


# AGENDA

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Carlos Díaz-Rosillo, Julián Obiglio, José María Aznar,  
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## MEASURING FORCES

A photograph showing two hands, one from the left and one from the right, firmly grasping a thick, white, braided rope. The hands are positioned as if pulling or holding the rope taut. The background is a soft, out-of-focus grey.

**Money, power, and leadership...  
the key behind Trump's actions.**

Europe and Latin America are closer than ever  
to doing business and strengthening their alliance  
in a world where the rules change every day.  
The U.S. demands reciprocity.

**A scandal** shakes the political  
landscape and forces early elections  
in Portugal.

**In Ecuador**, the center-right of  
President Noboa claims victory.

**Lincoln Díaz-Balart**: The tribute.  
**IACHR**: The election of  
commissioners is approaching.  
**Mercosur - EU Agreement**: The  
never-ending wait.



**Carlos Díaz-Rosillo, Ph.D.** 

Founding Director of the Adam Smith Center for Economic Freedom (FIU).

### Monthly reflection

## The Case for President Trump's Tariffs: A Vision Beyond Economics

President Trump's *America First* tariffs have sparked heated debates, both in the United States and around the world. Supporters hail them as bold and necessary measures to restore American strength, while critics dismiss them as protectionist folly. As someone who has closely examined President Trump's approach to policy, I believe his tariffs are not simply about trade; they are about advancing a vision deeply rooted in fairness, security, and pragmatism. While economists may come up with equations, crunch numbers, and present academic arguments to decry the tariffs, Trump's strategy is driven by a blend of moral conviction, national interest, and political savvy that deserves a closer look.

At the heart of Trump's tariff policy is a

demand for fairness and reciprocity. For decades, Donald J. Trump has argued—consistently since the 1980s—that the United States has been shortchanged (“ripped off,” to use his words) in global trade. Other nations slap tariffs on American goods, yet the U.S. often responds with open markets. For Trump, this imbalance is morally wrong and totally unacceptable. The tariffs aim to level the playing field, ensuring that if a country taxes our exports, it faces an equivalent response from the *American* government.

*"At the heart of Trump's tariff policy is a demand for fairness and reciprocity."*

Critics may scoff at this measure as simplistic, but for the President of the United States, it's a matter of principle: why should we play by rules others ignore?

National security is another pillar of his strategy. The COVID-19 pandemic exposed the fragility of global supply chains, particularly those tethered to adversarial nations like China. Trump sees tariffs as a tool to rebuild America's industrial base, ensuring critical goods—like iron, aluminum, medical supplies, and so many others—are produced domestically. This isn't just about economics; it's about ensuring the U.S. isn't beholden to distant or adversarial powers. Economists might argue that trade deficits are not necessarily bad, but for President Trump, a negative trade balance signals vulnerability. A strong industrial base, he believes, is a bulwark against external threats.

Beyond security, President Trump's tariffs carry cultural and political weight. Globalization may have boosted global output and lowered prices "overall," but for the 2 factory worker in Ohio, the auto worker in Michigan, and so many other industrial workers throughout



our great country, these gains are hollow. When trade deals shipped millions of jobs overseas—many to China—entire communities were gutted. Trump's tariffs are a response to this human toll, aiming to bring back some of those jobs and restore the dignity of work in America's heartland. Prize-winning economists may tout the overall benefits of free trade, but their graphs, tables, and arguments mean little to families who have lost their way of living. President Trump's focus on reindustrialization is a bid to prioritize American workers over global metrics.

Tariffs are also a revenue generator. Regardless of whether producers absorb the costs or consumers pay them, the U.S. government collects the tariffs. This influx of potentially billions of dollars allows President Trump to claim a fiscal victory, whether used to pay down the national debt or to fund

domestic priorities. Critics warn of many negative impacts, but President Trump counters that the immediate revenue is undeniable—a tangible win for his administration.

Finally, tariffs are a masterful negotiating tool. Trump's willingness to impose steep levies sends a clear message: he's not bluffing. This show of force, even if terribly unpopular in capitals around the world, has prompted countries to go to the negotiating table, eager to strike deals with the United States. Thus far, over 70 countries have reportedly approached the Trump administration to negotiate, a sign that suggests that the tariffs have indeed offered the President leverage—leverage that he will use to help advance American interests. For President Trump, therefore, tariffs are not only part of his deeply held belief in their value and utility, but also a strategic negotiating tool that allows him to extract concessions that a less assertive President might never secure.

The President's tariff policy is not without risks, of course. Higher prices, disrupted supply chains, decreased

output, economic slowdown, and strained alliances are real concerns. My argument here is not that tariffs are good or bad, but rather that those who reduce the Trump administration tariff policy to economic missteps are missing the point of the tariffs and the logic behind them. For President Trump, tariffs are much more than a trade instrument—they are a political and cultural statement. They signal a rejection of a globalized status quo that has left too many Americans behind. Whether you agree with his approach or not, it's hard to deny the conviction behind it. In an era of cautious and timid leaders, President Trump's tariff vision is a bold bet on America's resilience, sovereignty, and workforce. Time will tell if it pays off, but one thing is clear: for President Trump, tariffs are about far more than economics—they are about rebuilding a nation.



# Monthly Editorial

## Julián Obiglio

General Coordinator AGENDA Magazine  
President Nuevas Generaciones  
Foundation, Argentina



## Will the West Be Able to Maintain Its Political and Trade Unity?

The past month has presented a complex and risky reality for the unity of the Western political and trade front. Measures taken by the American administration have shaken the global trade board and prompted a reassessment of the historical political agreements that have kept countries aligned in defense of Western values.

Tariff increases, pressure on Ukraine, and the U.S. confrontation with its largest trading partner (China) have caused significant global instability. This has gradually begun to settle through the suspension of certain measures and the call for dialogue among partners seeking to establish new rules to support a redefined trade relationship.

President Trump's "Make America Great Again" goal is the guiding principle behind all his administration's policies. International actors are beginning to understand this and have started to analyze each measure through that lens, realizing that the reasoning behind these decisions deviates from globalist principles.



