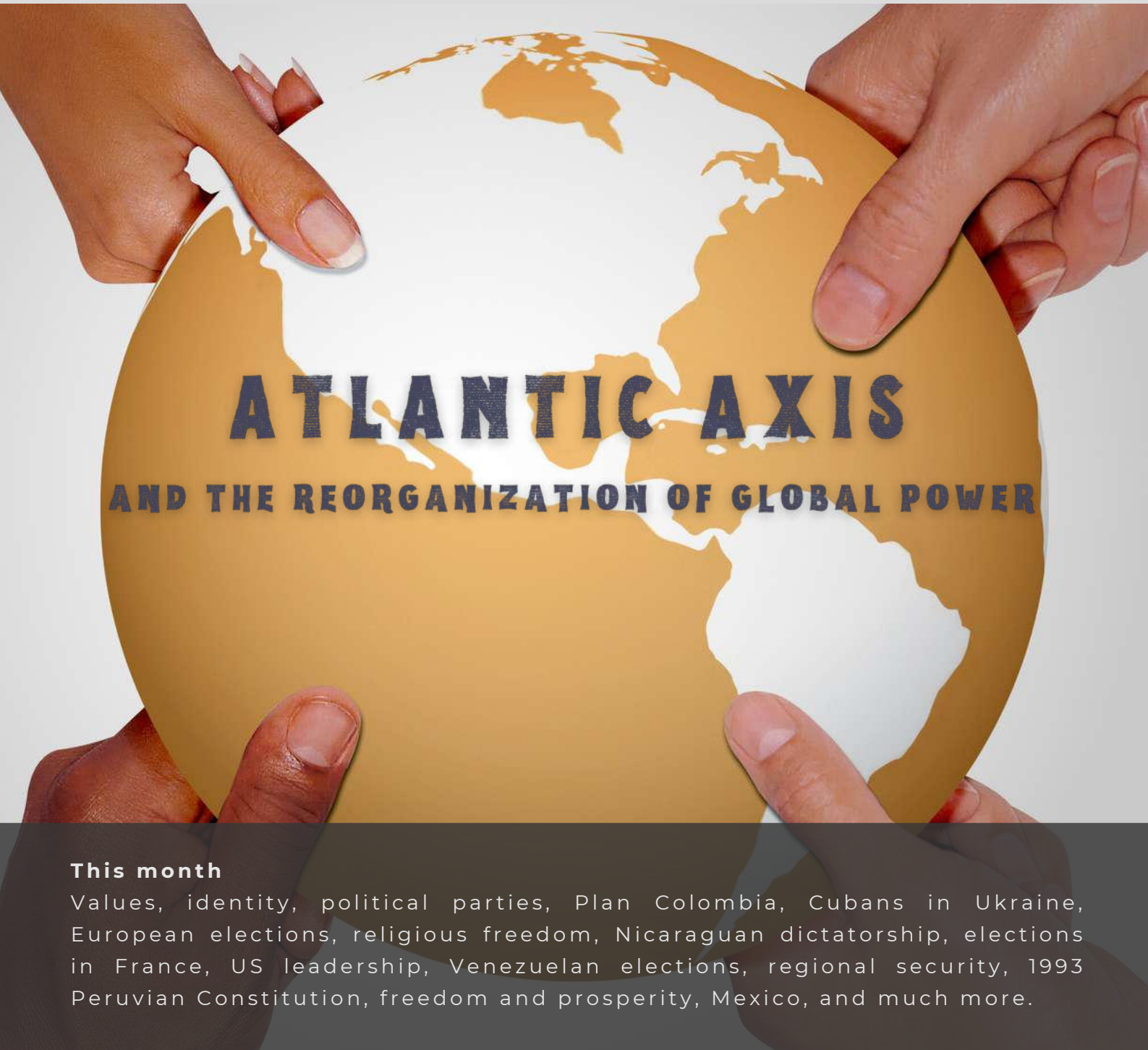
Magazine

AGENDA

Issue 4 - June 2024

Carlos Díaz-Rosillo, Julián Obiglio, Juan Guaidó, Rick Scott, Maryan Zablotskiy, Mario Diaz-Balart, Keiko Fujimori, Hélder Sousa Silva, Sam Brownback, Patricia Bullrich, Pablo Vázquez, Paula J. Dobriansky, Rodrigo Galilea and Bertrand Dupont



This month

Values, identity, political parties, Plan Colombia, Cubans in Ukraine, European elections, religious freedom, Nicaraguan dictatorship, elections in France, US leadership, Venezuelan elections, regional security, 1993 Peruvian Constitution, freedom and prosperity, Mexico, and much more.

Monthly editorial

Julián Obiglio
General Coordinator AGENDA Magazine
President Nuevas Generaciones
Foundation, Argentina

Everything is connected

¡Welcome to issue number 4 of AGENDA! In our June issue, we offer excellent contributions from outstanding Western leaders who share their ideas and proposals from **Argentina, Chile, France, Peru, Portugal, Ukraine, Spain, USA, and Venezuela**, inviting us to reflect on many current global and regional topics.

Many relevant events have occurred in the past month. In Latin America, elections were held in Mexico, delivering a hard blow to those who expected to see a change in the country's leadership ideas.

In Europe, a decisive victory for center-right parties in the EU parliamentary elections presents a new perspective for the next five years in the region, with some consequences already materializing, such as President Macron calling for elections.

Meanwhile, Russia has intensified its attacks on Ukraine, and Putin has publicly appeared with the North Korean totalitarian leader.

At the same time, the U.S. political campaign has already begun, and candidates have fiercely faced off in a

first public debate, followed worldwide. And rightly so, as the outcome of that election will affect the global political and economic system. Many of these events will be analyzed in this number, but I will refer to two issues related to Cuba that intersect all the realities I have mentioned.

"...the regime has provided Cuban citizens to the invading Russian troops in Ukraine. Troops that will later return to our region.."

These concern the situation of the Cuban dictatorship, with two noteworthy developments. The first is the evidence that the regime has provided Cuban citizens to the invading Russian troops in Ukraine.

As indicated by the brave Ukrainian deputy Maryan Zablotskiy in his article published in this issue of AGENDA, these Cuban troops are not only fighting in his country against his government but are also training and preparing for specific actions in Latin

America. **Everything is connected.**

On the other hand, the confirmation of the European People's Party majorities in the EU parliament opens the door for finally stopping the flow of funds from the EU to Cuba, which the regime uses to finance its totalitarian and anti-democratic actions.

Under the Political Dialogue and Cooperation Agreement (PDCA), the European Union has provided hundreds of millions of euros to the Cuban communist regime, to fake NGOs, to businesses owned by regime leaders, or to educational institutions that only promote totalitarian communism. Why is

Europe financing a regime that violates all essential human rights and fights alongside Russia in the invasion of Ukraine? With the current European parliamentary majorities and Poland holding the Presidency of the Council of the European Union, this is very close to ending. As I said before, **everything is connected.**

Our magazine AGENDA works on these connections, seeking to link all those in the United States, Europe, and Latin America who defend the essential values of democracy and freedom, which are also the foundation for prosperity and development.

We begin this issue 4 with the monthly reflections of the Adam Smith Center for Economic Freedom Director, **Carlos Díaz-Rosillo**, who offers us invaluable considerations regarding perspectives in Mexico following the early June election results.

Here is our AGENDA. **Enjoy the reading!**

Carlos Díaz-Rosillo, Ph.D.

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

Monthly reflection

Sheinbaum´s challenges

Mexico is the second-largest economy in Latin America and the 12th-largest in the world. With a GDP of 1.5 trillion dollars and a population of over 130 million people, it shares more than 3,100 kilometers of border with the United States. It is a country of enormous and fascinating opportunities. It is also a country with many challenges: it ranks first out of 193 countries in terms of the magnitude of illicit economic activities, it is the most dangerous country to be a journalist, and twelve of the fifty most violent cities in the world are found there. These are the United Mexican States that have just elected, for the first time, a woman as President. Claudia Sheinbaum Pardo assumes leadership at a crucial moment for the country and the region.

The OECD forecasts that the Mexican economy will grow by 2.2% in 2024 and 2.0% in 2025. Despite informality exceeding 55% of the labor market, unemployment is at historically low levels. Private consumption is anticipated to be the driver of this modest growth. There are several factors in Sheinbaum's favor as she hopes to boost the Mexican economy: many industrial park projects, inflation under control, a moderate fiscal deficit, public investment in infrastructure, and the huge and historical opportunities offered by "nearshoring," among other factors.

