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AGENDA

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AGENDA

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AGENDA

AGENDA is an international digital magazine published monthly in English and Spanish and distributed free of charge. It features prominent politicians, intellectuals, think tank members, and academics, along with other influential figures from the United States, Latin America, and Europe, who share a commitment to the **free-market system** and **democratic principles** that foster development and equality of opportunities for our societies.

The magazine, developed by a group of international organizations, is non-partisan and has the following institutions as its primary sponsors:

- The **Adam Smith Center for Economic Freedom** at Florida International University (FIU), USA.
- The **International Republican institute** (IRI), USA.
- The **New Generations Foundation** (FNG), Argentina.
- **UNIR University**, Spain.

AGENDA also enjoys the support of a significant group of **think tanks** in the Atlantic Triangle and a distinguished editorial board composed of renowned figures from the intellectual and political worlds. They provide valuable support, strengthening the magazine with ideas, initiatives, and debates on its content.

AGENDA presents **twelve brief opinion articles** on global or local topics every month: 4 from America, 4 from Latin America, and 4 from Western Europe.

Contributors are prominent politicians, thinkers, analysts, and academics with extensive knowledge of the region's **political and economic realities** and outstanding analytical skills.

The magazine's target audience includes decision-makers and public opinion leaders. If you are reading this, it's because **you** can amplify the message, incorporate the experiences described, replicate them in your spheres of influence, and make decisions based on the principles and values promoted in the magazine.

AGENDA: the meeting point for all who believe in the values of freedom and democracy. **Enjoy your reading!**





Carlos Díaz-Rosillo, Ph.D. 

Director and Founder Adam Smith Center for
Economic Freedom, Florida International University

A Contribution to the Agenda of Western Democracy

AGENDA: Whether in English or Spanish, this word means the list of topics to be addressed or, according to the Royal Academy of the Spanish Language, the object in which "something is written down to not forget it, something that **has to be done.**"

That is precisely the purpose of this magazine, whose first issue we put in your hands today: to list the essential issues for **debate and action** for those of us who believe in the values of economic and individual freedom and democracy and to become a space for meeting and convergence of the main representatives of those values in the Western world.

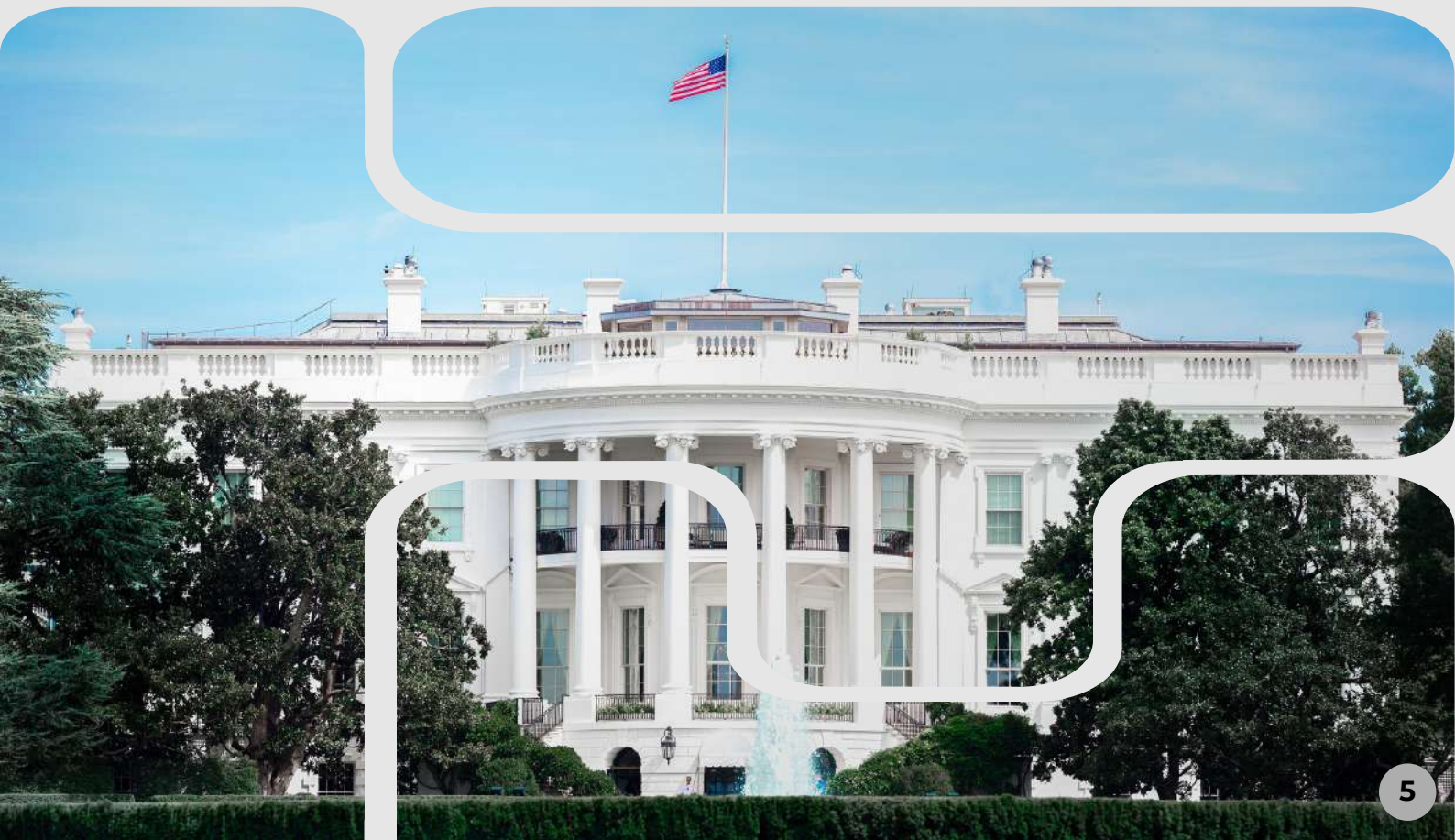
Developed by the **Adam Smith Center for Economic Freedom** alongside prestigious academic institutions from the United States, Europe, and Latin America, these pages will showcase the ideas, reflections, and experiences of the region's most prestigious leaders from the public and private sectors. This effort is directed at **leaders and decision-makers**, who will find in our articles the valuable combination of theory and practice, reflection, and experience.



As institutions, our goal is to build a community of ideas and values, to promote democracy and economic freedom in a time of permanent change where we face challenges that until recently were unknown to us. In this **constantly moving** and changing world, taking time to analyze and learn becomes even more important, and that is what we aspire to provide through our Agenda.

We will address topics related to politics, economics, trade, and innovation, among many others, and in each publication, we will alternate between an analysis of historical facts, reviews of classics, or interviews with the protagonists from more than **50 countries** reached by our publication.

It is an honor for the Adam Smith Center for Economic Freedom to be part of this important project. Our goal as a Center is to inform, influence, and inspire current and future leaders to develop and implement innovative, meaningful, and effective public policies to promote **economic freedom and prosperity**. That's why we are pleased to participate in an effort like this, perfectly aligned with our vision to be a "think and do tank," that is why we present this magazine today, written by - and for - **"thinkers and doers."**





Julián Obiglio

General Coordinator AGENDA Magazine
President Nuevas Generaciones Foundation, Argentina.

WELCOME TO AGENDA!

Dear friends, today marks the birth of a magazine that will be a turning point in the bond of those who believe that democratic principles and the values of freedom are essential for **development** and **equal opportunities** in Western societies.

Within these pages will converge, political actors, intellectuals, academics, members of think tanks, and study centers from **three regions** of our world, which should be much more connected and coordinated than they currently are.

AGENDA will be the **meeting point** for prominent figures from the United States, Latin America, and Europe who share ideas, visions, and values. It will be where writers and readers will recognize themselves and begin to identify, eliminating any physical distance between them to enhance the ideas and actions that unite them.

Our magazine will have unprecedented, high-quality content produced by the very actors at the forefront of **global action and thought**. AGENDA will bring us reflections and information that no other publication has ever managed to coordinate. It will open the doors to a network of institutions, study centers, and personalities that will soon be much more powerful than it is today.

Our magazine's articles will all be brief, so reading them will take no more than five minutes. They will focus on **clear and impactful** content, going straight to the central ideas we want to convey. Both contributors and readers of AGENDA make the most of their time, and our publication will accompany them in efficiently using their minutes.