*"Measures taken by the American administration have shaken the global trade board and prompted a reassessment of the historical political agreements."*

With the United States focused on policies and actions to revive its economy and create jobs, its natural allies—affected by those measures—are beginning to reshape their strategies and reactivate processes that had been paused or delayed. A clear example of this is Europe and Mercosur, which are now pushing to sign the bilateral agreement no later than the second half of the year.

No one can yet say what the ultimate commercial balance of the new American administration's measures will be. However, it is clear that the other global trade players are also adapting and developing new strategies to adjust to this new reality, even if that means reducing their trade with the United States.

Meanwhile, the cuts in U.S. public spending have also impacted many organizations, institutions, and individuals that used to be subsidized by the American state while promoting ideas and actions contrary to free markets. These actors—accustomed to living off public funds while advocating statist and leftist ideologies both within the U.S. and abroad—are no longer being funded. Now, they must seek private sector support from those who consider them efficient and necessary. Reality is proving that such support is not forthcoming, leading many to scale





back their activities or shut down entirely. It's a true wake-up call for those who had enjoyed the perks of a statist utopia—funded by someone else's money.

Although it has understood the need to accelerate its pending trade agreements, Europe has yet to show signs that it fully grasps the cultural shift that President Trump's leadership is bringing to the West. For example, the European Union continues to uphold a cooperation agreement with Cuba, through which it sends the Castro regime hundreds of millions of euros annually—money that is then used to repress the democratic resistance. How much time do you think it would have taken Trump to suspend such an agreement?

Or take Italy's prime minister, who has canceled naturalization processes for descendants of Italian immigrants who crossed to the Americas a hundred years ago or more. Could it be that she prefers Asian or African immigration—groups with different customs, values, and religious beliefs? In countries where birth rates are plummeting, labor forces are shrinking, and pensioners are increasing, the rejection of immigration from their own descendants is a strategy that's hard to understand.

These and other matters will likely be debated at the European People's Party Congress, which will take place April 29–30 in Valencia, Spain. This

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party governs Europe's major institutions through its parliamentary majority, and its Congress is where the continent's new direction must be defined.

The Trump effect has also reached Latin America, as evidenced in this month's elections in Ecuador. What seemed to be a very close runoff ended in a solid victory for center-right President Noboa, who won 56% of the vote, defeating the populist left-wing faction of fugitive former president Rafael Correa, which garnered 44%.

This new reality driven by the U.S. government has been like a tsunami that is just beginning to circle the globe. Many more changes will unfold in the coming months. We'll see which players manage to adapt—and which will be swept away by the tide.

All these challenges and opportunities presented by the global **AGENDA** are covered in this edition of our magazine. Don't miss it!





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## José María Aznar

*Former President of Spain.  
President of the  
Foundation for Analysis  
and Social Studies (FAES).*



### Renewing Our Commitment to Venezuela

*The Venezuelan dictatorship, currently led by Maduro, and the refusal to recognize the results of the 2024 elections continue to plunge the country into misery and exclusion, triggering a massive exodus of people seeking to escape this situation.*

*President Aznar, a well-known defender of the democratic resistance led by the Venezuelan opposition, reflects on the effects of this regime on the continent, the situation of its global allies, and the actions that should be taken to prevent abandoning the Venezuelan people to their fate.*

More than half a year has passed since the sovereignty expressed through voting was denied to the Venezuelan people by the criminal dictatorship that usurped its government. This past January, that usurpation was violently consolidated. We are witnessing yet another episode in the decline of democracy, the illegitimate abuse of power, and the forced exodus that afflicts Latin America.

At this point, no one can ignore that Nicolás Maduro's word is worth even less than the bolívar consumed by hyperinflation. The regime has not only plunged its people into misery but continues to keep them under house arrest, turning all of Venezuela into a giant prison.

Refusing to see this reality is, at this stage, more than suspicious—any willful blindness regarding Maduro's self-coup makes one complicit in his crime against democracy. Since the night of July 28, persecution and violence have multiplied. The out-of-control migration crisis, which

threatens the stability and security of the entire region, has also escalated. The international community has yet to respond adequately to the scale of this crime.

Today, the death toll from protests reaches dozens; arbitrary detentions exceed the worst estimates, and the man who once threatened a "bloodbath" if he lost the election is proving that his threats are the only thing we can trust.



According to data from the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR), migration to Brazil between July 29 and August 5 increased sevenfold in one week, from 50 people per day to 353. The exodus of nearly 8 million Venezuelans has caused a migration crisis impacting the entire American continent, from the United States to Chile.

Maduro's violent entrenchment in power could trigger a regional destabilization process with unpredictable consequences. While Maduro has no significant support in the region, he unfortunately still does not face strong and effective international opposition. In this scenario, China and Russia—his unconditional external backers—could play a decisive role. They were the first to legitimize Maduro and deny the electoral fraud.

Iran, North Korea, and Turkey have also joined this infamous interference. The commercial trafficking of oil, gold, and weapons links them. Venezuela's economic dependence on China has

*"Maduro's violent entrenchment in power could trigger a regional destabilization process with unpredictable consequences..."*

reached alarming levels.

Data from the Observatory of Economic Complexity indicates that China is the primary destination for Venezuelan exports (about 16%) and the source of its imports (around 31%). More importantly, Venezuela has accumulated a multi-billion-dollar debt with China, which some institutions estimate to be \$59.2 billion. There is no doubt that China is the main buyer of Venezuelan oil. Meanwhile, Russia's involvement appears to be more focused on arms sales, military technology, and internal security equipment—in other words, weapons for repression.

Geopolitically, Venezuela represents a strategic foothold for China and Russia—located just south of the

United States—extending into Central America and the Caribbean. Additionally, it is a hub for drug markets, human trafficking, and illegal mining—highly profitable businesses that also serve to establish territorial control. Reliable reports confirm that, alongside massive migration flows, organized crime is spreading throughout the region. This is logical, given that human trafficking is one of its major businesses.