She will also inherit from López Obrador a series of unfinished bilateral trade negotiations: Argentina, Brazil, South Korea, Ecuador, and the United Kingdom. There will be much attention on the review of the Mexico-United States-Canada Agreement (USMCA) due in 2026.

Despite this promising scenario and great economic opportunities, poverty remains one of the major problems facing Mexican society. The President will face the challenge of sustaining her predecessor's ambitious social programs and promoting new ones with her own stamp. During her campaign, the most concrete proposals in this regard included: a basic pension program for women aged 60 to 64, scholarships for all children in basic education, and a special social security program for workers in the fishing industry and agricultural laborers. She has also spoken of expanding state care systems.

There are also important energy issues: Mexico is the eleventh-largest oil producer in the world, and its new President is an expert in energy with a series of studies on clean and renewable energy. She will have to deal with an increasingly indebted state oil company, potential state investments in lithium, and the expansion of the Energía Costa Azul project, a liquefied gas export terminal that will be key for the United States to dominate the Asian market for this product.

"Sheinbaum will have to deal with an increasingly indebted state oil company"

And, of course, there is the security issue: one of the great problems facing Latin America in general, and Mexico in particular. In her campaign plan, "100 Steps for Transformation," she mentions three strategies regarding security: addressing the structural causes of violence, improving coordination between institutions, and emphasizing crime investigation. Solving the security —or rather insecurity— issue will be her greatest challenge and responsibility.

Despite the magnitude of these challenges, she will have important advantages: popular support, reflected in her landslide victory, in both legislative chambers, and in governorships and municipalities throughout the country. This will give her significant internal governability, complemented by an expectation of improved relations with the United States, the country's most important trading partner, where a leadership change is also anticipated —a matter that could ease tensions after years of strained relations between the two neighbors.

Sheinbaum could set a new course for Mexico, strengthening its position on the regional and global stage. Her success will depend on her ability to implement effective and coherent policies, understand the indispensable role that the business sector must play in the country's growth and development, and build strategic and practical alliances —rather than the dogmatic alliances of her predecessor— on multiple fronts.

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Juan Guaidó

Interim President of Venezuela (2019 – 2023). He has been a Deputy in the National Assembly. He is Senior Leadership Fellow at the Adam Smith Center for Economic Freedom, Florida International University (FIU).

July 28 is not an election; it is an event of civic resistance that drives change in Venezuela

On Sunday, July 28, presidential elections will be held in Venezuela. As President Guaidó explains in his article, it is a new opportunity for change and an expression of the resistance of the Venezuelan people.

The authoritarian regime of Maduro has judicially persecuted María Corina Machado and other candidates, detained many activists and regional leaders, and banned the mobilization of citizens and the participation of more than 4 million exiled Venezuelans.

Despite all this and other irregularities in the process, Juan Guaidó shows us that we are facing a unique opportunity to stop the Chavista dictatorship.

In Venezuela, there is a new opportunity for change, built by the contributions and resistance of Venezuelans who have dedicated their efforts to restoring democracy for more than two decades. This possibility is represented by the event on July 28, which, despite all the irregularities surrounding it—from the judicial persecution of María Corina Machado to the detention of activists and regional leaders to inhibit mobilization to the prohibition of participation by more than 4 million exiled Venezuelans—can be seen as an opportunity for transition, mobilization, and challenge to Nicolás Maduro's authoritarian regime, using the concept of a "transformative election" or "stunning election" in a context where the regime's electoral legitimacy does not exist.

The electoral situation in Venezuela.

In Venezuela, the term "election" has lost its meaning due to a series of practices and circumstances that distort this democratic mechanism, unlike suffrage exercises in the rest of the continent that, given the conditions surrounding them, refer to true elections that allow the population to express their stance, which is then adopted by the State on the consulted issues. Nicolás Maduro's regime has implemented constant traps to undermine the electoral process, including blocking international observation, changing names and locations of polling stations, manipulating the electoral register regarding voter registrations and locations, and creating polling stations in areas controlled by the dictatorship, among others. These factors, in addition to political persecution and

censorship, have created an environment where "elections" cannot be considered free or fair, and thus, the process proposed for July 28 cannot be classified as an election.

Despite this, elections in Venezuela have always represented something deeper and more significant than a mere voting process. They have become moments of high mobilization and challenge to the regime, as experienced in the Barinas regional election, where a substitute candidate ended up defeating authoritarianism in one of its main historical strongholds. At the time of voting, Maduro's “de facto” power can be temporarily questioned by the popular will, the armed forces, and the National Electoral Council, creating a space for political transition.

Elections as catalysts for change.

The term "stunning election" refers to electoral processes that, despite being flawed or manipulated, have a surprising impact on a country's political landscape. In Venezuela, this process has served as a catalyst for the massive mobilization of the population in a direct challenge to the authoritarian regime, as happened in the 2015 parliamentary election in Venezuela. These processes are not merely a means to elect officeholders but an opportunity for most citizens to express their discontent and demand change.

In Venezuela, the opposition has repeatedly managed to unite around clear leadership, as evidenced in recent primaries, where the elected candidate was illegally disqualified by the regime. Despite these restrictions, there is no doubt today about the opposition's advantage, as represented by Edmundo Gonzales Urrutia, with all polls clearly predicting a broad opposition victory, reflecting an overwhelming desire for change among the population.

"...elections in Venezuela have become moments of high mobilization and challenge to the regime..."

This phenomenon, which increased the electoral support generated by the primary and the legitimacy of María Corina Machado transferred to Edmundo González, previously unknown, was built once again by Venezuelans, following various stages over more than 20 years of struggle, thus gathering several factors associated with "stunning elections": massive mobilization, challenge to the regime, a clear demonstration of the intention for change, and what has been the common rational factor to face the dictatorship: UNITY.

The role of the international community.

The international community has a vital interest in the July 28 process in Venezuela, not only for reasons related to the restoration of democracy and systematic human rights violations but also for practical and geopolitical reasons. A successful transition in Venezuela could address the origin of the migration crisis in Latin America, caused by the displacement of millions of Venezue-

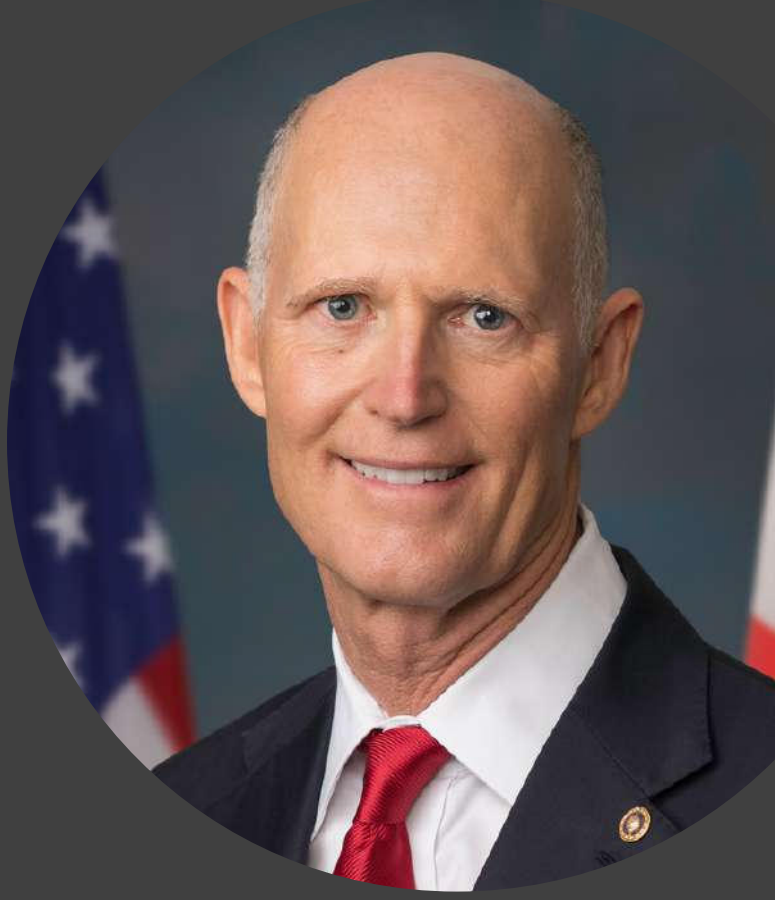
ans due to economic crisis and political repression. Additionally, achieving minimal stability in Venezuela would positively impact the region, curbing the expansion of organized crime and returning operational regularity to the continent.

International attention and pressure are crucial to ensuring that these processes, although flawed, can be maximized to promote a peaceful and democratic transition Interna-. tional vigilance and support can help ensure that the efforts of the opposition, through the leadership

and the Venezuelan population, are not in vain, providing a counterbalance to the dictatorial control exercised by the regime and, of course, achieving a stable partner in energy matters, only possible in a democracy.