AGENDA will share news about new book releases, research papers, events, and activities that may occur in our regions of influence. In the same vein, it will add special thematic notes and, indeed, some notes of global political humor.

Our magazine will be distributed every month in its two digital versions (English and Spanish) on the same day of the month in the three geographical areas (United States, Latin America, and Europe), with a simple format easy for **sharing** through any phone, computer, or application. Therefore, we count on all our readers to achieve great dissemination in each area of interest for the ideas developed here.

AGENDA is a powerful initiative reflecting the enormous joint work of people from the three participating regions, with a strong commitment to disseminating and defending the ideas of democracy and freedom. I want to especially thank the **Adam Smith Center for Economic Freedom** at Florida International University for its great leadership, as well as **UNIR University**, from Spain, for its great support, and the **International Republican Institute (IRI)** for its invaluable support and accompaniment to make this project come true. These institutions and their teams exemplify a commitment to our present and, even better, to our future.

Finally, in this first editorial note, which I will accompany you at the opening of each month, I want to thank all the collaborators of this initial issue. All of them are **top-level global actors** who immediately agreed to be part of this launch, understanding that an important chapter of our history begins here. We live in a world where great changes can only be achieved by working together.





Antonio Garrastazu, Ph.D.

Senior Director, Latin America and the Caribbean.
International Republican Institute (IRI). USA.

AGENDA!

Dear Readers,

Welcome to the inaugural edition of Agenda Magazine, a global, regional, and transatlantic initiative that seeks to highlight the **democratic values** that bridge the United States, the European Union (EU), Latin America, and the Caribbean.

The underlying theme of this effort is strengthening democracy, enhancing governance, reinforcing the importance of integration, and upholding the rule of law. Transparency, accountability, and **respect for institutions** are key to this endeavor.

Within these pages, you will read from a diverse set of contributors—policy makers, political and private sector leaders, civil society, democracy champions and defenders, and academics—providing a platform for discussion, debate, and understanding of the core **geopolitical issues** impacting and defining our world today.

From Russia's aggression against Ukraine, dissidents and citizens who dare question their monopoly on power, the Israel-Gaza war, and the rise of authoritarianism to countering China's interference globally, **Agenda Magazine** serves as an informative space to debate the ideas that matter to our world, to our transnational communities.



Key, thematic trends— Artificial intelligence, electoral integrity, insecurity, inclusion, engagement, and empowerment of women and youth in politics are key issues warranting serious analysis.

The inaugural issue of Agenda Magazine comes at an opportune time and provides a critical juncture from which to view the **Transatlantic relationship** via a bipartisan lens. It is no coincidence that this effort is being launched during International Women’s Month, reinforcing the Transatlantic relationship and values-based system at the core of the U.S., EU, and the Americas.

Information is **power**, and that’s the essence of Agenda Magazine, which creates a readership community and presents ideas on policy issues that impact our world.

I trust readers will find this initiative useful, informative, and **transformative**.





Santiago Peña 


President of the Republic of Paraguay

Latin America: a true leading actor on the world stage

What is the place of Latin America in the world today? Some think the region has fallen behind globally, but it is quite the opposite: the world's well-being, in many ways, depends on the well-being of Latin America. Consider just the material needs of the world today. In my inauguration speech as President of the Republic of Paraguay on August 15th, 2023, I mentioned four **global challenges** that inevitably generate geopolitical tensions today: a) access to water, b) food security, c) energy sufficiency, and d) logistical resilience.

Well, in each of these major themes, **Latin America**, in general, and Paraguay, in particular, are inevitably called to be true protagonists on the world stage. Regarding the challenge of access to water, we know that much of the future depends on this and on the difficulty that so many countries - even economically powerful ones - have in accessing clean water. In the heart of South America, and covering a significant part of Paraguay's territory, lies the "Guaraní Aquifer," one of the largest freshwater reserves on the planet.





As for **food security**, Latin America is one of the few regions in the world that not only produces food for its population but also feeds the rest of the world. Growth in this area has been exponential - the case of Paraguay, despite its small size, becoming the world's leading producer of soybeans and corn, is noteworthy - and it will not cease in the future, with Latin America in many ways becoming the great provider of food for the entire globe.

Regarding **energy**, once again, Paraguay is an example of how advanced the continent is in this issue: 100% of the energy produced by the country is green, renewable, and absolutely clean, thanks to our powerful hydroelectric plants shared with our neighboring countries, Brazil and Argentina. Finally, concerning logistical resilience, Paraguay, despite being landlocked, is crisscrossed by one of the most important "river highways" in the world, the Paraná-Paraguay Waterway; furthermore, we are building the Bi-oceanic Corridor to connect the Atlantic with the Pacific. A significant part of communication in the world, **between East and West**, necessarily passes and will pass through Latin America.

But the **region's potential** is not only material, confined to these crucial aspects for the well-being of the global community, but also in the field of ideas, spiritually speaking. Therefore, I believe that the main obstacle, the greatest barrier that we Latin Americans have, is not physical or geographical but lies in our minds. We must **believe** in our greatness, in our protagonism, because our actions depend on our ideas.

If, on the contrary, we see ourselves as small or as victims, then we will be small. **Latin America is great** and an obligatory protagonist in the concert of nations, but it depends on us to make it a reality.

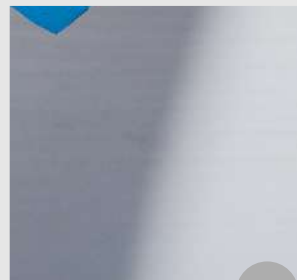
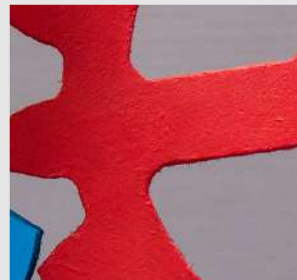
Contrary to what many believe or maintain, Latin America has been great, is great, and is configured to be great: it is not a secondary actor. It only depends on itself to find its truly leading role on the world stage.

This protagonism in such an important process for world history as the creation of the modern nation-state must once again be found in Latin America in the twenty-first century, defining again its role as the main protagonist, not merely peripheral, in the modern world: a true **leading actor** on the world stage.

Integration within Latin America: the case of MERCOSUR

The future tasks promoting **regional mechanisms** such as MERCOSUR require joint and arduous work. As a first step, there must be a renewal of political will among the States regarding a new model of integration, adapted to the realities of today's world and adjusted to the paradigms driving the international economy and the current trends prevailing in global trade. Without political will, there is no easy way out.

The great challenge will be to consolidate a genuine integrationist sentiment in our societies and the conviction of a common destiny in the imagination of each citizen of our countries. This will allow us to overcome the limitations of a merely intergovernmental approach and achieve a **non-ideological integration**.





The current agenda of economic integration must be expanded, giving greater prominence to new content, especially in services for trade, intellectual property rights, **digital agenda**, e-commerce, and environmental sustainability, considering that in previous stages, the focus was on the trade of goods.

Integration outside of Latin America: the case of the European Union

The current situation in Europe is strongly conditioned by the energy **crisis** resulting from the conflict between Russia and Ukraine, the military issue with NATO and the European policy's aspirations in defense matters, the dependency on China for the provision of industrial inputs, the rejection by EU countries of the Commission's proposal for a package of environmental measures, and some difficulties in the community-level approval of essential topics.

Latin America has an unparalleled historical, cultural, familial, and undeniable commercial relationship with Europe, and strengthening its relationships can greatly contribute to mitigating the difficulties arising from the previously described scenario. It must be stated clearly: a **fraternal relationship** with Latin America is very beneficial for the European Union.

The negotiating position of the European Union has been very demanding with MERCOSUR on various issues, especially non-commercial ones, not having the same rigor in its negotiations with countries of a different identity from other regions of the world. This is regrettable and shows that there is still a **lack of full understanding** of the European-rooted ideal of fraternity, of understanding that should exist with the different realities and historical processes of the countries.

I am sure that the leaders of the **European Union** will know how to return to their roots and understand that a fraternal relationship with Latin America is the only path to follow for regions that share a common trunk of history, culture, and tradition.

Conclusion

The challenge for Latin America, then, is tremendous. It has two alternatives. To assume that leading role - that **leading actor** role - within the concert of nations' stage, or to be entrenched in a doubtful and forgettable secondary role, dragged by the winds of history.