In light of all this, we cannot remain silent. We must raise our voices, denounce the situation in every forum, and demand a coordinated regional response that must be activated immediately. Many Central

*" Reliable reports confirm that, alongside massive migration flows, organized crime. Given that human trafficking is one of its major businesses...."*

and South American countries are already experiencing firsthand the dangers of organized crime and the violent gangs that establish and consolidate territorial control, not only nationally but also regionally and across the continent.

The Fourth Global Homicide Study by the UN Office on Drugs and Crime revealed that in 2023, organized crime was responsible for nearly half of all homicides in Latin America. Moreover, eight of the ten countries with the highest murder rates in the world belong to this region.

Both in Spain and across the Americas, our countries must remain places of refuge. However, Europe and the Americas face different challenges that require tailored approaches.

Regardless, any democratic state has the right to establish a real immigration policy that regulates migration flows and must develop cooperation policies with the countries of origin. It is essential to

design ambitious and generous integration programs.

If we aim to be both a land of refuge and a rule-of-law state that respects human rights, we must ensure that those who arrive also respect the fundamental principles of our social contract.

This will require political leaders to move beyond short-term media-driven announcements and instead commit to long-term actions that respect human dignity and the realities on the ground.

We cannot abandon the Venezuelan people to their fate. It is time to renew our commitment and use every tool at our disposal to prevent the dictatorship from becoming permanent.





## **Hernando Abraham Carrasquilla Abadi-Balid**

*Panamanian lawyer and politician. He has been responsible for international relations in the Cambio Democrático party.*



### **Panama: The Central Axis of American Development**

*Panama occupies a crucial geographic position in the world, particularly in the Americas. Its location, legislation, and port and waterway infrastructure make it a key player in international trade.*

*At the same time, it is a country that defends and promotes Western values such as freedom, the rule of law, and private property, making it a natural ally of all who support these causes.*

*The author highlights this reality and discusses the current administration of his country, which is working to strengthen the guarantees of both local and global development.*

The historical and political development of our countries cannot be separated from the democratic efforts of the societies that contribute to building their institutions. Since 1990, the Panamanian state has regained its democracy, defended it, and sought its institutionalization through the organization of free elections, in which citizens actively participate, either individually or through political groups.

Thirty-five years later, Panamanian citizens once again exercised our political power by electing José Raúl Mulino Quintero as the highest authority responsible for our country's administration. In my case, I am part of a political group based on prosperity, peace, and economic and social progress for every citizen of our country. It is different from the one that backed the president's candidacy. However, I must acknowledge that he is a professional who has historically been committed to democracy and sovereignty. An example of this is that, in the fight for democratic institutions, he emerged

in 1980 as part of the "Civil Crusade," a citizen movement that opposed the forces that had remained in power for approximately twenty-one years. His political trajectory as Vice-Chancellor from 1990 to 1992, Minister of Foreign Affairs from 1993 to 1994, Minister of Government and Justice in 2009, and Minister of Security from 2010 to 2014 demonstrates his commitment to the public sector and the institutional development of the Panamanian state.

Today, Panama stands as a





democratic state with a strong commitment to active citizen participation. To such an extent that, in the 1994 constitutional reform, all traces of the military were eliminated to strengthen the rule of law. This is why, as a country, we are part of the community of Western nations that have enshrined in their constitutions the mission of strengthening a sovereign and independent state with a unitary, republican, democratic, and representative government, as stated in Article 1 of our legal framework.

There are many principles that unite the Panamanian state and its government with democratic organizations across the continent, such as the Union of Latin American Parties. Both share a vision for the region and the country that seeks to increase citizens' economic participation, improve equality conditions, uphold human rights, and encourage greater involvement of men and women in national political affairs. All of this serves as a bridge toward consolidating a true rule of law.

*"As a country, we are part of the community of Western nations that have enshrined in their constitutions the mission of strengthening a sovereign and independent state..."*

Currently, the government faces many challenges, including the fight to reaffirm national sovereignty and maintain our democracy, as well as the implementation of economic policies focused on sustainable development and respect for human rights. These principles have defined us regionally over the past twenty years. In this context, the national economic policy under President José Raúl Mulino's administration has outlined a 2024-2029 Plan, which includes key development projects aimed at improving logistics corridors between ports, airports, and free zones, modernizing port infrastructure and procedures to leverage the economy of the Panama Canal, implementing

models for crude oil storage, processing, and supply, integrating Panama into economic and trade blocs such as MERCOSUR, and participating in the diversification of the semiconductor supply chain, among other initiatives.

Democratic institutions play an important role in this strategy. While seeking membership in economic and trade blocs and establishing commercial ties with various nations to promote the national economy is a clear strategy of the Panamanian state, it must not stray from the principles of sovereignty and the effective defense of national public order. For this reason, all bilateral or multilateral engagements must respect the sovereignty of nations and the principle of non-intervention, recognizing that in the pursuit of new economic platforms, Panama may integrate itself based on its interests and the value it can offer to the international community.

In this context, I conclude by emphasizing the importance of the

current Panamanian government in sharing and defending the core values of the West. This will strengthen existing alliances and build new ones that promote freedom, equal opportunities, prosperity, and social development for our entire region.





## André Craveiro

*Research Fellow at the Institute for the Promotion of Latin America and the Caribbean (IPDAL), Portugal.*



### Political Landscape Ahead of Portugal's Early Elections

Portugal's Prime Minister, Luís Montenegro, leader of the center-right Democratic Alliance coalition, lost a vote of confidence, forcing him to call early parliamentary and presidential elections.

The author of this article, a member of one of Portugal's most prestigious think tanks, analyzes the events that led the Prime Minister to this situation and the outlook for the country ahead of this crucial election, which will take place in just over a month.

Portugal is experiencing a moment of political clarification. The leader of the minority government of the Democratic Alliance (center-right), Luís Montenegro, became embroiled in a controversy involving his wife's and children's company, which ultimately led to the dissolution of Parliament and the calling of early elections for May 18.