Although not an Election, it is an opportunity.

Finally, although the July 28 process in Venezuela cannot be considered elections due to numerous irregularities and manipulations by Nicolás Maduro's regime, milestones like these offer a unique opportunity to direct mobilization and challenge toward political transition. Interpreting the concept of "stunning election" in this context, one can understand how, even in a repressive system contrary to the values of freedom, voting and participating can become powerful acts of resistance leading to change. The international community has the historical and political commitment to continue supporting these efforts, recognizing the importance of these moments for the future of Venezuela and the stability of the entire region.



Rick Scott

U.S. Senator, Republican Party, Florida.
Member of the U.S. Senate Committee on Armed Services and the U.S. Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.
Former Governor of Florida.

The United States must take action against the Ortega regime's attackson religious freedom

Senator Scott describes in his article the initiative he has launched together with Senators Ted Cruz, Tommy Tuberville, and Katie Britt, expressing his concern about the violations of religious freedom being perpetrated by the Ortega-Murillo regime in Nicaragua.

He also details the actions that this authoritarian government has been taking against those who wish to express their thoughts and ideas, visibly and demonstrably violating the fundamental human rights of Nicaraguan society.

Finally, he outlines the sanctions they have requested the U.S. administration apply against this regime in order to defend the Nicaraguan people.

Recently, I led an effort with Senators Ted Cruz (R-TX), Tommy Tuberville (R-AL), and Katie Britt (R-AL) to express our deep concern regarding repeated violations of religious freedom in Nicaragua and call for action from President Joe Biden to implement strong, targeted sanctions in response to these attacks on the Nicaraguan people.

The oppressive actions taken by the Ortega regime in Nicaragua targeting religious groups, especially those associated with the Catholic Church, were demonstrated again by the recent actions taken by regime leader President Daniel Ortega and his wife, Vice President Rosario Murillo, against Mountain Gateway, a U.S.-based Christian organization which has maintained a missionary presence in Latin America for more than a decade.

While the Biden administration has employed some targeted sanctions, there is much more that must be done to hold the Ortega-Murillo regime accountable for these disturbing violations of religious freedom and decades of abuse and corruption. These actions are the latest chilling representation of the oppression of human rights in Nicaragua, Cuba, and Venezuela under their evil regimes and a call to action for the United States to show strength in defense of human rights, democracy, and freedom in our Hemisphere.

In December 2023, the Ortega-Murillo regime arrested 13 pastors and members associated with Mountain Gateway, which held multiple evangelistic events all around the country. The Mountain Gateway members and pastors were targeted despite having the approval, support, and assistance of the Nicaraguan government. The regime also issued arrest warrants for three American citizens associated with the organization, preventing them from retur-

ning to the communities they have served for years. The unjust imprisonment of these religious leaders further confirms the Ortega-Murillo regime's corruption and coordination with the regimes in Venezuela and Cuba in an oppressive campaign of destabilization in the Western Hemisphere.

We have seen an exponential increase in human rights abuses in Nicaragua, focused on eliminating any opposition since the pro-democracy protests in 2018. In a move taken from the playbook of dangerous regimes in Cuba and Venezuela, the Ortega-Murillo regime has repressed all dissent by way of jailing, murdering, and even exiling many political prisoner opposition leaders to the United States. The regime's efforts to dismantle civil society institutions have resulted in the shuttering of more than 3,500 NGOs in Nicaragua, including the Nicaraguan Red Cross. The Ortega-Murillo regime has also seized the assets of Mountain Gateway and these other institutions.

"We have seen an exponential increase in human rights abuses in Nicaragua, focused on eliminating any opposition..."

A recent report by the United Nations (UN) Group of Human Rights Experts on Nicaragua (GHREN) concluded that widespread human rights violations that amount to crimes against humanity are being committed against civilians by Nicaragua's Government for political reasons (Human Rights Council Fifty-fifth session February 26–April 5, 2024 Agenda item 2 Annual report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and reports of the Office of the High Commissioner and the Secretary-General Report of the Group of Human Rights Experts on Nicaragua).

In presenting the report, UN GHREN Chair Jan Simon stated, "President Ortega, Vice-President Murillo, and

the high-level State officials identified in the investigation should be held accountable by the international community, as should Nicaragua as a State that goes after its own people, targeting university students, Indigenous people, people of African descent, campesinos, and members of the Catholic Church and other Christian denominations" (Nicaragua's grim reality: Investigation by UN experts reveals crimes against humanity targeting civilians, including children and students, for political ends. News and Press Release, UN HRC, Posted February 29, 2024).

The persecution by the Ortega-Murillo regime on the Catholic Church began in 2018 and has only escalated, as they have expelled several Catholic and Christian missions and charities (https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2024/country-chapters/Nicaragua). Mountain Gateway is the latest victim of the regime's religious tyranny. I will continue to urge President Biden to use additional targeted sanctions and all available authorities to hold this repressive regime accountable. The Biden administration must stand strong against the thugs who are oppressing the people of Nicaragua, as well as Venezuela and Cuba, and we must all stand with the Nicaraguan people and pressure the Ortega-Murillo regime until religious freedom and human rights are restored, democracy upheld and the release of all political prisoners is secured.

Maryan Zablotskiy

Member of Parliament of Ukraine. Economist. Former Director of the "Ukrainian Economic Freedoms Foundation" and the "Centre for Effective Legislation"

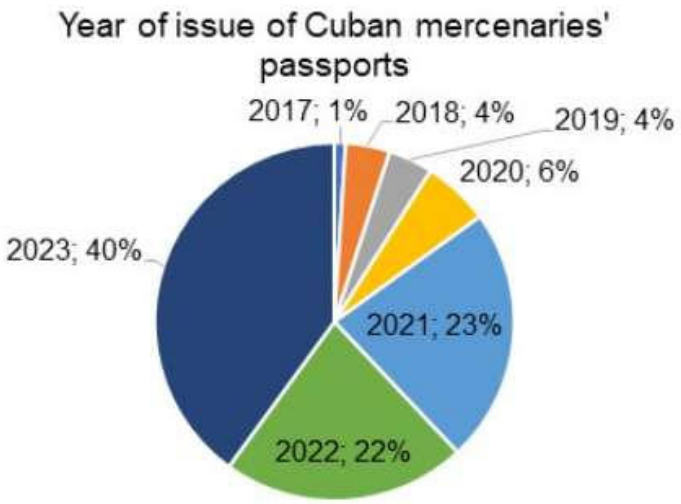
Russia trains Cubans for future conflicts in Latin America

The author informs us about Russia's recruitment plan for Cubans, aimed at their training and participation in the invasion of Ukraine.

Furthermore, the author indicates that this could not happen without an agreement with the Cuban regime and warns us about the true objective of this military involvement: training for future operations in the American continent.

I believe that Russia is battle-hardening and training Cuban regime forces and military for future conflicts in Latin America, with Guyana being the first target. This conclusion is apparent based on a variety of concurrent factors. And the world should be worried about this.

First, let me explain who these Cuban mercenaries actually are. We have passport copies of 259 of them. Our cyber hackers hacked an email from Russian military officers responsible for recruitment . Here are statistics on the dates of passport issue: (https://informnapalm.org/en/cuban-mercenaries/)



We can see that roughly 40% of mercenaries going to Ukraine had a foreign passport prior to the full-scale Russian invasion. It is not typical for a regular Cuban citizen to have a foreign passport. Regime loyalists or security officers are more likely to have them. Thus, stories that base recruitment on impoverished, duped, unwitting people are obviously false. At least some significant percentages of so-called mercenaries are, one way or another, part of the Cuban regime's security apparatus.

And, of course, no recruitment in a totalitarian state could have ever been done without the regime's explicit approval and policy like it was the Yemenite War of 1972, Yom Kippur War, Angolan Civil War, Ethio-Somali War, Invasion of Grenada and other conflicts where Cuban mercenaries were sent to participate.

Now, we are back to the same playbook in Ukraine. But I believe that the intention is now much more sinister and forward-looking. Here's the problem: Cuban forces in Russia will never ever be an effective fighting unit. The language barrier alone will likely cause more friendly fire deaths

than harm Ukrainians. Ukrainian forces have already killed at least a dozen Cuban mercenaries and captured a prisoner.

From a military standpoint, Russia does not need Cubans on the battlefield. However, getting troops into an actual combat zone is the only way to train and battle-harden them effectively. Real battlefield experience for Cubans will allow us to highlight people with leadership skills, cruelty, and battle efficiency. It will help them get used to explosions and alleviate their fear of being under fire. The whole Cuban mercenary thing only makes sense if they have future plans for those soldiers.