We Latin Americans must face our future with unyielding perseverance but also intelligent flexibility to first integrate ourselves as a region and then be a "**preponderant factor**" of "balance and peace" for the whole world. I am sure that, with advances and setbacks, **we will do so.**





Marco Rubio

U.S. Senator (Republican Party - Florida) since 2011. Served as Speaker of the Florida House of Representatives from 2006 to 2008. Was elected to the Florida House of Representatives in 2000. Served as a City Commissioner for West Miami in the 1990s.


Huawei threatens Latin America's independence

If a gangster offered to work in your household, would you accept? The logical answer is no. You wouldn't think twice about turning him away, even if his services came at a bargain price. Well, governments in Latin America and the Caribbean courting Huawei should beware: the Chinese telecom giant is a **criminal**.

I've been making this case since 2018, when Huawei used its budget-priced 5G technology to establish ties with the United States and many of its closest allies. Beijing wasn't subsidizing Huawei to help rural communities in America. Instead, its goal was to make a Chinese company ruled by the Chinese state the dominant player in the **global wireless market, thereby making** every major country and company on Earth dependent on the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) for telecom.

This would have given Beijing incalculable leverage to exploit and coerce foreign policymakers and businesspeople. Add to this Huawei's backdoor data-collection capabilities, and you get a Trojan horse tailor-made to spy, steal **intellectual property**, and rob nations of their very independence.





I sounded the alarm, and President Donald Trump took action, effectively banning the company in the United States. The leaders of Australia, Canada, France, Japan, New Zealand, and the United Kingdom soon followed suit.

But in the years since, Huawei has lowered its profile, survived a near collapse, and set its sights on countries in our hemisphere. Unfortunately, it's making significant inroads. Today, at least seven countries in our region—Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, the Dominican Republic, and Ecuador—are using or planning to use **Huawei technology** in their national 5G networks. Huawei has also set up shop in Paraguay, despite President Santiago Peña's commendable opposition to the CCP.

Latin American leaders are facing difficult choices, as the Chinese telecom giant offers a nominally good deal. Perhaps these leaders believe they can manage the **risk** of doing business with Huawei. But as I argued in 2020, "the strength of 5G is that the core and the periphery of a network are one and the same, meaning that giving Huawei any access poses a tremendous risk." Open the door one inch, and this company will be able to manipulate your entire network—it's just how the technology works. And take it from the United States, which worked with Huawei only briefly and exposed itself to high-level security threats and attacks on six domestic companies as a result, that it's too dangerous to handle.

There's an urgent need for other 5G suppliers—Sweden's Ericsson, Finland's Nokia, and South Korea's Samsung—to be made available in Latin America.

Open Access Radio Network (ORAN) technology provides another alternative, one that is incompatible with Huawei but offers more options at lower costs. In all of this, the deal the United States offered to the United Kingdom when it was considering a Huawei partnership should remain on the table for other U.S. allies and partners: reject this company, and we will help you improve your telecom network.

President Nayib Bukele of El Salvador took this deal just a few months ago. I hope more leaders in our hemisphere follow in his footsteps. It would benefit the United States by keeping our greatest **geopolitical adversary** from extending its reach in our region. But, it would also benefit Latin America and the Caribbean by protecting their policymakers and businesspeople from Huawei's state-sponsored coercion, espionage, and intellectual property theft.

Remember, Huawei is no ordinary company. As a “national champion” beholden to the CCP, it knows no law but Beijing's. Governments that give this entity access to their citizens' data and technology are opening the doors to their people's exploitation—and putting their **national independence** at risk.





Jeanette Nuñez


Lieutenant Governor of the State of Florida 2018-2026; Chair of Space Florida; Chair of the Florida Cybersecurity Advisory Council; former State Representative of the Florida House of Representatives 2010-2018; Bachelor of Arts and Master of Public Administration from Florida International University.

Florida and the aerospace industry

While some people may view space as merely the backdrop of a distant future, the **space industry** is inextricably intertwined with Florida's economy. For decades, Florida has been synonymous with space, but we have set our sights on an industry that has much broader implications than just rockets and launches. The space industry is on pace to be a multi-trillion-dollar economy within the next decade, and with a projected \$1.1 billion annual impact to the state's economy over the next five years, Florida is well on its way to solidifying its reputation as the premier global aerospace hub.

I have had the privilege of serving as the Chair of **Space Florida** since 2019. Space Florida is the state's aerospace finance and development authority, responsible for growth in space-related technology, innovation, commerce, and exploration. As the unquestioned leader in the global aerospace industry, Space Florida supports thousands of companies and is responsible for nearly 20% of Florida's aerospace workforce. Last year alone, Space Florida was successful in recruiting and retaining 15 companies and 5,000 high-quality jobs across the state. Rather than focusing on subsidies or incentives, the State of Florida adheres to free market principles, particularly in aerospace investment.





While other states throw large sums of money to lure businesses, Florida continually remains the place where everyone wants to plant their flag. Our unique financing tools and business approach set us apart.

Nowhere have we seen an industry transform more than the space industry. What used to be exclusively a government agency has now overwhelmingly attracted commercial investment. The private sector's active participation in aerospace has created conditions that are ripe for less government involvement, economic competitiveness, and innovation. This new dynamic takes us to places where only our imagination could previously fathom. For example, thanks to SpaceX, reusable rockets are now the norm, and the industry has followed suit, reducing the cost of space travel and rapidly increasing launch cadence. With the possible retirement of the International Space Station (ISS), commercial space is aggressively working on its successor. Whether Orbital Reef (a collaboration between Blue Origin and Sierra Space) or Starlab (the commercial space station being developed by Airbus and Voyager Space), **commercial space** is moving at light speed.

Last year was a breakthrough year for Space Florida. One of those exciting opportunities was welcoming **Amazon's Project Kuiper** to the Space Coast. Amazon is investing approximately \$120 million in the new construction of its satellite processing facility, creating several hundred jobs for Floridians. Furthermore, this project is setting the stage for a robust satellite constellation that will provide fast and reliable internet access across the globe.

Additionally, we have collaborated with the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) and the **National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA)** on ongoing infrastructure investments.

By enhancing the infrastructure in and around Cape Canaveral, the State of Florida has paved the way for continued growth, both for payloads and personnel.

Our state is continually looking to develop our talent pipeline. Governor Ron DeSantis and I have prioritized investing in our state's most valuable resource: **our people**. By working closely with stakeholders to address the needs of different industries, we have used our discussions to drive policy and investment decisions. We have developed apprenticeship programs and other education-related initiatives to propel the **industry with highly specialized talent**. Florida is recognized by U.S. News & World Report as the #1 university system in the country, for seven years running. Coupled with our state college system and other flagship institutions, such as Embry Riddle Aeronautical University, we have the capacity and vision to educate future engineers and researchers.

Beyond the work we are doing here in Florida, our success is felt across the globe. Florida and Israel, for example, have maintained a long-standing partnership. For more than a decade, Space Florida and the Israel Innovation Authority have worked jointly to enhance research, development, and commercialization of the **aerospace industry**. The return on investment has been substantial, with projects even creating critical lifesaving equipment. A joint venture between Lockheed Martin and Israeli-based StemRad produced a radiation-shielding vest for use by astronauts in space. The AstroRad vests have undergone several tests by astronauts on the ISS and is a testament to this initiative.



In addition to Florida's partnership with Israel, we remain focused on collaborating with aerospace and aviation companies around the globe to position Florida's long-term success. Last year, our administration entered into a **Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)** with the United Kingdom to promote further cooperation and investment.

Our international collaboration is not limited to working with our allies across the Atlantic. Latin America is proving critical to our **aerospace expansion** efforts. Countries like Brazil play an important part in our economic development, especially as it relates to the aerospace sector. In 2022, aircrafts amounted to \$4.5 billion in Brazilian imports from Florida, and Brazilian trade to Florida accounted for \$787 million in aircraft exports. Florida has also played a large role in the growth of one of our largest aerospace partners, Embraer, a Brazilian aviation company. In 2014, with the support of Space Florida, Embraer opened its Engineering Center of Excellence facility in Melbourne. This \$24.2 million facility brought significant capital investment to Florida's Space Coast and created hundreds of jobs. International corporations such as Embraer see the value of investing in Florida, and we will support them every step of the way.

From global space research and development funding, to manufacturing, energy production, and the new frontier of space tourism, Florida is continuing its role as the leader for the entire space enterprise, and **Space Florida** continues to be the envy of the nation. It is unrivaled, unmatched, and unparalleled.