The controversy began with the enactment of a new Land Law, which facilitates construction on rural land. A few days later, Portuguese media reported that the Prime Minister's wife and children owned a company that could benefit from this law.

Opposition parties demanded explanations from the Prime Minister while he was on an official visit to Brazil, as both countries were celebrating 200 years of diplomatic relations. Upon his return, the government faced a motion of no confidence from the CHEGA party (populist right), which Parliament rejected. Nevertheless, demands for clarification continued regarding the

*" The leader of the minority government of the Democratic Alliance became embroiled in a controversy which ultimately led to the dissolution of Parliament..."*

nature of the company, the identity of its clients, and the market value of the services provided.

Later, it was also revealed that the company received a monthly commission from one of its main clients and that, due to the marital property regime under which the Prime Minister was married, he was potentially involved in another conflict of interest, further fueling suspicion.



Luis Montenegro – Prime Minister of Portugal

In response, the Prime Minister urged the opposition to acknowledge that the government had the legitimacy to govern; otherwise, he would submit a vote of confidence in Parliament to clarify the political situation. In reaction, the Communist Party requested another motion of no confidence, which was also initially rejected. The Socialist Party (PS), the main opposition force, voted against this motion, arguing that if the government believed it was fit to govern, it should not delegate that responsibility to Parliament. However, they emphasized that if the government proceeded with a vote of confidence, they would vote against it, considering it a sign that the Prime Minister believed that only elections could clarify the political situation.

*"There is a widespread expectation that one of the two main political parties will win the elections. There is no risk of an extremist force coming to power..."*



And so it happened. During the debate on the second motion of no confidence, the government decided to proceed with a vote of confidence. It turned out that the parliamentary majority rejected this measure, and the minority government collapsed. In response, the President of the Republic, who is also nearing the end of his term (presidential elections will be held in January 2026), dissolved Parliament and called early

parliamentary elections (and consequently, a new prime minister) for May 18.

It is well known—and Portugal is no exception—that this type of political challenge creates barriers to economic dynamism, establishing an environment that affects consumers and investors, who postpone their decisions due to uncertainty about the future political landscape or the regulatory environment that may emerge from it.

So far, this dynamic has not significantly manifested in Portugal. There is a widespread expectation that one of the two main political parties, the Democratic Alliance (center-right) or the Socialist Party (center-left), will win the elections. There is no risk of an extremist force coming to power. In this regard, it is recognized that regardless of the outcome, Portugal is not expected to change its commitment to public debt management, regulatory stability, or the European Union.





## María Anne Quiroga

*Lawyer. Director of Research at the Global Center for Human Rights (GCHR) in Washington, USA. Holds law degrees in both French and Argentine law from Universidad del Salvador and the University of Paris I: Panthéon-Sorbonne. She has been a researcher and coordinator of various international programs at Fundación Nuevas Generaciones in Argentina.*



### — Elections at the IACHR 2025: — A Historic Opportunity — to Restore Impartiality and Sovereignty in the Americas

*At the end of June this year, the General Assembly of the Organization of American States (OAS) will take place, during which a partial renewal of the members of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) will occur.*

*This election, in which all member states of the organization must vote, represents a crucial battle in defending conservative values within the Inter-American human rights system.*

*The author reflects on the progressive majority that has led the IACHR in recent years and the need to return the Commission to its original function: defending fundamental rights without ideological bias.*

The elections to renew three of the seven seats on the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) will take place during the upcoming General Assembly of the Organization of American States (OAS), scheduled for June 25–27, 2025, in Antigua and Barbuda. Although the candidates have not yet been officially announced, these elections represent a historic opportunity to correct the ideological bias of the IACHR and restore its true mission: the defense of fundamental rights without ideological manipulation or leftist agendas.

### **The Urgency of Change in the IACHR**

The IACHR, far from fulfilling its mandate to protect human rights impartially, has become a militant arm of the international left. Over the years, it has been instrumentalized in imposing progressive views and exerting pressure on center-right and right-wing governments across the continent. It has acted as an

ideological tribunal, systematically attacking countries with conservative governments while downplaying actual human rights violations committed by leftist regimes in the region.

The opportunity to renew three of the seven seats on the IACHR opens the door to a historic shift that could end the progressive hegemony in the Commission. This is a key moment to restore a necessary balance and ensure that this body ceases to be a political pressure tool disguised as a human rights defender.

The 2024 elections in the IACHR demonstrated that it is possible to


 The logo for the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR). The letters 'IACHR' are displayed in a bold, sans-serif font. The 'I', 'A', 'C', and 'H' are in a dark blue color, while the 'R' is in a light green color.

Inter-American  
Commission on  
Human Rights



challenge the left’s ideological monopoly in the Inter-American system and that many countries want true jurists (not activists) in international institutions. For the first time, two judges criticized by the left managed to be elected—an unprecedented victory reflecting a clear trend shift.

In recent decades, the IACHR has abandoned its role of defending fundamental rights to become a “naming and shaming” mechanism against conservative governments. Instead of focusing on real, documented violations, the Commission has dedicated its time and resources to imposing its progressive agenda on gender, migration, and identity politics, attacking any country that dares to



*“The 2024 elections in the IACHR demonstrated that it is possible to challenge the left’s ideological monopoly in the Inter-American system...”*

defend traditional values. This is evident in several of its critical reports on center-right and right-wing countries, whose primary sources are press articles or reports from leftist activist NGOs, with little to no effort to contrast them with official state information.

### **The Opportunity for Conservative Countries**

The 2025 elections are a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for governments that defend national sovereignty, freedom, life, and family. The chance to change three of the seven seats in the IACHR could put an end to the left’s ideological dominance and pave the way for a new balance in the Commission.

The IACHR cannot continue to be an institution captured by interests disconnected from the needs of the countries in our region. It is time to restore its independence and ensure that its work focuses on fundamental rights rather than the imposition of ideologies.