" Cuban forces in Russia will never ever be an effective fighting unit. The language barrier alone will likely cause more friendly fire deaths than harm Ukrainians..."

And there is an obvious place for future conflict already: Guyana. As it is said to have 11 billion barrels in oil reserves, the country is set to become one of the world's largest per capita oil producers by 2025. The discovery of over 11 billion barrels of oil reserves off the coast of Guyana since 2017 is the largest addition to global oil reserves since the 1970s. And that exploration is being done by American Exxon. Does Russia want to disrupt this operation? Absolutely.

Russian imperialist mindset is simple: cause problems in countries with oil exploration to keep prices higher. For example -but basically– by controlling the Venezuelan regime and destroying its economy, Russia has taken a few million barrels of oil out of the market. This is an extremely profitable policy, given that 70% of the Russian economy and income come from oil and gas.

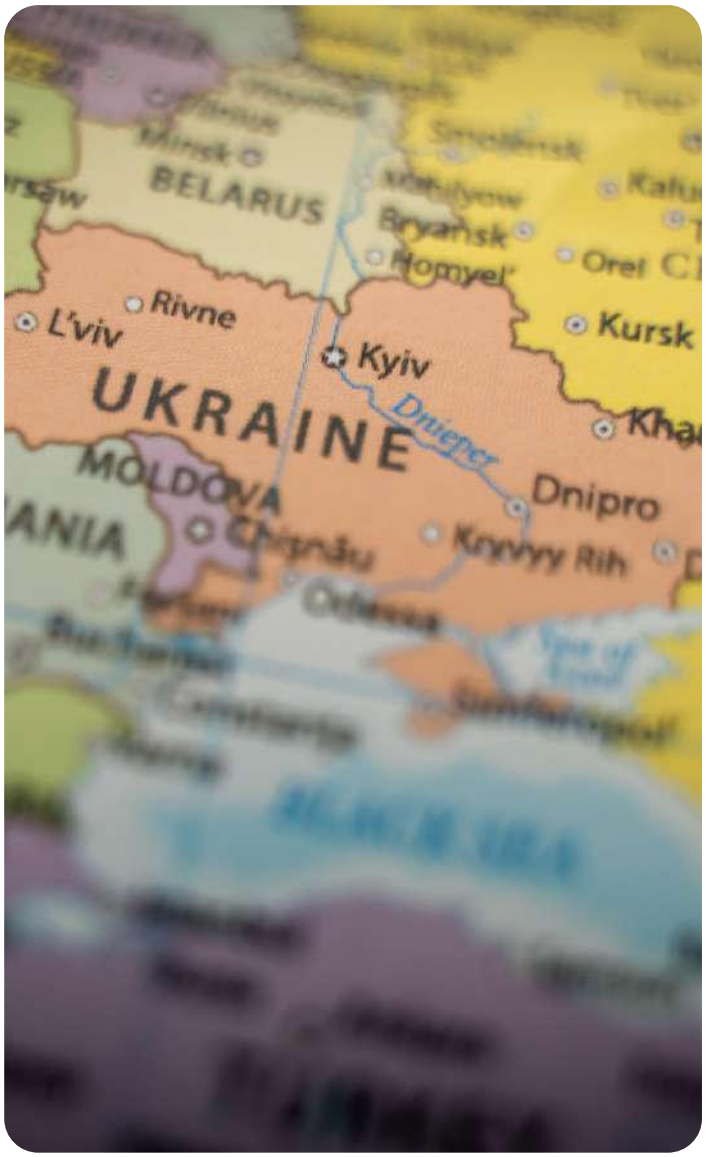
How does Russia view the biggest oil discovery next to Venezuela –a country with the world's biggest oil reserves? It is a threat to its income.

What's the solution? Create military conflict and trouble. Now, Russia has three military bases in Venezuela. However, using them directly in the invasion would generate a huge and efficient military response from the UK and probably other countries.

So, the answer can only be a hybrid warfare, supposedly not by Russian hands. Recently, a self-proclaimed Venezuelan President laid territorial claims on Guyana. But everyone understands that the Venezuelan poorly fed army is not capable of any military action.

But what if some "Che Guevara" paramilitary organization would do an invasion of Guyana? Guyana troops are only 3,400 people. And to disrupt oil production, they won´t need so much. Cuban forces are already actively taking part in helping the Venezuelan regime to control its people. By using Cuban mercenaries and existing equipment on Russian military bases in Venezuela, Russia can assemble a supposed "volunteer force" for battle. The only problem would be to train them in modern warfare and battle harden them. Doing that in the war against Ukraine would be the obvious choice.

Also, having a Spanish-speaking native Latin American fighting force can be used to repel potential revolutions in Cuba or Venezuela or to support their allies, such as Nicaragua. Or to threaten any other Latin American country.



Having Russian nationals fight as part of the Wagner group or other official forces may be “accepted” in Africa but is simply not applicable politically in Latin America.

I call on all countries to take a closer look at Cuban mercenaries being used in Ukraine. They are honestly not a huge threat to my country, but I would hate to see Guyana invaded, oil prices skyrocket again, and Russia gaining more financial power. Russia should be stopped in every single country they try to meddle with. In current conditions, sanctions relief on Venezuela or further EU funding of the Cuban regime doesn´t look like the best policy.

Mario Díaz-Balart

U.S. Representative for Florida's 26th Congressional District. Senior member of the House Committee on Appropriations. Chairman of the State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs Subcommittee.

Reestablishing American leadership

American Representative Mario Díaz-Balart refers in his article to the Additional Consolidated Appropriations Act passed this year in the United States and to the portion corresponding to the subcommittee under his charge concerning his country's international contributions to various international actions.

Among his reflections, he analyzes the importance of strategic conditioning in allocating funds to certain organizations, entities, or countries that do not share the democratic vision or development goals of the U.S.

He also indicates that his country must regain leadership positions, and each administration must ensure that American taxpayer dollars are spent supporting crucial foreign policy priorities.

As Chairman of the subcommittee that provides funds for our national security and foreign policy, I am proud of the State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs portion of the Further Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2024 for reestablishing American leadership where it has been severely lacking for the last four years.

This important legislation advances global freedom, manifests strong solidarity with our allies, and stands firm against the malign forces that undermine U.S. national security, all while cutting overall spending by six percent from last year's level. After the Biden Administration's disastrous withdrawal from Afghanistan, Russia's invasion of Ukraine, and increasing threats from the Chinese Communist Party, the American people deserve better than a weak and confused foreign policy. This bill takes us in the right direction.

For example, this legislation provides unwavering support to our key democratic ally in the Middle East, Israel, as it wages an existential battle against terrorism. It fully funds the U.S.-Israel Memorandum of Understanding at $3.3 billion, conditions any assistance to Gaza, and strengthens vetting to prevent funds from going to non-governmental organizations that support the Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions movement. As Iran seeks to destroy Israel and stoke terror through its proxies, the bill prohibits implementation of any Iran deal absent congressional approval and prohibits removing the Iranian Revolutionary Guard from the foreign terrorist organizations' list.

The bill also takes a strong stand against wasteful, anti-American, and

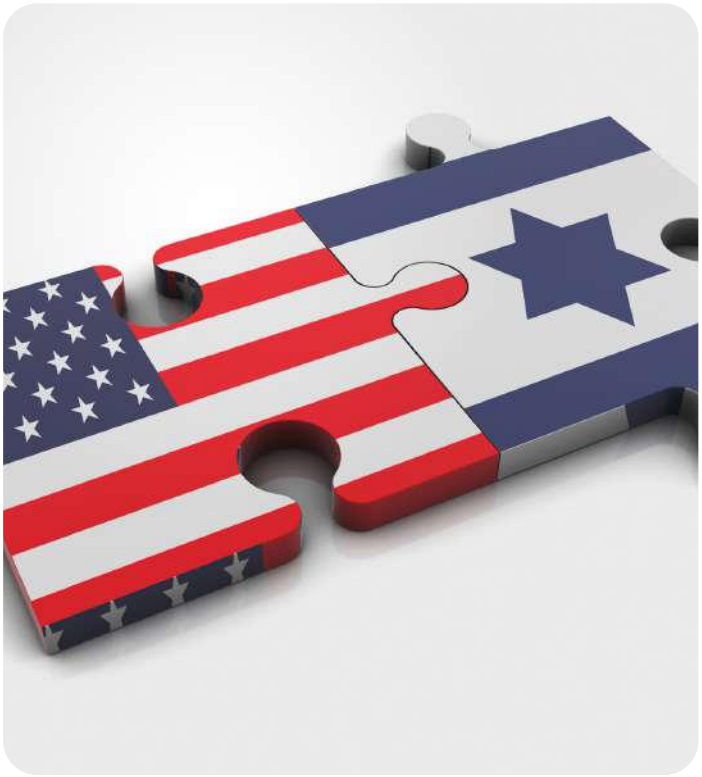
antisemitic entities within the United Nations, such as by prohibiting funding to UNRWA (United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees), which employed Hamas sympathizers that assisted in the wicked terrorist attack against innocent Israelis on October 7, 2023, and by blocking funds for the blatantly antisemitic Commission of Inquiry against Israel.