Guillermo Lasso Mendoza

President of the Republic of Ecuador (2021-2023).

Senior Leadership Fellow, Adam Smith Center for Economic Freedom, FIU.

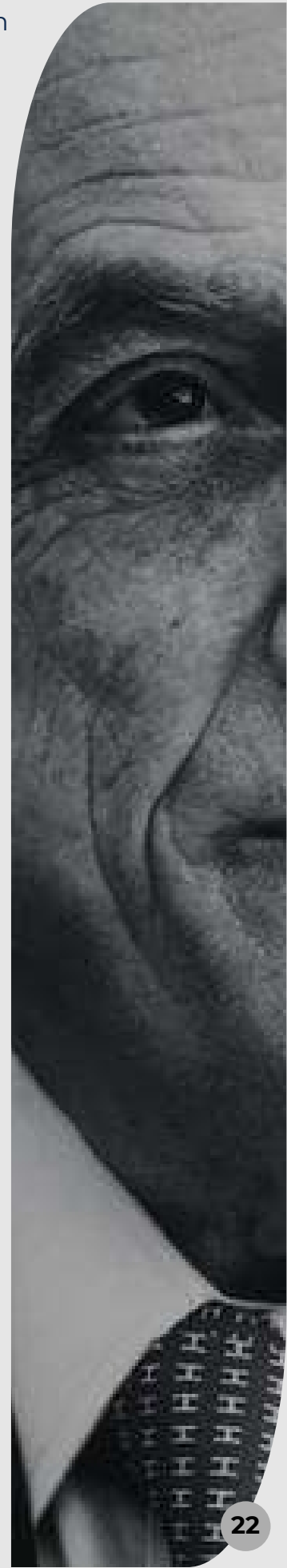
Sebastián Piñera

On Tuesday, February 6th, I was in Houston finishing a medical check-up. That day also happened to be our wedding anniversary; we celebrated 43 years of marriage and were happy, celebrating our life together. On the way to the airport to return to Guayaquil, a friend from Ecuador messaged me with the news: **Sebastián Piñera** had died in a tragic accident. It hit me tremendously; it hurt, and I felt it deeply.

I met Sebastián after his first term as President in 2014. We coincided at the Intercontinental Hotel in Madrid; I had arrived early from Ecuador, and as I was checking in, he came to the front desk—wearing sportswear—to ask for information.

My friend Aparicio Caicedo whispered, "**President Piñera** just entered, look, he's here." Without hesitation, I got up from my seat and greeted him.

I introduced myself as an Ecuadorian who had followed his **government** closely. He responded very kindly, and although our conversation was brief, it was intense. So much so that we agreed to have dinner that same night. He asked me to choose a restaurant in the old area of Madrid. "Casa Lucio," I replied. He agreed, we shook hands, and, smiling, we said goodbye until the evening.





During our long conversation at Casa Lucio and our later walk through Plaza Mayor of Madrid, we talked about Ecuador, Chile, **regional politics**, and the global economy. By that time, we were two men who had achieved business success, but we were less important than the millions of citizens of our countries who were trapped in poverty.

I told him I aspired to be **President of Ecuador**, and he gave me several pieces of advice, all very useful, without foreseeing crises so deep as those left by the pandemic or the outbreak of violence due to insecurity that we experienced later - including the political violence that hit our countries in 2019 and 2022.

Regarding Chile specifically, we discussed its border disputes with Peru, how it was dealing with the tragic consequences of the 2010 earthquake, and how the country was seen as a reference for the region, enjoying the **democracy** that many of us have always wanted. I considered that he was capable of assuming regional leadership to stop the advance of the antidemocratic trend known at the time as the "socialism of the 21st century." I also sensed that he would run for a second term from that conversation.

Sebastián Piñera came to Guayaquil in 2016 to give a talk organized by the **Ecuador Libre Foundation**. He talked about the economy and environment. This man was no longer just thinking about Chile but about the continent and beyond.

In 2017, he invited me to visit his country and deliver a conference at several Chilean events. I understood that he did that to support me on the day Lenin Moreno took office, who had come to power after elections **suspected of fraud**.

In October 2019, a "**popular uprising**" erupted in Quito, which fundamentally aimed to overthrow our democracy. By then, Sebastián Piñera had been elected President of Chile for a second time. I called him to tell him what was happening in Ecuador. I told him I was an **opponent** of Moreno's government, not only because of doubts about how he came to power but also because the previous presidential period, of which Moreno was a member, was characterized by authoritarianism, persecution, encroachment on public liberties, and corruption.

It was also true that Moreno had made a U-turn and distanced Rafael Correa as much as possible from his government. His vice president Jorge Glas was already in prison for corruption, several ministers from Correa's government were also in prison or fugitives, and Correa himself was already facing criminal charges. Then, violence erupted in the country in an unprecedented way. For me, it was clear that an **attempted coup** was underway, and behind this pretense was Correa with money from Nicolás Maduro. I had no choice but to opt for respect for institutionalism and defend Lenin Moreno's government for Ecuadorian democracy and our future.



I must acknowledge that at that moment, he listened to my theory that Correa and Chavismo were trying to overthrow our **democracy**. Seven days after the October demonstrations ended in Ecuador, the "outburst in Chile" erupted with very similar characteristics to what we had experienced.

It is worth remembering that months earlier, in January 2019, the **democratic countries** of Latin America took a radical stance against the Maduro regime, supporting Juan Guaidó as the legitimate interim President of Venezuela: Argentina, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Guatemala, Honduras, Panama, Paraguay, and Peru demanded his departure. They were 11 out of the 14 members of the Lima Group.

The idea of the "Bolivarian breeze" sweeping through Latin America, as declared by Cabello - the number two in the Chavismo line of power - was very true. 2019 was a very difficult year for **liberal democracies** threatened by the new "progressivisms." They saw their influence in the region waning and had to fight back because if it wasn't through the ballot boxes, they had to regain power by force. Although they did not achieve their goal, they further weakened democratic institutions and deepened the wounds within our societies.

Piñera and other regional presidents even reached the northern border of Colombia to pressure the exit of the **Maduro dictatorship** and free Venezuela from that despotic regime that brought ruin to one of the richest nations in America.



Nearly two years later, Sebastián called me to congratulate me on my victory in the **presidential elections** in Ecuador. With his particular sense of humor, he told me that the period before taking office is the best because hard and endless days would come once the government is installed. He was right: when I got into the office, there were days when I couldn't sleep, and on average, I worked 17 hours a day.

Our communication as presidents became more precise, and we discussed government issues such as **COVID-19** vaccination. I was very interested in how his country had progressed so rapidly in acquiring vaccines.

I followed his steps because I had set out to vaccinate nine million Ecuadorians in **one hundred days** with two doses. Ecuador had to overcome stagnation; we had to reduce deaths from COVID-19 further. I wanted Ecuadorians to regain their normalcy. My diplomatic efforts with China and other countries yielded results; we obtained enough vaccines for all Ecuadorians in record time. At that moment, President Piñera called to ask about my **vaccination logistical plan**. Now, he was surprised by our good results in fighting COVID-19.

When the violence erupted in June 2021 in Ecuador, he was very concerned, and we shared the principle that it must be **resolved democratically**. It seemed that our governments were marked by the same events and the same way of resolving conflicts.





In April 2023, Sebastián Piñera called me concerned about the direction that was taking the "**false political trial**" initiated against me, with the complicity of six judges of the Constitutional Court. He asked me how he could help and, in his nobility, if we could do something with Nebot. Once again, I was honest and practical: I replied that this was a personal problem and not political, that Nebot hated me and wanted my head at any cost, regardless of what happened in Ecuador. Sebastián Piñera, as the democratic leader he was, believed that everything could be resolved through dialogue. Knowing my adversaries, I knew that there are realities that **will never change**.

After a month of back-and-forth, he said he had concluded that Nebot hated me and that it was a personal matter: "He wants to **see you out of power** despite admitting that you have not committed embezzlement by omission." What happened next in Ecuador is public knowledge.

I left the presidency, and our conversations continued less frequently than I would have liked. Therefore, because of everything I've narrated here, on February 6th, I was shocked to learn about his death. I couldn't believe it, so I wrote to President Gabriel Boric, and he confirmed that the news was true, that it was a very tough day for Chile, and that I would be welcome to attend the funeral of this **great man**.