## **Conclusion**

The 2025 elections for the IACHR are a crucial battle in defending conservative values within the Inter-American human rights system. There is a real possibility of reversing the progressive majority and restoring the Commission's original function: defending fundamental rights without ideological bias.

It is time to take action and ensure that the IACHR returns to what it was always meant to be: an institution dedicated to fundamental rights, not a platform for political activism disguised as international justice.





## Fernando Mirabal

*Architect. Co-founder of the Assembly of the Cuban Resistance. International coordinator of humanitarian aid for the resistance inside Cuba.*



### Lincoln Díaz-Balart: A Brilliant Legislator and Politician, and a Cuban for the History Books

*On March 3, at the age of 70, Congressman Lincoln Díaz-Balart passed away—an indispensable figure in the democratic life of the United States, Cuba, and the region.*

*His work and legacy in the fight for freedom and fundamental rights are immense and impossible to summarize in a few words. However, from AGENDA Magazine, we wish to pay him a well-deserved tribute. The author, a renowned figure in the Cuban resistance, compiles Díaz-Balart's major public actions and reminds us of his many efforts in defense of the values of Western democracy.*

A serious look at the life of Congressman Lincoln Díaz-Balart reveals why he became—since his arrival in the U.S. Congress in 1993—a successful legislator and an unbeatable politician. Lincoln had the privilege of coming from a family of distinguished politicians. His father, Rafael Díaz-Balart, was a brilliant member of the Cuban House of Representatives and president of the Senate before the revolution. Lincoln’s political influence was evident in the coherence of his arguments and the passion with which he expressed them.

Lincoln received a strong education that led him directly to the political-legislative career he embraced with passion and success. He graduated in International Relations from the University of South Florida in Sarasota in 1976. Shortly after, he strengthened his political knowledge by studying English politics at the University of Cambridge, England. The only thing missing from this formidable educational background was legal training, which he acquired at Case

Western University in Cleveland, Ohio, where he earned his law degree in 1979.

His political career began in 1986 when he was elected to the Florida House of Representatives. Due to his strong legislative performance, he was elected to the state Senate four years later. There, he stood out for promoting low-interest loans for housing construction in a rapidly growing Florida due to the influx of numerous immigrants and refugees from Latin America. In 1993, Lincoln ran for the U.S. Congress and won. He held that seat until his retirement in 2011. Once in Congress, Lincoln secured a position on the influential Rules Committee, working closely with Republican leaders to advance key national and party legislation.



Lincoln Díaz-Balart was an inescapable presence in congressional efforts for Cuba. His leadership and personality were always at the forefront of legislative proposals aimed at freeing Cuba from communist dictatorship and promoting democracy on the island. He was a staunch defender of Radio and TV Martí. His voice and actions were a constant call for the freedom of political prisoners.

Knowing that the Castro regime used incoming resources to strengthen its repressive apparatus, Lincoln was a formidable advocate for economic sanctions against the dictatorship. The so-called Helms-Burton Act, which served as a barrier against immoral foreign investments in Cuba, could have just as easily been named the “Lincoln Díaz-Balart Law” due to his dedication in drafting it.



*"Lincoln Díaz-Balart was an inescapable presence in congressional efforts for Cuba. were always at the forefront of legislative proposals aimed at freeing Cuba from communist dictatorship..."*

Lincoln Díaz-Balart had the vision and privilege of codifying the economic embargo against the Castro dictatorship through the Liberty and Democratic Solidarity Act of 1996. This measure ensured that no shifts in U.S. presidential administrations could arbitrarily lift this crucial sanction, preventing the Cuban communist regime from securing U.S. credits that it would never repay, thereby prolonging its grip on power.

But Lincoln Díaz-Balart was also a conservative who defended the rights of refugees fleeing dictatorial regimes. He created legislation to prevent the deportation of thousands of refugees from Latin America, the Caribbean,

and former communist countries in Europe, including the 1996 Immigrant Responsibility Act and the NACARA Act, which protected immigrants from Nicaragua and Central America.

On numerous occasions, Lincoln took a stand against his own Republican Party to defend Cuba. He voted against the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) because Mexico and Canada maintained economic and political support for the Cuban dictatorship. He also opposed Republican lawmakers who sought to expand agricultural sales and trade with the Castro regime.

Lincoln was actively involved with exile organizations. His presence was guaranteed at every patriotic event held in Miami. Cuban national holidays always counted on Lincoln as a keynote speaker. It is impossible to discuss or write about the epic struggle for Cuba's freedom without mentioning the name Lincoln Díaz-Balart. He earned that honor many times over.

Those of us who have fought in this

struggle for years miss him, remember him, and will always keep his name and legacy alive—inscribing them in the new free Cuba when that moment arrives, which, by the grace of God, will come soon.

Honor and glory to the great warrior that was Lincoln Díaz-Balart!





## Fernando Iglesias

*Member of the Argentine National Congress.  
President of the Foreign Affairs Committee.  
Lecturer and writer.*



### Mercosur - European Union Agreement: A Huge Opportunity

*What is the current political state of the Mercosur - European Union Agreement? What ratification prospects are present on both sides of the Atlantic? What particularities does Argentina present in this process?*

*The author reflects on all of these aspects. He leads the parliamentary ratification process in the Argentine Congress and has established a permanent dialogue mechanism with his counterparts in the European Parliament to implement the agreement.*

Argentina was once a prosperous country. When its leaders promoted integration with the world, it ranked among the world's ten wealthiest economies. Unfortunately, due to protectionist, populist, and industrialist economic theories and policies—predominant since the first Peronist administration and intensified over the past twenty years—we have become a declining country with an economy incapable of growing and creating quality jobs.

Today, Argentina maintains some form of trade agreement with countries that represent only 4% of the world's Gross Domestic Product (GDP). The results have been predictable: high domestic prices, inflation, devaluations, and constant crises, leading to underdevelopment and poverty. The arrival of an economist with liberal convictions to the presidency presents a huge opportunity: reconnecting a faltering Argentina with the world and putting an end to the scourges derived from economic isolationism and the application of ideological concepts to foreign relations.