Similarly, this legislation holds back funds from the U.N. Human Rights Council until there is progress in both addressing its dangerous obsession with Israel and implementing meaningful reforms to begin removing the world's worst human rights abusers from its ranks. I have said that I will take the United Nations seriously only when it takes itself seriously, and this bill signals that business as usual is over.

The Act strongly counters the malign influence of Communist China by prohibiting all funds to it while also prohibiting funding for countries to repay debts owed to China, which has become a predatory lender to many of the world's most vulnerable countries. This bill also includes assistance to Taiwan by providing an unprecedented $300 million in Foreign Military Financing, as well as $400 million for the Countering PRC Influence Fund.This legislation stands solidly with Taiwan and counters the PRC's global, malign influence. The bill also provides $125 million to combat fentanyl trafficking and production, most of which originates in the PRC to ultimately enter the United States at the southern border. Furthermore, it prohibits funds to any entity facilitating or encouraging irresponsible and illegal migration.

"The bill also takes a strong stand against wasteful, anti-American, and antisemitic entities within the United Nations..."

Additionally, this Act provides strong solidarity to those struggling for freedom and democracy in the most repressed corners of the globe, particularly within the destabilizing, dangerous, and anti-American dictatorships in our hemisphere, such as Cuba, Nicaragua, and Venezuela. The bill combats human trafficking by denying visas to governments and international organizations that facilitate the trafficking of Cuban doctors. It also imposes strict restrictions to prevent the Biden Administration from diverting Cuba democracy funding for unauthorized purposes without hoping to promote democracy.



"I believe that the United States, and indeed the world, is more secure when human rights are respected, and people are free to choose their own governments..."

I believe that the United States, and indeed the world, is more secure when human rights are respected, and people are free to choose their own governments. I am proud that this crucial legislation stands with political prisoners, pro-democracy activists, and all those risking their lives today in the struggle for freedom. President Reagan, who is largely credited for ending the Cold War and ushering in an era of freedom for Eastern Europe, explained his reason for democracy assistance: "So let us ask ourselves: What kind of people do we think we are? And let us answer: free people, worthy of freedom, and determined not only to remain so but to help others gain their freedom as well."

The State-Foreign Operations Appropriations portion addresses our most pressing foreign policy and national security priorities while cutting wasteful and counterproductive "green" programs that impose burdensome requirements in places where they simply do not make sense and include longstanding pro-life measures. The world has become a more dangerous place since President Biden took office. This bill helps to redirect U.S. attention and resources where they belong, ensuring that American taxpayer dollars are spent wisely, efficiently, and in furtherance of crucial foreign policy priorities.

Keiko Fujimori

President and Founder of "Fuerza Popular" Party of Peru. Former Presidential Candidate. Former Congresswoman. Former First Lady of the Republic of Peru.

From the past to the future: the foundations of the 1993 Constitution

On the 30th anniversary of the enactment of the Peruvian Constitution of 1993, Keiko Fujimori reflects on the significant reforms introduced by this legislation and the achievements the country has attained thanks to the economic, social, and educational foundations it established.

She also highlights the systemic framework incorporated within the Constitution that allows for substantial adjustments and political changes without necessitating modifications to the entire state structure. Finally, she analyzes the challenges facing Peru in the near future.

The 1993 Constitution is a fundamental pillar in Peru's political, social, and economic structure. Our Magna Carta not only established a regulatory framework that promoted economic stability but also enshrined guiding principles that have enabled our sustained development over the past three decades.

Perhaps the aspect most highlighted about the 1993 Constitution is its economic chapter. There is even specialized literature dedicated to analyzing this section. In the context of an economy devastated by hyperinflation exceeding 7000% in the early 1990s, reforms were introduced, such as the creation of an autonomous Central Reserve Bank to prevent it from being used to finance the whims of the ruling government, thus avoiding economic and fiscal instability.

Additionally, the privatization of inefficient public enterprises draining the national budget was another improvement implemented. Restructuring these enterprises allowed resources to be redirected to more productive areas and reduced the fiscal deficit. This measure, criticized by those benefiting from the golden payrolls of these enterprises, was based on the necessity to close down inefficient companies that, year after year, required greater subsidies without improving the services offered to the population.

Moreover, promoting private initiatives is crucial, especially regarding support for micro and small businesses. Thanks to the impetus given to this sector, it is now evident that the political decision made at that time was correct. Medium and small enterprises have become one of the pillars of the national economy, representing 21% of the GDP and 99% of formal employment.

It is noteworthy that, in general, creating a favorable environment for private investment has been a key factor in economic diversification and job creation, contributing to poverty reduction and improving living conditions for the population, whose future was jeopardized by misguided political decisions and the scourge of terrorism that left thousands of families in mourning in Peru.

"...the future of the population was jeopardized by misguided political decisions and the scourge of terrorism that left thousands of families in mourning..."

Despite many focusing solely on the economic chapter of our Constitution and overlooking that our constitutional text is comprehensive, I would like to highlight some additional points beyond the Peruvian Economic Constitution. It is not enough to state that conditions were improved to create a favorable investment climate that allowed our country to transition from a developing nation. Political education about the achievements realized through the social spirit of our Constitution is also necessary.

For example, when the left attacks the foundations of the Constitution, we must explain to the population that thanks to the directives solidified since 1993, poverty was reduced from 60% to 20%. And although today we see an increase in poverty rates, it is also essential to clarify two things:

1) We are facing a global issue as a consequence of the COVID-19 pandemic.

2) In the Peruvian case, the consequences in terms of loss of human lives and economic impact were a terrible aftermath of the misguided political decisions promoted and endorsed by the metropolitan left.

The reforms were not only focused on

the economy but also closing gaps in various areas, each of great significance for the country's development. In the health sector, for instance, efforts were made to improve access to medical services and healthcare infrastructure, both public and private. While acknowledge that much remains to be done, it is important to remember where we came from, what we have achieved, and the direction we are heading.

Similarly, in education, the Constitution promoted reforms that increased educational coverage and improved the quality of teaching, allowing more children and young people to access better education that meets the demands of the labor market and society. In terms of infrastructure, the Constitution laid the foundations for investment in major projects such as roads, bridges, airports, and ports aimed at enhancing the country's productive capacities through a more efficient flow of goods and services. The implications of this for the population and our economy are self-evident.

As we mark the 30th anniversary of our Constitution, the Popular Force Party has reflected on the role of the political system in defending our democracy. Although we were the political "parents" of Peru's unicameral system, we recognized that the political and social circumstances demanded a change. Therefore, it became necessary to reconsider returning to a bicameral system, which favors more political reflection over legislative executivism.

Fortunately, our Constitution, drafted with a forward-looking vision, included clauses that allow these adjustments without resetting our political system completely. This cons-

titutional flexibility is crucial to prevent the enemies of development, now identifying as "21st-century socialism," from exploiting any opportunity to destabilize the progress achieved and dismantle our weakened democracy.

The adaptability of our Constitution is one of its greatest strengths, allowing it to adjust to the country's changing needs without sacrificing the guiding principles that have driven our development. Times change. We had to adapt in the 1990s, and now we have done the same, continuing with the second-tier reforms we currently firmly push forward from “Fuerza Popular.”

Hélder Sousa Silva

President of the Mafra City Council, Portugal (Social Democratic Party - PSD). Elected Portuguese Member of the European Parliament, for 2024-2029 term by the EPP.

European elections: fromelectoral results to future challenges

Portuguese Member of the European Parliament, Hélder Sousa Silva, provides a precise analysis of the results from the recent European elections and the political landscape that Europe will face over the next five years.

Additionally, the author examines the three main challenges Europe faces and the actions that the bloc must consider to continue on the path of progress and development.

After the votes were tallied, several conclusions can be drawn about the consolidated results of the elections that took place between June 6th and 9th across the 27 European Union member states for the election of 720 Members of the European Parliament for the 2024-2029 term.