Back in Guayaquil on February 7th, I watched on television the transfer of his coffin to the **Congress** building. There were images of a multitude of people who wanted to bid him farewell. I must admit that tears welled up in my eyes. I also wanted to say goodbye, so we packed our bags and went to Santiago with very close collaborators and good personal friends from my government.

The speeches we heard from supporters and opponents testified to a life dedicated to serving others. **Sebastián Piñera** was not just a man of ideas but of action, who proposed to Chile a modern, centrist-right government concerned about fighting poverty and inequality.

As I left the **National Congress**, the press approached me and asked me why I had attended Sebastián Piñera's funeral. I told them I had gone to celebrate the life of a great man, an example of a human being, a family man, a politician, a Senator, and a President. Furthermore, I said that not only Chile had suffered a great loss, but the entire region would miss him immensely.

Rest in peace, dear **friend**.





Stefan Müller

Federal deputy for the electoral district of Erlangen, Bavaria, since 2002. Parliamentary Secretary of the CSU (Christian Social Union) in the German parliament. Leader of the Parliamentary Group of the CSU in the federal German parliament. Next summer, he will become the President and CEO of the Cooperative Association of Bavaria in Munich.

Is Germany once again the sick man of Europe?

Germany, often lauded for its economic stability and industrial prowess, finds itself in a precarious position amidst a backdrop of economic challenges and **shifting global dynamics**. While the country's government portrays an image of stability and efficiency, its actions raise critical questions about its approach to economic cooperation and sustainable development. "The Economist" claims Germany is once again Europe's sick man. How is the economic situation in Europe's biggest country?

As of 2022, Germany remained one of Europe's largest and most robust economies despite facing challenges such as an aging population, structural changes in industries, and the need to adapt to a rapidly evolving global economic landscape. The disruptions have exposed vulnerabilities in its traditional economic model. The government's response to these challenges has been lackluster, characterized by a reluctance to adapt to changing realities and a failure to **provide innovative solutions**.





Whether Germany could be considered the "**sick man**" of Europe again would depend on various factors such as economic performance, political stability, social indicators, and other relevant metrics. As of now, Germany's economy is still strong. Germany's Mittelstand refers to the country's small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) that form the backbone of its economy. The term Mittelstand translates to "middle class" or "middle stand." Still, in the German context, it specifically denotes a diverse group of businesses that are often family-owned and characterized by their focus on **innovation**, specialization, and long-term sustainability. Mittelstand firms often specialize in niche markets or specific products, allowing them to excel in their chosen areas and maintain a competitive edge. A focus on quality and innovation often drives this specialization.

However, this business model is changing in response to various factors, including globalization, digitalization, demographic changes, and shifting consumer preferences. While many of the core characteristics of the **Mittelstand** remain intact, topics such as energy prices and backward digitalization are serious threats that the government has to deal with.

The transition to renewable energy, the so-called "**Energiewende**," has been hailed as a beacon of sustainability. However, the government's mishandling this transition has led to inefficiencies and missed opportunities. While other countries forge ahead with ambitious renewable energy projects, Germany's progress has been marred by bureaucratic red tape and corporate interests, stifling innovation and hindering progress.

Furthermore, Germany's digital transformation has been marred by inertia and indecision. While Industry 4.0 promises to revolutionize manufacturing and drive economic growth, the government's failure to provide adequate support and infrastructure has left many industries lagging. This **lack of vision and leadership** has allowed other countries to seize the initiative, leaving Germany playing catch-up in the digital race. Germany is at risk of descending into mediocrity.

Against this backdrop, the government's approach to Latin America appears disjointed and shortsighted. While the region presents significant opportunities for economic collaboration and investment, Germany's engagement has been marked by **inconsistency and neglect**. Despite Latin America's abundant natural resources and growing markets, German investment in the region remains minimal, overshadowed by its focus on traditional trade partners.

In conclusion, Germany's economic challenges are exacerbated by a government that **lacks vision and leadership**. Its reluctance to embrace renewable energy and digital innovation stifles economic growth and undermines its credibility on the global stage. Moreover, its approach to Latin America highlights a glaring inconsistency between rhetoric and action, raising questions about its commitment to sustainable development and responsible governance.

As Germany grapples with these challenges, it must confront the uncomfortable truth that real change requires **bold leadership** and a willingness to challenge entrenched interests. Only by embracing innovation and forging genuine partnerships with Latin America can Germany secure its place in the global economy and not become the sick man of Europe.





Víctor "Ito" Bisonó Haza


Minister of Industry, Commerce, and SMEs of the Dominican Republic. Currently coordinating President Abinader's reelection campaign. Former Deputy of the Republic. Entrepreneur. President of the Center for Analysis for Public Policies (CAPP).

2024 Electoral Festival and the Two Luises in Ibero-America

The 2024 **electoral cycle** is exceptionally active, representing the most active period the world will see in the next two decades, with more than half of the global population being called to vote. Of course, as the ones who adhere to liberal, conservative, and Christian democratic ideals have repeated, democracy goes far beyond just holding elections. Still, it cannot be considered to exist without free, fair, and credible elections. Therefore, this year fills us with considerable enthusiasm while leading us to deeply reflect on its political, economic, and social implications.

It would be quite challenging to address each process individually or cover all regions, so in this opportunity, we will focus more closely on **Ibero-America** and the collateral effects it entails. Our region will elect national governments in El Salvador, Portugal, Panama, the Dominican Republic, Mexico, and Uruguay, each with its particularities but mostly free compared to the Venezuelan case's significant unknown.



A hand is shown on the left side of the page, holding a white ballot paper. The background is a light blue gradient with a white, torn-paper-like edge on the left. The text is positioned to the right of the hand.

Salvadorans have already voted on February 4th when Nayib Bukele became the first president to be re-elected since 2016. During that period, Mauricio Macri of Argentina (2019) and Jair Bolsonaro of Brazil (2022) had not managed to remain in office, and Guillermo Lasso of Ecuador and Alberto Fernández of Argentina both declined their right to a second consecutive nomination in 2023. This broke the trend of incumbents who also failed to repeat since 2018 **outside the dictatorial axis**, with the Paraguayan exception, which, with its specificities, does not resemble practically any other country.

Bukele, with his tough stance and national re-foundation message, garnered 84.65% of the votes, the highest level of support in elections where opponents were neither arrested nor banned. Such a result calls for a profound debate on the foundations of **Western liberal democracy**, which, according to almost all measurements, is in decline, primarily among younger segments.

Further along in the calendar, it's time for voting in my country, the Dominican Republic, and in Uruguay, two countries still exhibit strong, pluralistic political parties within a coexistence framework. In fact, Uruguayans have relevant parties that approach two centuries of existence, a regional milestone, accompanied by **peaceful transfers** of political power among different sectors in both 2005 and 2020, free from any trauma. The same goes for Dominicans in 2020, 2004, 2000, 1996, 1986, and 1978, who, despite seeing long-standing governments, handed victory to the opposition winner in the polls without the slightest fear that the will could be frustrated.

On February 18th, Dominicans voted to choose their **municipal authorities** in the presence of 14 international observation missions, including the Organization of American States (OAS) and the Democratic Initiative of Spain and the Americas (IDEA), which brings together 37 former Heads of State and Government. All of them highlighted it as an exemplary, enthusiastic process.

Unlike Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Ecuador, Peru, and Uruguay, the **Dominican Republic** does not have compulsory voting, making it entirely voluntary. Therefore, **interest** in non-presidential elections is usually considerably lower than in presidential ones. However, still, 52.44% of those eligible to vote in the national territory went to the polls, surpassing the 31% turnout in the Costa Rican municipal election on February 4th, the 29% in the Jamaican local elections on February 26th, and on par with the 52.60% turnout of the Salvadoran general elections on February 4th.

In other words, Dominicans exhibit a remarkable level of enthusiasm for the **democratic political process**. Heading towards the presidential and legislative elections in May, a participation rate of between 65 and 70% is expected, among the highest non-compulsory levels on the continent. Similar to the Uruguayan example, which, although it has compulsory participation, surpasses all its neighbors, with **90%** of the electorate voting in 2019, 2014, 2009, and 2004, the highest level on the continent.



In the Dominican system, consecutive **presidential re-election** is deeply rooted in our culture. All forecasts point to President Luis Abinader—supported by a coalition of center parties—repeating for a second term focused on the economic reforms needed to modernize and incentivize production in the new environment. Several analysis agencies and observers highlight that it is the most popular government in the region, with a message of consensus, something increasingly uncommon but worth highlighting, rescuing, and sharing.