There are countless challenges in this

regard, from gaining access to financing markets at reasonable rates to joining the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development. However, from a practical standpoint, two key instruments can drive our reconnection: the Mercosur - European Union Free Trade Agreement and the treaty with the United States, which is beginning to be negotiated. If both agreements are finalized during the current presidential term, Argentina would gain preferential ties with nearly 50% of the global GDP. This would open up an extraordinary scenario for investment and growth. It would also mark a decisive step toward ending the decline brought about by the so-called champions of national and popular economics.

Due to its level of maturity, the Mercosur - European Union agreement should be the first of these





steps. The breakthrough achieved at the recent Montevideo summit opened the door to the treaty's final approval, which had been stalled since the Cambiemos government (with Mauricio Macri as president and Jorge Faurie as foreign minister) managed to sign the provisional agreement. It will be difficult, if not impossible, for the entire agreement to be approved. However, its commercial component could come into effect this year if it gains approval by a qualified majority in the European Council (requiring a positive vote from 55% of countries representing 65% of the population), a simple majority in the European Parliament, and unanimous support from Mercosur countries—a challenging yet achievable goal.

At a time when few believed in its future, a window of opportunity has emerged based on two key factors: President Luiz Inácio “Lula” da Silva’s firm support for the agreement and Europe’s current state of isolation, affected by disruptions in its energy and food supply chains. The war in Ukraine has forced the EU to allocate more resources to military rearmament. It perceives itself as isolated from the rest of the world,

*“Its approval will reveal whether the general interests of the economy and European citizens outweigh the corporate power of the sector agriculture.”*

partly due to the hesitations of its wealthy ally, the United States, which has increased tariffs and weakened the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA).

Last month, I visited Brussels, where I participated in several sessions of parliamentary committees, met with top-level authorities from both the European Parliament and the Commission, and confirmed that concerns are immense. Paradoxically, this is good news for the Mercosur - European Union agreement. Something previously undervalued has now gained a completely different and higher level of significance. Its approval will reveal whether the general interests of the economy and European citizens outweigh the corporate power of the most backward economic sector

agriculture. This segment represents only 1.4% of the total GDP but absorbs 40% of the subsidies granted by Brussels' bureaucratic machinery.

Like any trade agreement, the Mercosur - European Union deal will encourage specialization and benefit the most competitive sectors of both economies while pushing less efficient ones to invest, evolve, and compete. In Argentina, resistance is particularly strong among the factions of "Jurassic industrialism." This industrial sector has thrived on state contracts, discretionary subsidies, drastic devaluations, and predatory economic practices. Politically, they are well represented by Peronism, which holds a veto power in the Senate.

However, the treaty's significance extends far beyond trade, as it will have enormous geopolitical implications in



the increasingly conflict-ridden international landscape. Even from an economic standpoint, its primary benefit is not commercial but rather the potential for a massive influx of European investments into our region. These investments will not be limited to primary sectors, where Argentina's potential profitability is so high that it does not require institutional frameworks or agreements. Instead, the Mercosur - European Union agreement would position Argentina as an ideal platform with access to the vast Brazilian market, offering comparative advantages that can attract long-term, high-quality investments.

At the same time, this reality will compel Mercosur to take itself seriously, pushing it to finally establish a common free market and align external tariffs with global standards. In other words, it must stop being a barrier that isolates our nations from the world and become a bridge that connects them to it.

Hopefully, all Argentine political forces will rise to this challenge and ensure we do not squander a tremendous opportunity again.



## Paola Holguín Moreno

*Colombian journalist and politician. Senator of the Republic since 2014 for the Democratic Center party. Served as a presidential advisor in the government of Álvaro Uribe since 2003.*



### Democracy under threat

*Colombia is experiencing critical moments. Its administration, accused of deep ties to drug trafficking, faces enormous failures in governance.*

*Moreover, violations of democratic principles are becoming increasingly evident, and the serious events unfolding are reaching the ears of the international community, which watches with great concern the setbacks in democracy and the rule of law.*

*Senator Paola Holguín, a key figure in the country and a prominent member of President Uribe's team reflects on these issues.*

On June 19, 2022, in the second round of elections, Gustavo Petro won with 50.44% of the votes. On August 7 of that year, in Colombia's more than 200 years of republican history, the so-called "Government of Change" began, marking the first socialist-communist administration.

Among the many factors that led to this outcome, the so-called "social uprising" of 2021 was crucial—a strategy of violent takeovers of major cities. This was compounded by the significant damage caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, which severely affected the national food supply chain and led to the destabilization of constitutional and legal order, as well as the proper functioning of institutions.

A few months into the government, recordings and complaints surfaced about illegal campaign financing and violations of campaign spending limits, prompting investigations by the Attorney General's Office, the National Electoral Council, and the Accusations Commission. These

inquiries into Petro's campaign, officials, and the president himself remain ongoing. Additionally, Juan Fernando, the president's brother, stated that agreements in prisons may have resulted in a million votes.

Amid these concerns regarding the legality and legitimacy of the election, numerous allegations of government corruption, lack of execution, worsening security, economic decline, social policy failures, institutional weakening, and an increasing climate of uncertainty have emerged.

For example, the government's instability is reflected in the following: In just over 30 months, there have



been 54 ministers and more than 150 deputy ministers. The economy, which grew 10.6% in 2021, slowed to 7.3% in 2022, 0.6% in 2023, and 1.7% in 2024. Last year, 286,719 businesses closed, surpassing the number seen during the pandemic (195,042 in 2020). And in 2024, for the first time, the fiscal rule was broken.

The "Human Security and Total Peace" policy has failed due to the weakening of law enforcement. Criminal structures have expanded, now operating in 809 municipalities (70% of the territory, according to the Ombudsman's Office). This is facilitated by bilateral ceasefires, which criminals consistently violate, and increasing illicit revenues.