The fundamental conclusion is the recognition that moderate center parties, who were the founding forces of the European Union (EU) and remained its primary defenders, once again secured the majority of seats in the European Parliament (European People's Party - EPP, Socialists and Democrats, and Liberals), totaling 406 out of 720 seats.

This was an excellent outcome for someone like myself, a committed Europeanist. Many polls had suggested a potential overall loss of seats for these three parties in favor of both left-wing and right-wing extremism. Fortunately, this did not occur.

"...moderate center parties, who were the founding forces of the European Union (EU) and remained its primary defenders, once again secured the majority of seats in the European Parliament..."

While extremist parties did experience some growth, it was generally modest. These parties (Identity and Democracy-ID, Europe-, an Conservatives and Reformists-ECR, and The Left) generally oppose the EU project, using populism and nationalism as political arguments aimed at undermining the EU itself. Their increased vote share does not grant them significant influence over essential EU decisions, such as forming majorities in legislative votes, electing the Presidents of the Commission and Council, or defining strategy and priorities.

The extreme left (The Left) saw a minor increase of just two seats (from 37 to 39), whereas the extreme right (ID, ECR) gained more significantly, increasing from 118 to 134 seats (an increase of 16 seats). This growth was most pronounced in France, Austria, and Germany. The extreme right saw moderate gains in Sweden, Denmark, Italy, and Belgium, while in Poland, Bulgaria, and Hungary, they slightly reduced their representation.

Notably, in France and Germany, the extreme right surpassed the governing parties for the first time since World War II, significantly weakening Emmanuel Macron and Olaf Scholz. This instability in Europe's key engines indirectly threatens the future of the EU.

Special attention is warranted for Germany and Austria, where, for the first time, European election voting was extended to youths aged 16 and older, reducing the voting age by two years. Understanding the influence of social media platforms like TikTok on these young voters' preferences will be an intriguing area for future study.

Turning to the **three main challenges** facing European Parliamentarians in the upcoming term:

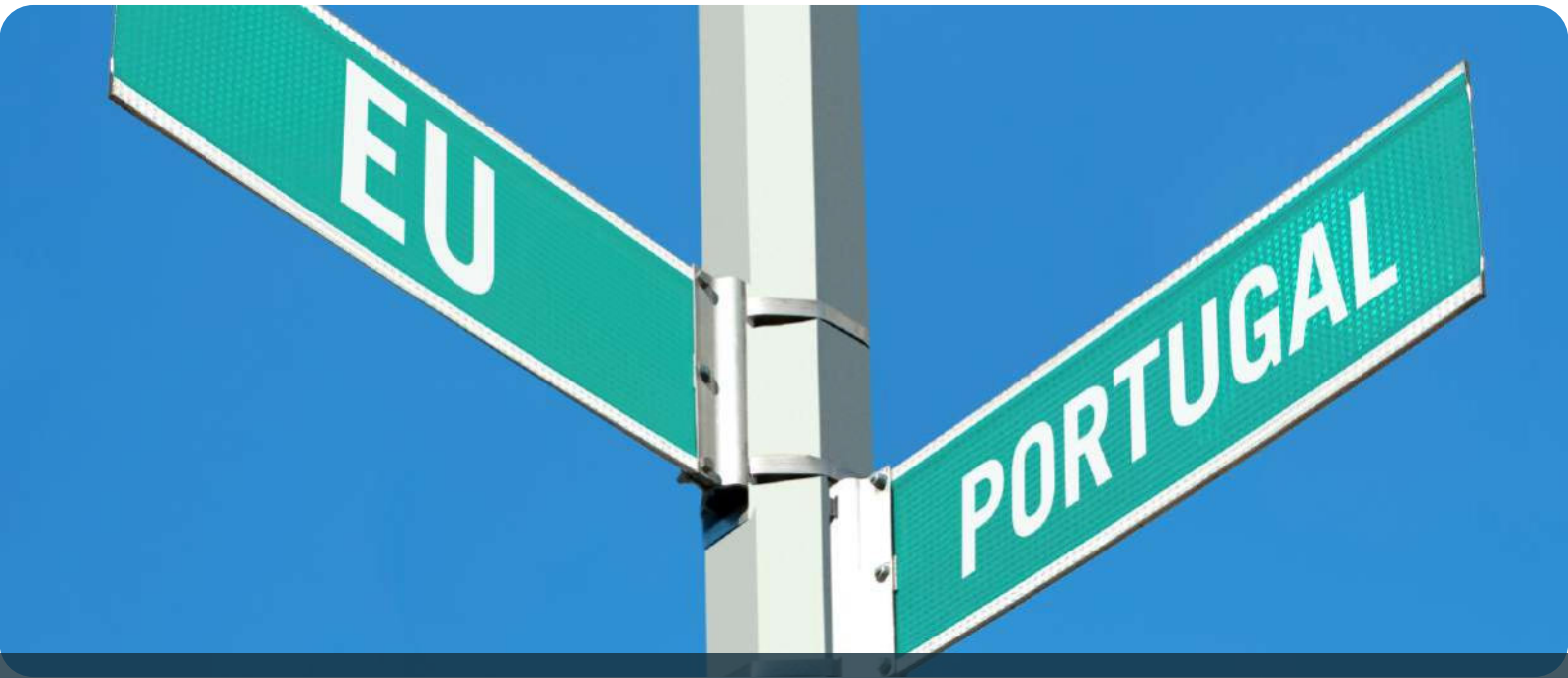
1) **Restoration and maintenance of peace:** With recent conflicts such as the Balkans in the 1990s and, more recently, Russia's invasion of Ukraine, there is a critical need to prioritize Security and Defense policies in the EU's agenda for 2024-2029. The EU

must maintain transatlantic cooperation (via NATO) while securing its defense and protecting its citizens amid uncertainty over the duration and impact of nearby conflicts.

2) **Enlargement**: With several candidate countries (Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina, North Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia, Turkey, Ukraine, Moldova, and Georgia) and Kosovo seeking recognition despite disputes with some EU member states, serious political and logistical challenges arise. Each candidate must navigate a rigorous accession process, posing questions about funding for social cohesion and economic well-being without compromising the existing 27 member states.

3) **Economic growth and strong currency**: Europe's economic prominence has waned relative to the US and China. To reverse this trend, the EU must prioritize research, development, and innovation investment across key sectors like Security, Defense, Energy, Environment, and Food. This strategy aims to restore European leadership and ensure economic prosperity while maintaining a strong Euro.

In summary, the upcoming term demands concerted efforts to safeguard the European way of life, balancing economic prosperity with social welfare within a secure, defended, expanded, and peaceful Europe.



Sam Brownback

Served as United States Ambassador at Large for International Religious Freedom from 2018 to 2021 and prior to that as Governor of Kansas and in the United States Senate. He is co-chair of the International Religious Freedom Summit and a Senior Fellow with Global Christian Relief.

Religious freedom slowly eroding in the Americas

Ambassador Brownback points out how religious freedom is under siege worldwide, often with governments themselves contributing to the oppression, thereby exacerbating this issue.

He also refers to recent data published by the Pew Research Center and the setbacks this freedom has suffered in the Latin American region, especially in Cuba and Nicaragua.

Religious freedom is under assault around the world. More than 80 percent of the world's population lives under restrictions that limit their religious freedom. The most recent Pew Research data on religion found that in 2021, "religious groups faced harassment from governments or social groups and individuals in 190 out of the 198 countries and territories in our study." The government was involved in the harassment in 183 of those countries.

This problem hits the Western Hemisphere more than most people realize. Pew found that 33 of the 35 countries in the Americas found at least one case of government harassment against a religious group, and in 28 countries, there was actual government interference.

No one should be surprised by communist Cuba's ranking as the most oppressive offender of religious freedom. Runner-up, however, is Nicaragua, a country that is unfortunately trending in the wrong direction. Nicaragua has become the latest battleground over religious freedom due to the autocratic regime of President Daniel Ortega, previously president from 1979 to 1990 and democratically elected president in 2007. In 2014, his Sandinista government abolished presidential term limits and began to erode the constitutional order.

"No one should be surprised by communist Cuba's ranking as the most oppressive offender of religious freedom..."

Following Ortega's violent crackdown on student protests in 2018 and jailing of political opponents in advance of the 2021 presidential election, Catholic clergy have emerged as leaders in the movement against the government's violent oppression and degradation of human rights. That has put the Catholic Church squarely in Ortega's crosshairs.

Nearly 80 percent of Nicaragua's population identifies as Christian, and almost 45 percent of the country identifies as Catholic, so the Church represents one of the largest blocks of influence outside of government control and, as such, is a threat to Ortega's grip on power. The most well-known target of the Sandinista attack on religious institutions is Bishop Rolando Álvarez of Matagalpa, but no one has been safe. Churches have been shut down and desecrated, universities closed, and civil society and nonprofit organizations banned.