Uruguayans do not have consecutive re-election, but they have a tradition of **partisan political projects** and coalitions that last for several periods, as with the Colorado Party and recently with the "Frente Amplio." The National Party, traditionally in opposition, now governs with Luis Lacalle Pou, who is also applauded as one of the best Ibero-American success stories, also betting on dialogue, progress, and republican ideas. He cannot personally run for a second term, but the "Whites" - as the eastern nationalists are known - will also seek to continue the model they represent, similar to the Dominican one.

This year's analysis will revolve around authoritarian dangers, regressions, persecutions, and the ineffectiveness of multilateral sanctions. All that is important, however, is that I am convinced that one of the weaknesses of our message is that we have been spending so much time accusing and neglecting the **examples of success**. I firmly believe that we must be present, raising our voices every time extremists find an echo. Still, the message I want to leave in this election year is that the best way to convince people that democracy works is by showing examples like the Dominican and Uruguayan ones. I invite all those who read us to pay attention to the unfolding history of the two Luises, **Abinader, and Lacalle Pou**, as there is much to learn from both.






Tamala Longaberger

Board Member of the International Republican Institute (IRI). Former CEO of Longaberger Company. President and Member of the Board of the Longaberger Family Foundation. Vice-President of the Financial Research Advisory Committee of the US Treasury. She served as a US delegate to the Human Rights Commission and was appointed by President George W Bush as the National Women's Business Council Chair. She also served on the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars Board.

Women's Political Leadership: Unfinished Business

March 8 is recognized as **International Women's Day**. Celebrated in the early 20th century, this day reflects women's progress—particularly the legal frameworks and societal support for women's rights and gender equality—and reminds us of the work left to be done. While advances in women's political participation, particularly in Europe and the Americas, have been dramatic, there is unfinished business to ensure those gains and close the gap between women and men.

The 20th century saw monumental progress in **gender equality** in much of the world. New Zealand famously became the first country to guarantee women's suffrage in 1893, followed by Australia and much of northern Europe, which granted partial suffrage in the late 19th century and early 20th. In the U.S., the 19th Amendment enshrined a woman's right to vote beginning in 1920. Latin America has a long lineage of **strong women leaders**, from the revolutionary military leader Juana Azurduy to Argentina's Eva ("Evita") Perón, who shattered barriers and paved the way for future generations of female leaders. Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Peru, Nicaragua, and others in the region have had women heads of state. Mexico is set to elect its first woman president in June's elections.

A bronze statue of a woman in a dress and hat, standing on a stack of gold coins. The statue is positioned on the left side of the page, with the stack of coins extending from the bottom left towards the center. The background is a light, neutral color.

More recently, efforts to address gender disparities in politics through measures such as gender quotas, affirmative action policies, and campaigns to encourage women's political engagement have started to level the playing field for **women's participation**. The European Parliament's share of Women Members (MEPs) rose from a low of 16 percent in 1979 to 39 percent in 2023, according to the European Parliamentary Research Service. The Latin America and the Caribbean region are not far behind. As of 2022, the average legislative body had a 35 percent presence of women. Several, including Argentina, Mexico, and Bolivia, routinely surpass 40 percent of women's participation. The current U.S. Congress has the highest percentage of women in U.S. history, with just 28 percent of members of both chambers.

But these figures obscure huge differences within and between states and, importantly, the quality of participation. Brazil has elected a woman as president but has South America's lowest portion of women in Congress, with 17 percent. Cuba consistently has one of the highest proportions of women in the legislature, but it is a rubber-stamp legislature in a one-party dictatorship where legislators have **little agency**. However, these figures make clear that the next frontier in promoting women's political participation involves addressing deeper systemic and cultural barriers to gender equality in politics.

There is work to be done challenging traditional gender roles and **stereotypes** that dictate women's roles as caregivers rather than leaders: promoting cultural shifts that recognize and value women's leadership qualities and capabilities.

We must identify and dismantle institutional obstacles such as lack of access to resources, funding, and networks that disproportionately affect women's ability to enter and advance in politics. States must champion **comprehensive educational programs** to empower women with the skills, knowledge, and confidence to engage in political processes and leadership roles. Today's challenges have outgrown many of yesterday's policy solutions. We need up-to-date legislative reforms such as gender quotas, electoral reforms, and anti-discrimination laws to create a more inclusive and level playing field for women in politics.

As the former chair of the International Republican Institute's Arab Women's Leadership Institute, I know first-hand the importance of supportive Networks and Mentorship. Establishing networks, mentorship programs, and support structures is critical to fostering the development and advancement of women leaders, providing guidance, encouragement, and opportunities for career growth. Similarly, positive and diverse portrayals of women in politics in the media help challenge stereotypes and inspire the next generation of **female leaders**.

This is hard work. As recent events have shown, progress on women's **political participation** cannot be assumed. However, by addressing these multifaceted challenges and advancing a holistic approach to promoting gender equality in politics, societies can create more inclusive and representative political systems that benefit from women's full participation.





Paulo Neves



President of the Instituto de Promoción de América Latina y el Caribe (IPDAL).
MP of the Portuguese Republic.

A common agenda between Latin America & the Caribbean, Europe, and the United States

We in Europe, along with Latin America and the Caribbean and the United States, need to have a well-identified **Agenda of Common Interests**. Our three regions have much in common. In fact, they are the regions of the world with the most in common, whether from a cultural standpoint, shared history, or the values we hold. And it is precisely these values that demand a common strategy in an increasingly "blocked" world.

In this tripartite Common Agenda, we must identify the major challenges and find common solutions. Indeed, global problems can only be solved globally. There are many challenges, and some are complex. However, almost all of them can only be truly addressed if we have a common strategy—the challenge of economic growth. Only a strategy of fair and ethical **Trade and Investment Agreements** can create wealth. We need to have more trade and investment relations among ourselves. This way, we will grow our respective economies to help combat our countries' enormous and unacceptable poverty and misery. Poverty and misery are things of which we should be ashamed.



We should also have a common strategy to combat the problem of insecurity. This is a priority issue in almost all Latin American countries but is also increasingly important in the United States and Europe. In fact, Latin American organized crime networks have spread to the United States and Europe, and only a common strategy can relentlessly and successfully combat this terrible phenomenon. In addition to the **common Values** of Human Dignity, which require us to combat poverty and misery through wealth creation, investment, the creation of equal opportunities, and fair social policies, the Values of Democracy and Freedom are also essential.

We must be the **Bloc of Freedom** and strong public institutions, legitimately elected by the people and with effective and independent regulators. The fight against corruption and bad governance must also be relentless. There must be transparency in the management of public funds and zero tolerance for corrupt individuals and corruption. To achieve this, we need a serious judiciary with means and nothing politicized. We must also have a common policy that defends the environment and helps create much-needed infrastructure in our regions. Food and energy security must also be common priorities.

These challenges must be part of the **Agenda of Common Interests** between our three regions. We must remember that the Atlantic Ocean is not a wall. It is a sea that unites us. It unites Europe and the Americas. It is our duty as Think Tanks, politicians, Regional and Subregional Institutions, Universities, Governments, Multilateral Banks, Companies, Political Organizations, and Foundations to focus together on these common challenges. That is what our people want and what they deserve. That is what is demanded of us. That is what we have to do. We are already late, and we will be judged for it. **But we still have time.**





Jörgen Warborn

Swedish Member of the European Parliament from the European People's Party (SE-Moderaterna). He has been Mayor of Varberg (2011), Vice-Chair of SME Europe (2019), a Member of the Swedish Parliament, and is currently the EPP Spokesperson for International Trade.

A partnership beyond trade

The EU's trade policy is synonymous with growth and opportunities. In the current geopolitical context, it has also become a geostrategic tool for **defending democracy** and a multilateral rules-based system.

The COVID-19 pandemic and the unjustified and illegal Russian war of aggression against Ukraine have highlighted the urgent need for the EU to **cut interdependencies** by diversifying its market with trustful allies and partners.

Therefore, as natural allies, the EU, Latin America, and the Caribbean should further strengthen their relations to counterbalance the influence of **non-democratic actors** such as China, Russia, and Iran. Likeminded regions like the EU and Latin America have shared democratic values and history. However, Europe can no longer take this for granted, given the growing Chinese influence in the region. China has become a preferential trading partner for almost all Latin America and the Caribbean countries, sometimes surpassing the EU.

