. Also the book [China: O socialismo do século XXI \(2021\)](#) by [Elías Jabour](#) and [Alberto Gabriele](#), members of the same group, has reached international repercussions including China itself. It challenges traditional visions and discusses China as an economic-social formation with its own characteristics, under an Economy of the Property, which does not fit into what some consider as "state capitalism" and neither as definitive "socialism".



"China and the map of world power"

In Ecuador, the IAEN (State Postgraduate University) created, years ago, the Center for Chinese Studies. There are several degree theses published in electronic format and thanks to them we can better understand the relations that have been advanced between the country and China. However, it is necessary to highlight the recent work entitled [History of Chinese Migration in Ecuador. Between the diaspora and the development of the belt and road](#), under the coordination of Milton Reyes (directs the IAEN Center), José Borja and Patricio Trujillo. It is a well-worked book, with sufficient historical perspective, abundant information and also supported by novel interviews that have allowed to reconstruct the Chinese presence. I emphasize the particular interest of the study in relation to Ecuador's relations with China following each of the presidents of the democratic-constitutional era that began in 1979.



[History of Chinese Migration in Ecuador: Between Disapor and belt and road development](#) Full book PDF

format

It is worth mentioning the accumulation of "passions" that brought both the direct investments of China during the ten years of "correísmo", or the commercial ties that grew, as well as the debt acquired with this country, which the political and economic right, in its internal struggle, turned into a ghost for social horror under the phrase "the country has been mortgaged to China". Well, both the government of Lenin Moreno

(2017-2021) and that of the successor Guillermo Lasso, under the consolidation of a model of business economy of a neoliberal-oligarchic nature and opposed to all types of social economy, did not stop relations with China and are currently trying to be strengthened. Lasso even traveled to China in February 2022, displaying the official propaganda slogan: "[more Ecuador in the world and more world in Ecuador.](#)"

As has happened with Ecuador, Latin America's relations with China are in the process of expanding. It is a matter that has become world news for the spectacularity acquired. This is highlighted by France 24, when realizing that \diamond . The data is overwhelming: in 2021 the total value of trade between China and Latin America and the Caribbean increased by 41.1% compared to 2020, registering a new record in transactions, worth 451,591 million dollars. And all this contributes to the creation of the multipolar and multicultural world that is being formed in the twenty-first century. This new configuration between powers and also changing economic relations with Latin American countries is born. It is an unstoppable process, which forces the development of new studies.



[China is currently the second most important trading partner for the region.](#) © France 24

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