Bishop Alvarez was imprisoned by the Ortega regime in February 2023 after refusing to leave house arrest and go into exile with 222 other political prisoners, including eight priests. As Bishop, Álvarez established a human rights office to assist victims of government violence and also denounced the regime's abuses in his homilies. He was promptly sentenced to 26 years in prison and stripped of his citizenship. In prison, the bishop was mistreated in solitary confinement.

Fortunately, he was released in January along with 18 other clergymen after Pope Francis spotlighted their plight in his annual New Year's Day address. Although we should be glad these men were released from prison, their exile means they are still paying the price for standing up against the government.

Last year, the government shifted its religious hostility from targeting Catholic institutions to the actual practices of the Catholic faith by banning Lenten religious processions, namely the Stations of the Cross.

In shutting down Catholic churches, charities, and schools and now forbidding public religious proce-processions, the regime seeks to eliminate the Church's presence in public life.

Although Cuba and Nicaragua are the only countries in the hemisphere on the US State Department's Countries of Particular Concern list for religious freedom violations, they are not the only countries that raise a red flag. The United States Commission on International Religious Freedom has expressed concern for the religious freedom of individuals in Indigenous communities throughout the region but primarily in Colombia and Mexico. Organized crime and paramilitary groups play a role in this concern.

A wild card in Latin America is China's expansion in the region. While the United States expects recipients of trade and foreign aid to respect human rights and the rule of law, China has no such prerequisites.

"Cuba and Nicaragua are the only countries in the hemisphere on the US State Department's Countries of Particular Concern list for religious freedom violations..."

Authoritarian regimes like Nicaragua can oppress their populations and actually be lauded for it by Beijing.

A stronger relationship with China is helpful to those regimes who rule with an iron fist. A pioneer in digital surveillance, China is exporting its surveillance state technology to client states around the world, making it easier for security services to spy on their own people.

The recent crackdown on peaceful Falun Gong practitioners in Russia shows that China is willing and able to export its persecution of religious groups outside its own borders. As countries chase China's money or seek to avoid American pressure and,

therefore, move into China's sphere of influence, we can expect their respect for religious freedom and other human rights to diminish. Nicaragua is a prime example.

The recent Pew data found that "the Americas continued to have the lowest levels of religion-related government restrictions of any region in the study." Whether or not that continues to be the case depends on the resolve of democracies to defend this fundamental human right and protect it throughout the hemisphere.

Patricia Bullrich

Minister of Security of the Argentine Republic and President of the Meeting of National Authorities on Transnational Organized Crime (RANDOT) of the OAS.

Security and economic freedomare the two essential dimensions for prosperity

Minister Patricia Bullrich conducts an interesting analysis of the link between economic freedom and public security, highlighting how they reinforce each other, resulting in positive effects for society.

To support her reflections, she reviews various experiences from the Latin American region and proposes steps that administrations should follow to achieve better outcomes in terms of security and economic freedom.

Economic growth is unlikely without economic freedom, and higher economic freedom correlates with increased public security. As economic freedom increases, conditions that favor the creation of genuine jobs and the development of other profitable lawful activities will emerge. In Colombia, for instance, economic freedom promoted lawful investments contributing to the fight against drug trafficking.

Since 2019, the national objective in El Salvador has been to eliminate gangs ("maras"). Without extortion or shootings and with no non-state actors replacing governmental roles, there is a direct correlation between increased public security and GDP growth, which has been on the rise since 2021. The World Bank projects an average annual GDP growth rate of 2.5% in the medium term, driven partly by tourism, which saw a 48% year-on-year increase. This economic sector has grown in direct proportion to improvements in security. El Salvador is now poised to surpass Costa Rica in regional economic indicators.

Conversely, in autocracies within the region, conditions evolve inversely. Venezuela serves as a stark example, where economic crisis, lack of opportunities, institutional destruction, proliferation of various criminal networks, and corruption have compounded. The country's economic devastation has paralleled an increase in criminal activity; while Latin America's general homicide rate is 20 per 100,000 inhabitants, Venezuela's stands at 26.8. The criminal organization "Tren de Aragua" is Venezuela's primary "export" to the region.

The degradation of democratic conditions, attacks on republican institutions, economic collapse, and crime escalation are interconnected. Bolivia exemplifies this: as it aligns with major autocracies worldwide, its economic activity declines while drug trafficking increases, bringing conflict and violence to the region.

There is a linkage between the deterioration of democratic conditions, the attack on republican institutions, economic collapse, and increased crime. Consider Bolivia: as it consolidates a regime allied with the world's major autocracies, its economic activity declines, and drug trafficking increases, bringing conflict and violence to the region.

A true democracy allows citizens to live without fear of falling victim to crime or seeing their children ensnared in criminal networks. Once again, it highlights a correlation between economic freedom, security, and the consolidation of democratic institutions.

"A true democracy allows citizens to live without fear of falling..."

In Argentina, five crimes illustrate the correlation between economic freedom and security: smuggling, motor vehicle theft, drug trafficking, illegal fishing, and human trafficking. With the exception of human trafficking, all these crimes show an increase directly proportional to negative state interference in legitimate activities.

Smuggling predominates along the borders with Bolivia and Paraguay, where, for many, it represents virtually the sole source of employment. Less state regulation could encourage productive investments and formal job development in border regions, thereby reducing this crime.

Motor vehicle theft, a socially impactful and often violent crime, affects major cities. Its economic connection lies in the difficulty of obtaining legitimate parts, many of

which are imported. Increased crime occurs when international trade restrictions tighten, as stolen cars supply the illegal auto parts trade.

Illegal fishing directly correlates with state intervention: deregulating this activity could render it lawful and profitable. Currently, illegal fishing around the Malvinas Islands and adjacent to the Exclusive Economic Zone causes annual losses of up to $2 billion. Realizing these gains necessitates a state that signs international agreements and considers environmental concerns.

In Argentina, human trafficking manifests as a localized or infrequent crime due to minimal state intervention in migration, unlike other regional countries where restrictions and transnational criminal organizations often increase its occurrence.

That lack of economic freedom hampers job creation, free movement of goods, and intensive

investments in food and raw material exploitation, fostering transnational crime and diminishing overall security levels.

Insecurity diminishes quality of life and impacts the economy through direct loss of goods and lives, increased security-related costs, and investor deterrence. Without economic freedom, sufficient resources cannot sustain the economically active population, exacerbating poverty and substituting state presence among the needy with organized criminal organizations.

Addressing insecurity from economic and public security perspectives is crucial to prevent violence from becoming widespread in Argentina. These variables underpin republican institutions and foster a full-fledged democracy.

In conclusion, The Heritage Foundation's Index of Economic Freedom, which assesses 12 variables related to both economic freedom and institutional quality, indicates that countries with higher scores also boast elevated levels of public security. In this context, economic freedom and public security are mutually interdependent; one is unlikely to exist without the other. Both serve as foundations for national progress and uphold democratic quality and institutional strength.

Pablo Vázquez

President of the Reformismo21 Foundation (Spain). Holds a Law degree and a Ph.D. in Economics, with a postgraduate degree in Economics (California). Among other public positions, he has served as a Member of the Spanish Parliament, Managing Director of "Madrid Futuro," President of RENFE, and President of INECO.

Analysis of the results of the European elections

The author analyzes the results of the European parliamentary elections, highlighting the decline of left-wing parties and the growth of the center-right represented by the European People's Party.

He also addresses the advances of the populist right, particularly in countries where the center-right is weak and lacks proper organization.

Finally, he describes the ideological intrigues posed by the actions of certain contemporary European parties.

Most analyses of the European elections agree in their interpretation: the axis of European politics has shifted to the right. And they are right. After all, in most member states, populist right-wing parties have improved their results from 2019. The paradigmatic example is France, where Macron has been forced to dissolve the National Assembly and call legislative elections from June 30th to July 7th.

However, the clear winner of these elections is the European People's Party (EPP), which has gained thirteen seats, totaling one hundred and ninety. The center-right has won in important countries like Germany, where the CDU has a fourteen-seat lead over the second most-voted party, and Spain, where the leading party, the Partido Popular, has gained nine seats and fourteen points compared to 2019. This confirms that the only barrier to what is known as the "populist right" is the center-right. Where the center-right is strong and solid—in Germany, Spain, and Poland—the populist right grows little or not at all. In France, however...