In this context, **concluding** the EU-Mercosur Association Agreement and the Global Agreement with Mexico is of the utmost importance. There is no more time to waste





A Europe-Latin America partnership goes beyond trade, which is why the aforementioned agreements are not solely about liberalizing tariffs. Instead, they include valuable provisions on **political cooperation** in a wide range of areas, such as security and defense of human rights and democracy, as well as cybersecurity and cooperation for the green transition.

Numbers and figures are also relevant. For example, Mercosur is the fifth largest economy outside the EU, with an annual GDP of €2.2 trillion. It is a region with over 260 million consumers and a market for more than 60,000 EU companies. The EU is the second largest investor in Mexico after the US and its third largest source of imports after the US and China. Moreover, 82% of EU companies exporting to Mexico are SMEs.

You might wonder why we have yet to manage to do more if these agreements are full of benefits.

A general answer would be the **difficult ratification process** of association agreements in the European Union, where not only the European Parliament and the Council have to give their approval but also the national and, in some cases, the regional parliaments.

However, **political specificities** in all of the agreements have added extra challenges to moving forward.

In 2019, the EU embarked on the green and digital transition, which implied important **policy changes** in a wide range of areas, particularly in the agricultural sector, with new environmental production requirements. The green and digital transition needed changes both internally and externally, which meant that products coming from third countries should also follow those requirements.

In the case of Mercosur, the **agreement's ratification** was left in the middle of Europe's debate on the green transition. Therefore, the EU proposed an additional instrument to the agreement in order to include and reinforce both European and Mercosur environmental commitments.

Many thought that with Lula's arrival into power in Brazil and the start of the Spanish Presidency of the Council, the agreement would finally have the political willingness and conditions needed to make some progress. However, this was not the case, and the agreement now seems more **frozen** than ever.

On the one hand, Lula was not the agreement's silver bullet. On the contrary, he came forward with new requirements on public procurement that have not been solved yet as negotiations on the additional instrument continue. On the other hand, the Spanish Presidency of the Council failed to reach an agreement with Mercosur due to internal political issues, which was another missed opportunity. Besides the above, the recent outbreak of farmers' protests throughout Europe worsened the odds of a prompt **ratification of the agreement**.

Regarding Mexico, the EU is not to blame. In this case, the left-wing and populist government of Andrés Manuel López Obrador has **blocked the agreement** to comply with his political agenda, among other things, to achieve a long-wanted energy reform that would severely affect European investments in the country.

However, it is worth noting that not all aspects of the EU trade agenda with the region have been stuck. On February 29 in Strasbourg, the European Parliament finally approved the modernized **EU-Chile agreement**.



With this new agreement, the EU has secured access to **critical raw materials** such as lithium or copper, which are essential for the digital and green transition. Chile will benefit from further European investment in the country. Overall, the updated framework will provide more opportunities and benefits for both parties, particularly SMEs.

Despite all the **great challenges** Europe faced in advancing its trade agenda, the ratification of the EU-Chile agreement gave us some hope.

The road to successfully ratifying the EU-Mercosur Agreement and the Global Agreement with Mexico will be challenging. However, it is worth noting that the window of opportunity is not yet closed. Therefore, the EU must **enhance efforts** to conclude both agreements, hopefully before the end of the current legislature or by the latest in the upcoming one, before China and Russia continue expanding their influence in the region.





Virginia Foxx

U.S. representative from North Carolina's 5th congressional district since 2005.

Chairwoman of the Committee on Education and the Workforce.

Member of the Republican Party. Served as Secretary of the House Republican Conference from 2013 to 2017.

Addressing America's Worker Shortage

Studies show Americans don't agree on much these days. Partisan battle lines have been drawn, and sides have been taken at all levels of society, even down to consumer choices. From grocery shopping for steak and potatoes to car shopping for a Toyota Prius, consumption has an **unmistakable political bent**.

So when red-state and blue-state communities come together to ask for the same thing, **Congress** should take note.


What is it that these Americans are asking for? More pathways to a successful career.

House Republicans, led by the Committee on Education and the Workforce, are busy advancing a bill that does just that, H.R. 6585, **the Bipartisan Workforce Pell Act**.

This bill represents a rare political consensus born from problems plaguing the **American workforce** that we can no longer afford to ignore. Here are three indisputable truths:

First, America has a **worker shortage**. That is a fact. Despite the low unemployment rate, worker participation remains below pre-pandemic levels. Over nine million jobs remain unfilled across the country, with only six million workers to fill them.





Second, America has a shortage of **qualified workers**. That is also a fact. Not only would we be three million workers short if every unemployed person found a job, but many current dislocated workers lack the requisite skills to get hired. Eighty-seven percent of companies say they already have skills gaps or expect them in a few years.

Third, college is not the **only answer**. That is a fact. The rising cost of college tuition and the burden of student debt make postsecondary education inaccessible for many individuals. Degree attainment well outpaces the number of jobs that require a baccalaureate, meaning thousands of college graduates enter the workforce each year, overeducated and underemployed.

America must dispense with the notion that college is this narrow, preordained pipeline to success. Academics and the media used to call it the “**ticket to the middle class**.” Right now, it’s a ticket to an average student loan debt of \$39,000 that will grow from ballooning interest. And with the average dropout rate being 40 percent and most graduates in many professions being underemployed, it’s clear we need a new vision for preparing America’s workforce.

Not every occupation requires dozens of **theoretical courses** that fit neatly into the rote mold of traditional postsecondary education, and not every student wants to spend multiple years working towards a baccalaureate.

The **Bipartisan Workforce Pell Act** is a major win for students and workers, as well as employers who are desperately looking to fill in-demand jobs. It will unlock these pathways. By opening the Pell Grant up to short-term, skills-based programs, career advancement will be accessible to Americans who otherwise would be unable to afford it. For the forgotten Americans sitting on the sidelines of the workforce, Workforce Pell will be the best opportunity for them to move into a job quickly.

Critically, every Workforce Pell dollar will be accountable. This bill guarantees that funding is aligned with the requirements of local employers and the needs of the economy. Only programs that offer positive economic value will see Workforce Pell dollars, meaning students and taxpayers **receive a positive return** on their investment.

What's more, Workforce Pell is overwhelmingly supported by a majority of Americans. **The National Institute for Civil Discourse's (NICD)** latest polling results showed that 79 percent of survey respondents believe the kind of career-connected learning that would be supported through Workforce Pell gets too little support relative to college. Additionally, 87 percent of survey respondents believe performance outcomes are an appropriate measure of short-term program quality.

Let's capitalize on this consensus and use it as an **opportunity** to invest in American workers, American jobs, and a greater American future. I look forward to achieving this goal by passing the Bipartisan Workforce Pell Act.





Francisco Chahuán

Senator of the Republic of Chile. President of the Foreign Relations Committee and the Human Rights Committee. Former President of the National Renewal Party. Honorary advisory councilor of the Union of Latin American Parties.


President Sebastián Piñera

One month after the unfortunate passing of former **Chilean president** for two terms (2010 - 2014 and 2018 - 2022), undoubtedly, former President Sebastián Piñera leaves an extraordinary legacy, which not only materializes in his administration but also leaves a mark on all of us who had the opportunity to know him and, in general, on all those who have ever heard of his presidency, in addition to his inexhaustible will to serve others from whatever position he found himself in.

On March 11, 2010, **Sebastián Piñera Echenique** was sworn in as President of the Republic. After 50 years, a leader from the center-right took over the reins of the nation, who had also been the president of the National Renewal Party, a position that I would later hold.

Thus began the bicentennial government, one that had little time for ceremonies due to the fact that days earlier, on February 27, 2010, a **massive earthquake** measuring 8.8 on the Richter scale shook the national territory. The damages were enormous: 222 thousand families lost their homes, 1.25 million children and adolescents lost their schools, and the government undertook the urgent task of repairing and building hospitals, roads, bridges, ports, schools, fishing coves, airports, drinking water and sewage systems, and important irrigation works. Thus, our government faced the challenge of confronting one of the most terrible tragedies in Chilean history, an unforeseen challenge.