Colombia is the world's largest cocaine producer, with 253,000 hectares recorded in 2023. Potential alkaloid production increased by 53% between 2022 and 2023, reaching 2,664 metric tons. The crops are spread across 19 of the country's 32 departments, concentrated in 15 production enclaves, including Norte

*"The "Human Security and Total Peace" policy has failed due to the weakening of law enforcement. Criminal structures have expanded..."*

de Santander, Sur de Bolívar, Antioquia, Cauca, Nariño, and Putumayo.

Illegal mining, which runs parallel to drug trafficking, is mainly controlled by the National Liberation Army (ELN, a guerrilla organization), the Gulf Clan, and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC). In 34% of municipalities that cultivate coca, illegal alluvial gold mining is also present. An estimated 85% of the gold exported from Colombia has an illicit origin, with 70% stemming from activities carried out by illegal armed groups.

Despite populist campaign promises, social policy has been another disaster. The government has weakened the healthcare system and

undermined important programs such as ICETEX student loans, "Youth in Action" cash transfers, "My House Now" housing subsidies, and "Colombia Without Hunger" assistance programs.

Regarding foreign relations, decisions have been based on ideological affinity, sometimes bordering on criminal complicity rather than serving the nation's interests or maintaining Colombia's diplomatic tradition. Petro has made significant efforts to distance the country from traditional allies while strengthening ties with anti-democratic regimes.

Beyond this multi-crisis, Petro has strained institutions to an unprecedented level. His constant attacks on the courts, the press, and

*"Despite populist campaign promises, social policy has been another disaster. The government has weakened the healthcare system..."*

Congress pose a serious threat to democracy, the rule of law, and the independence and balance of powers.

In fact, never before in the country's history had a congressional president even considered seeking international intervention to safeguard parliamentary independence, as Senator Efraín Cepeda was forced to do in response to systematic government harassment led by the president himself.

The Council of State publicly rejected President Gustavo Petro's "serious, systematic, and disrespectful

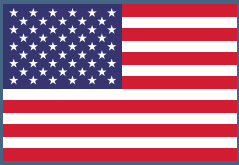


statements against its rulings." The Supreme Court condemned Petro's remarks that sought to downplay the siege it suffered in February 2024. The Foundation for Press Freedom (FLIP) and the Ombudsman's Office have also denounced the president's attacks on the press.

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The government is escalating institutional confrontation daily and continuously threatens to take to the streets violently, effectively suspending public powers that serve as checks and balances. We have been warned: they will attempt to impose their model by any means necessary.





## Manny Díaz, Jr.

*Florida Commissioner of  
Education, U.S.A.*

*He served as a Florida State  
Senator from 2018 to 2022 for  
District 36, and as a State  
Representative for three terms  
between 2012 and 2018.*

*He holds a degree in Human  
Resources from St. Thomas  
University and earned a  
master's in Educational  
Leadership from Nova  
Southeastern University.*



## State of Florida: A Pioneer in Teaching About the Harm Caused by Communism Around the World

*Florida's Commissioner of Education defends the decision made by the state government to include, starting next year, the study of the history of communism and the harm caused by the implementation of that ideology in government actions as part of the school curriculum.*

*In his article, he lays out the rationale behind the measure and explains the high-quality academic standards that will be applied in teaching it, along with the contributions of individuals and organizations dedicated to preserving the memory of the victims of communism.*

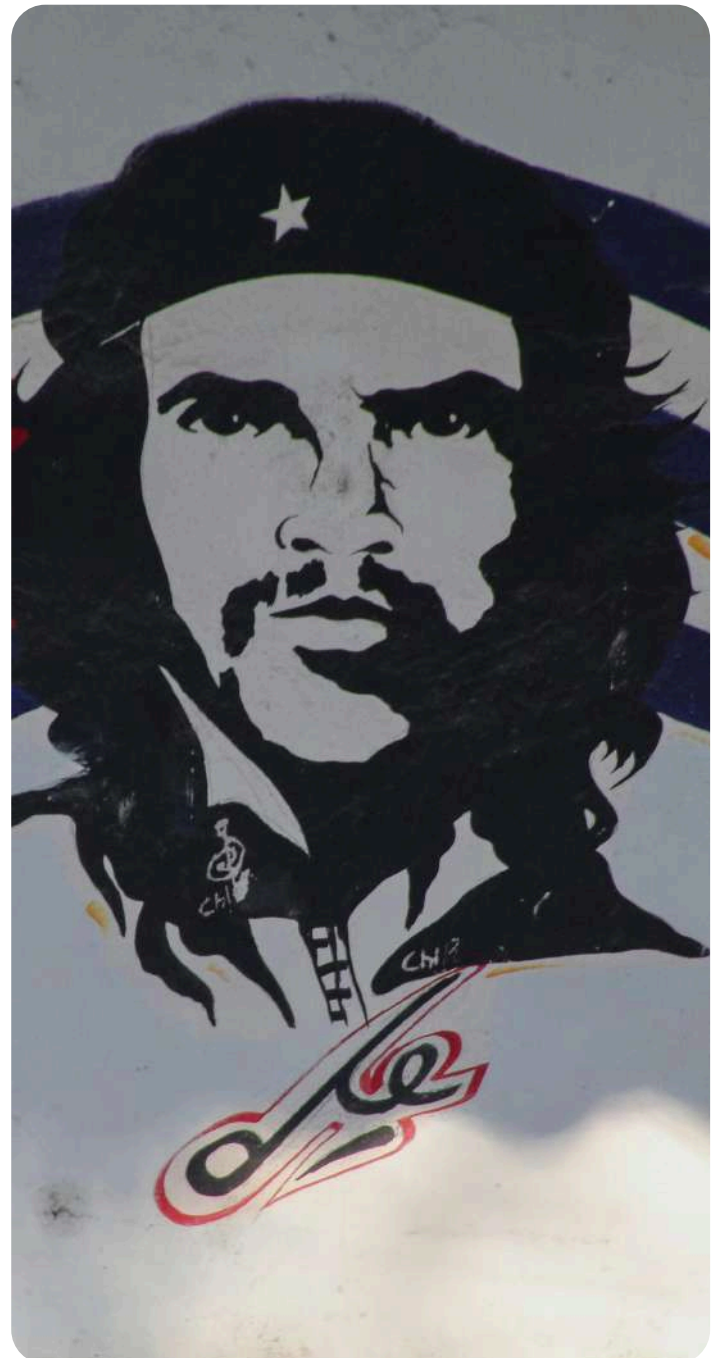


It is widely understood that those who fail to learn history are doomed to repeat it, and that is exactly why the true history of communism should be taught in public schools. In Florida, we are taking the lead. Beginning in the 2026-2027 school year, students will learn that 110 million people died under communist rule from 1900 to 1987 and that this horribly flawed political and economic philosophy has spawned misery and despair across the globe.

