

**Assessing China’s Presence and Influence in Latin America and the Caribbean Act of 2021**

- The United States and China are competing across nearly every functional and geographic domain, and one important—but underappreciated—front in this competition is Latin America and the Caribbean.
- Admiral Craig Faller, the commander of U.S. Southern Command, recently [said](#) that China is engaged in a “full-court press” in the region and that U.S. influence is “eroding.”
- As one analyst [observed](#): “China’s entry into the Americas is the most significant issue this century in hemispheric affairs. Relations that were at first considered one-dimensional and transactional . . . are now consolidating into a vast array of economic, political and geostrategic interests.”
- It is important for policymakers to understand precisely what military, diplomatic, and economic activities China is conducting in the region (its use of “hard” and “soft” power), which of these activities pose a challenge to U.S. interests and values (separating the malign from the more benign), and what the U.S. is doing—or should do—to counter China in an appropriate and effective way.
- To that end, the bill would require the State Department, Defense Department, intelligence community, and National Security Council to jointly prepare a holistic assessment for Congress (containing both unclassified and classified sections) on China’s efforts to expand its influence in South America, Central America, the Caribbean, and Mexico, and how these efforts could compromise U.S. security and economic interests.
- For example, the assessment would:
  - Examine China’s closest relationships in the region, including its relationship with the governments of Venezuela and Cuba;
  - Outline where China has made investments or loans, undertaken construction projects, and provided foreign assistance in the region;
  - Describe China’s military assets and activities, its sale or transfer of defense equipment, and its role in transnational crime and drug trafficking in the region;
  - Explain China’s COVID-19 “vaccine diplomacy” in the region and the conditions it attaches to such assistance;
  - Evaluate the specific objectives China seeks to achieve in the region; and
  - Describe the specific actions taken by China in the region that present the greatest threat to United States’ interests.
- Soon after submitting this assessment to Congress, the Secretary of State or the Secretary’s designee would be required to brief Congress on the U.S. plan of action to respond to the efforts by China to expand its presence and influence in Latin America and the Caribbean, including a description of the public policies, legal authorities, and financial resources required for the United States to appropriately and effectively counter China’s efforts.