At the end of his term, Piñera humbly acknowledged that the reconstruction task was fulfilled, and some even pointed out that it was rebuilt better than what existed before the earthquake. But the bicentennial year would still bring another enormous challenge to face. On August 5th, 2010, the collapse of the San José mine, located in the Atacama region in the north of the country, trapped 33 miners **720 meters underground** in the heart of the mountain, news that made headlines around the world. On October 13th, 2010, at 00:00 hours, the rescue operation began, and thus, the largest and most **successful rescue** in the history of world mining was carried out. The first term of President Piñera was also marked by the economic recovery achieved and by the order in the house.

Sebastián Piñera's second government faced even more serious adversities than the 27F earthquake, such as the October 2019 violence crisis, the coronavirus pandemic, and the consequences it brought, such as the economic and social crises. The scale and unprecedented nature of these political, economic, and social events marked a milestone in **Chile's history**.

One of the great joys we can be proud of is that these measures allowed us to protect health and save more than 31,000 lives during the pandemic, compared to the average mortality of countries in the region. To this, we add that Piñera had to face a deep recession in the global economy, which caused large drops in GDP and employment and great damage to families and small and medium-sized enterprises. Without a doubt, the so-called "social outbreak" was one of the **great challenges** that President Piñera had to face, to which he responded democratically, inviting political sectors to seek a peaceful solution to the conflict, giving rise to an "Agreement for Peace and New Constitution" that included the main political forces of the country.

Certainly, these are just some of the great works and challenges that former President Piñera faced, as he promoted countless advances in different areas for the Chileans. Precisely and in the same sense, and as a way to contribute to the knowledge and dissemination of the legacy of the former President, we made available to the public a special edition of the book "**History of National Renewal**," a publication that we launched in 2023, which rescues part of the history of the President, a party of which he was not only a committed militant, but also its President between 2001 and 2004, and the only militant who has reached the Presidency of the Republic.

President Piñera always maintained an **unyielding commitment** to the defense of Human Rights, which extended beyond the borders of our country and was always concerned about international affairs, especially in Latin America. Thus, for example, he established the "Democratic Responsibility Visa" that would allow temporary entry to Venezuelan citizens suffering under the dictatorship of Nicolás Maduro.

Also, without any doubt, one of his most notable recent projects in international matters, with the aim of further linking the center and the center-right in the world, but above all in Latin America, was to create the **Freedom and Democracy Group**, which brought together different former heads of state from the center and center-right and generated ties with **UPLA**, through Vice President Andrea Ojeda, by adding its Board of Directors to the group founded by the late former President.

Piñera was always willing to contribute to defending the values of freedom, the rule of law, democracy, and institutionalism on every occasion where his participation was required.

We bid farewell to a President who not only shone in his administration but also knew how to face each challenge with more democracy and more freedom. In the face of adversity, he knew how to respond at the height of the statesman he was, and upon being **bid farewell with State honors**, he was recognized by the citizens, from the humblest of workers to his staunchest detractors.

We also bid farewell to a great friend with whom I shared many years and from whom I learned a lot. **His legacy will transcend generations**, not only in Chile but also in different parts of the world, and his political, human, personal, and management projects will continue to illuminate the paths of the region's political future.



Casey Cagley



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Justice is Not a Doctrine of Empire

Former Bolivian president, Evo Morales' supporters, shut down highways in parts of Bolivia for over two weeks this month. Morales is demanding judicial elections to replace the country's top judges, whose terms expired at the end of last year. The use of blockades, a common protest tactic in Bolivia, slowed the distribution of gas and fuel, food, and other goods, resulting in over \$600 million in losses, according to the government. Ostensibly, Morales is protesting the "self-extension" of judicial terms on the country's four top courts. In fact, the blockades are a last-ditch effort to replace the **Plurinational Constitutional Court (PCT)**, which ruled in December against Morales' candidacy for the presidency and pave the way for his return to power.

To those who have followed Morales' career, his laments are hypocritical. Morales once called **judicial independence** a "doctrine of the United States 'Empire.'" Morales was the one who undermined judicial independence in the first place.

Morales' assault on **judicial independence** started with the 2009 constitution, which established the election of high court judges by popular vote.





The candidates for judicial posts, including the powerful Council of Magistrates, which appoints and dismisses judges, are selected by the **Plurinational Legislative Assembly (PLA)**, a body which Morales Movement Towards Socialism (MAS) party had dominated with a two-thirds majority for most of his time in office. Naturally, those elected to judicial posts were closely linked with the party and, in many cases, Morales himself.

In 2010, under the new constitution, Morales passed a law that stripped judges appointed before the new constitution of their tenure, rendering them “temporary.” Morales’ government extensively used the Council of Magistrates to remove judges and name new, **“provisional” judges**. Human Rights Watch estimates that about 80 percent of judges are in their roles provisionally, which means they are subject to the whims of the government of the day.

Judges on Bolivia’s top courts—the PCT, **Supreme Court of Justice**, and the Agro-Environmental Court—as well as the Council of Magistrates, serve six-year terms. The PLA began the process of legislating new elections and reviewing slates of candidates for each chamber in the spring of 2023. Elections to replace judges elected in 2017 should have taken place by October or November.

The selection of candidates for each court is where the MAS has tilted the playing field to its advantage in previous elections. Unlike previous elections, the governing MAS party does not enjoy a two-thirds legislative majority, so it must have some buy-in from the two opposition parties. Further, within the **MAS**, legislators loyal to President Luis Arce and Morales could not agree on a slate of candidates—both wanted candidates loyal to their respective factions.


Neither could have their way without votes from the **opposition** Comunidad Ciudadana or Creemos parties, both of which were uninclined to support a slate of candidates that would be bound to either faction of the MAS.

So, the PLA reached an impasse, failing to set the terms for judicial elections in time to elect new judges before the current ones' terms expired. By December 2023, with no solution in place, the PCT issued an indefinite self-extension, citing the absence of newly **elected judges**.

For most Bolivians, this fight has little relevance to their daily lives, as illustrated by their voting. In previous judicial elections of 2011 and 2017, the percentage of null and blank ballots far surpassed the number of valid candidate votes. Popular election for Bolivia's highest court ostensibly lends them credibility. But because the PLA—controlled overwhelmingly by one party—pre-approves all candidates, voters have little real choice. In the words of one expert I spoke to for this piece, “It isn't that justice doesn't interest us; it's the way in which they're selected. The candidates can't campaign or share proposals, so they sell me a **half-baked democracy**. They give me the ability to decide between nothing and nothing.” This is an internal political fight between two factions of the same party. Bolivia's judicial system is and will remain weak and partial—it is only a matter of to whom.

Morales made judicial bodies subservient to him and his allies by co-opting the judiciary in this way. But given the use of temporary and provisional appointments to co-opt judges, Morales discovered that any party in office could wield subservience.





When he resigned from the presidency following the failed 2019 elections, judicial loyalties turned quickly to the interim government of Jeannine Áñez. She wielded the judiciary cudgel against her **political enemies** as well as those her government accused of “sedition” and disseminating “misinformation.” Áñez’s interim government accused Morales, then living in exile in Mexico (and later, Argentina), of terrorism. When President Luis Arce Catacora, Morales’ former economy minister, won office, he returned the favor and had Áñez and several ministers jailed for terrorism in 2021.

Thus, with Arce and the MAS back in office, the **judicial pendulum** has swung back—just not in Morales’ favor. As with many prominent former presidents in the region, Morales maneuvered Arce, a mild-mannered technocrat, into the presidency and proceeded to make governing nearly impossible for him. The cracks between the two started showing early on, especially after the local elections of 2021, when many of Morales’ hand-selected candidates lost mayoral and gubernatorial races.

Tit-for-tat accusations and countercharges have flown ever since. Morales has accused Arce’s son of corrupt dealings with the state lithium company. Arce’s government arrested a former Morales drug czar for narcotrafficking and destroyed some 27 drug labs in Morales’ home region. In October, Morales hosted a MAS congress in Cochabamba, expelling Arce and his vice president, David Choquehuanca, from the party and declaring Morales the sole presidential candidate for 2025. Arce retaliated. First, the **Supreme Electoral Tribunal** threw out the results of Morales’ congress. Then, on the last day of its constitutional mandate, the PCT ruled against any individual serving more than two terms as president—effectively banning Morales from running again.

That brings us to today. Morales' supporters have lifted their blockade following a deal to move forward with judicial elections. The stakes are high, and one can only hope that, now that all involved have found themselves on the wrong end of a weaponized court system, this process will result in a legitimate, independent, and qualified judiciary. Judicial independence and the **independence of powers** is not a doctrine of empire, as Morales asserts. It is a core aspect of democracy and the rule of law.



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