Sadly, even today, communist rule subjugates millions of innocent people. Whether it's North Korea, Venezuela, China, the former Soviet Union, or any other communist regime, their fabled utopia is always around the next corner — but never comes. Instead, populations are stripped of human rights and forced to suffer through poverty, starvation, suppression of speech, and systemic lethal violence. That's why the Berlin Wall was erected. Not to keep people out but to lock them in.

The same is true for Cuba. Just 90

miles south of Florida, Fidel Castro and his Marxist ideologues seized power and turned a prosperous nation into an island prison. With promises of “equality for all,” they used the power of the state to crush dissent, along with the hopes and dreams of families and future generations they claimed to care for.



Democracy was never an option. Escape was the only way out. In places like Miami, where the reality of communism is well within living memory, incredible stories of survival and the human spirit breathe life into American communities, as do the memories of those who perished in search of freedom.

We cannot look past this historical nightmare. It is our moral duty to educate students across the world about the history of communism, just as we educate them about the Holocaust, the hideous evil of Nazi Germany, the history of abuses during World War II, slavery, and other evils of subjugation across the world.

We must ensure that all students in



*"We must ensure that all students in the free world learn about the history of communist movements and atrocities committed in many countries,..."*

the free world learn about the history of communist movements and communist atrocities committed in many countries, including Cuba, which has spread this ideology throughout Latin America and the rest of the world today.

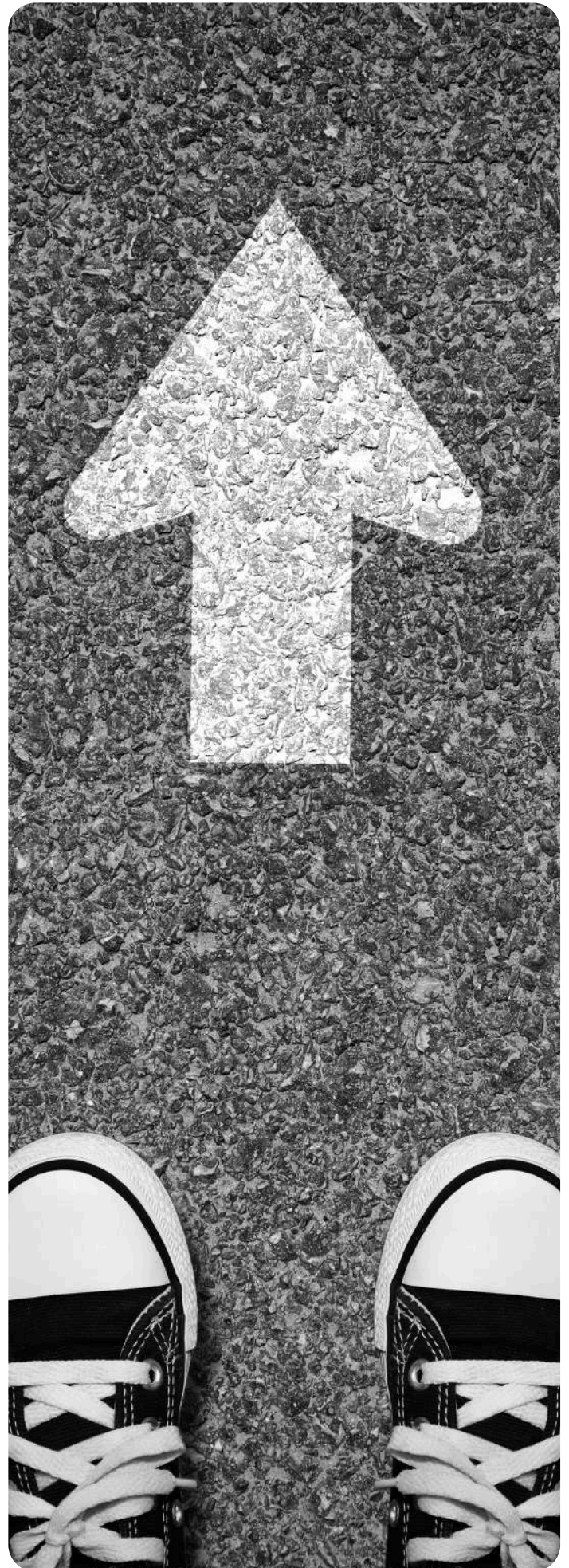
Students should learn about the events of the Chinese Cultural Revolution and other mass killings by communist governments while engaging in comparative discussions of political ideologies, such as communism and totalitarianism, which conflict with the principles of freedom and democracy.

Moreover, all schools should prepare high-quality academic standards using input from individuals and organizations dedicated to preserving

the memory of victims of communism. All of this groundbreaking instruction should be taught in an appropriate manner related to a student's age and development, always with the highest standards of professionalism and accuracy.

Of course, there are naysayers. There are those who view communist monsters like Fidel Castro, Ernesto "Che" Guevara, and Mao Zedong who celebrate these oppressive leaders and dictators as if they were counterculture icons, which clearly, they are not. In any case, people are free to disagree, though they would have no such freedom to do so in a communist country.

Those who stand for freedom should not be afraid to lead. The mission is to preserve the ideals of a free society and promote economic freedom, thus ensuring Florida students are well prepared to defend freedom as they learn from history how painful and costly the loss of liberty can be.



# AGENDA

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