The victory of the EPP is also a victory for Europeanism, as it is the party of the single currency, the initial treaties, and the initiatives that have nurtured the European project. Consequently, it can be stated that Europeans support the Union and that we are capable—despite the alarmism of some—of recognizing that it is the most significant and relevant political project of the entire 20th century.

"The victory of the EPP is also a victory for Europeanism, Is the party that have nurtured the European project...."

But there is more: the fact that the EPP, a great unifier of consensus, has won (again) demonstrates that Europe values agreement and pact. In Spain, accustomed to the "Sanchista" wall, it is hard to believe, but 85% of the decisions adopted in Europe have gone forward with the

support of the socialists. Confrontation can be effective, but it is a very weak form of governance that fails to captivate anyone.

Finally, the result of these elections forces us to abandon the labels we use to read or interpret the political landscape. First, what is known as the "populist right" has revealed itself as a sort of undefined magma of parties that disagree on important issues. This is seen in their stance on the war in Ukraine: while the EPP, socialists, and Meloni decisively support Ukraine's victory, ex-communist parties - Podemos, France Insoumise - agree with Germany's AfD and Le Pen on a more appeasing, more equidistant view, ultimately more favorable to Russian interests.

Thus, labels become useless, and the content of each party's stance on specific issues becomes important. This needs to be examined: each party's position on a specific issue. Of course, this is much more uncomfortable, as it requires thoroughness, but it is also necessary; otherwise, we will not understand anything happening in the Union at a crucial moment for its future.

Paula J. Dobriansky

Ambassador. Foreign policy expert and diplomat in national security affairs. Senior Fellow at Harvard Kennedy School's Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs. Vice Chair of the Atlantic Council's Scowcroft Center for Strategy and Security.

She is also Co-Chair of the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) Ukraine Economic Reconstruction Commission. From 2001-2009, she served as Under Secretary of State for Global Affairs.

"Plan Colombia" 25 years on: A model of cooperation and execution

The author describes and analyzes the "Plan Colombia" as a foreign policy of the U.S., conceived, supported, and executed by Colombians and Americans.

Additionally, she explains its durability based on the political will between the two countries, spanning three U.S. administrations and three Colombian administrations, presenting it as a model of cooperation and execution.

This year marks 25 years since the conception of what came to be known as Plan Colombia. Plan Colombia, though often seen as an extension of Washington's militarized approach to conducting the "war on drugs" overseas, also included economic and institutional development aid, which, together, helped the Colombian state reassert territorial control over rural areas, particularly in the south of the country.

Between 2000 and 2010, when U.S. assistance under Plan Colombia routinely surpassed $600 billion per year, homicides, massacres, kidnappings, and internal forced displacement dropped dramatically.

In the words of former Secretary of Defense Robert Gates, "In just a few years, Colombia has achieved a remarkable, indeed historic, transformation in the security arena that few would have thought possible…from a nation under siege from drug trafficking organizations and military groups to a country quickly becoming a lynchpin of security and prosperity in South America."

As an example of U.S. foreign policy, Plan Colombia stands as a model not only of cooperation with our allies but as an exemplary, if increasingly rare, illustration of what Washington can accomplish when unified. Since the Marshall Plan, few foreign policy initiatives have achieved the level of sustained, bipartisan support and effectiveness seen under Plan Colombia. Several factors stand out as key elements in this success.

International conditions favored Plan Colombia. The Colombian government's struggles became most pro-

nounced during Washington's post-Cold War unipolar moment, and the Plan itself was conceived just months before September 11, 2001, and what would develop into the Global War on Terrorism. It is hard to imagine Washington marshaling the same level of interest and resources for Colombia post-9/11. This was also a moment of favorable political and budgetary conditions; the U.S. was running a budget surplus in the waning years of the second Clinton administration. Politically, drugs ranked as a top concern for Americans. Support for Colombia's fight against narco-terrorists like the FARC, paramilitaries, and ELN—under the umbrella of the war on drugs—suited both parties well.

But what made Plan Colombia remarkable was that it incorporated a whole of government approach from the U.S. side. The project had a unity of purpose and was integrated into every aspect of U.S. foreign policy toward Colombia. It guided U.S. economic, military, and development assistance. From the very beginning, authors of the Plan's enabling legislation institutionalized the initiative across many agencies, understanding that to be successful, it would need to engage the U.S. and Colombian governments over the course of several presidential administrations. Early involvement from the National Security Council, operating under an "Executive Committee" designation, was also key in overcoming bureaucratic inertia and turf fights among involved agencies. Senior career and non-career officials in the Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs (WHA) and the Bureau of International

"The Plan Colombia incorporated a whole of government approach from the U.S. side. The project had a unity of purpose and was integrated into every aspect of U.S..."

Narcotics and Law-Enforcement Affairs (INL) were instrumental in aligning priorities and resources under Plan Colombia. Critically, Plan Colombia had bipartisan support on Capitol Hill and across Democrat and Republican presidential administrations.

The main reason for that support was Colombian Ambassador Luis Alberto Moreno, who skillfully campaigned for support on Capitol Hill—linking the issue of Colombia's survival as a state to the American audience's strong support for anti-drug measures—and coordinated between multiple U.S. and Colombian administrations. In 2002, incoming president Álvaro Uribe decided to keep Moreno in his post as Ambassador to the U.S., helping to institutionalize the initiative further. As importantly, Plan Colombia was very much a Colombian initiative. Successive governments put in the resources, political capital, and human lives that went into executing it. President Andres Pastrana initially pledged an initial $4 billion of Colom-

-bian resources. And while critics argue that the U.S. contribution favored militarization, there was an expectation that European aid agencies would fund many of the social and human rights components of the Plan.

Thus, Plan Colombia was never just a U.S. foreign policy initiative. It was conceived, supported, and executed by Colombians and Americans. Its durability was a function of political will between the two countries, during three U.S. and three

Colombian administrations, and across the aisle. This historical context is relevant today as countries around the region continue to struggle with narco-fueled violence, institutional decay, and illegal armed groups.

For example, in response to Ecuador's dramatic descent into gang-fueled violence, some are calling for a Plan Ecuador. U.S., Latin American, as well as European policy makers should be clear-eyed about what Plan Colombia was able to achieve—and what it was not. Despite its impressive advances, the expanse of territory dedicated to coca (the primary ingredient for cocaine production) and estimated cocaine exports reached record highs in 2023. Latin American policymakers and diplomats should also be realistic about the conditions that facilitated Plan Colombia 25 years ago and the critical need for domestic political will.

Rodrigo Galilea

Senator.
President of the Renovación Nacional party (Chile).
He was the Gobernor of the Maule region between 2010 and 2014.

The upcoming challenges for the Chilean center-right

Next October, Chile will hold regional and municipal elections, in which 16 regional governors and 302 members of the sixteen regional councils will be elected, along with the mayors and municipal councilors of 345 municipalities.

The author of the note suggests that for this election, the center-right should unite under the coalition "Chile Vamos," along with the other opposition parties, such as Republicans, Democrats, and "Amarillos."

To achieve this, the author analyzes ways to overcome internal divisions and forge strategic alliances that maximize electoral opportunities, allowing the center-right to be a constructive opposition that ensures the country's governance.

In the complex Chilean political landscape, the center-right faces a crucial moment in its preparation for the upcoming municipal elections. The need for unity and coordination among the various opposition forces is fundamental to successfully confronting a leftist government that has shown little willingness to abandon a path of reforms poorly evaluated by the public, and that contradicts empirical evidence regarding their effectiveness. This lack of flexibility and sensitivity to citizen demands has generated an atmosphere of tension and discontent, emphasizing the importance of a united opposition determined to promote significant change.

The challenges for the center-right in the October elections are numerous and require a clear and strategic approach to overcome them successfully.

Among these, it is crucial for the center-right to represent the needs and demands of the public through concrete proposals. The current government has increased public dissatisfaction by failing to meet expectations and not executing its program. It is necessary to regain the public's trust and work towards building a country that returns to growth and achieves the stability we all desire to foster investment and improve employment indicators. This, along with establishing an agenda against organized crime and delinquency, will help manage the current insecurity crisis.

In this context, the ability of the center-right, represented by Chile Vamos, to

coordinate with other opposition parties, such as Republicans, Democrats, and "Amarillos" (Yellows), to present solid, representative, and competitive candidacies is of vital importance. This reflects a conscious effort to overcome internal divisions and forge strategic alliances that can maximize electoral opportunities. The center-right must be a constructive opposition that guarantees the country's governance by promoting dialogue and reaching agreements that translate into sustainable and beneficial reforms for the public.

I have no doubt that the public, tired and feeling a sense of fatigue from an uninterrupted electoral cycle since 2020, will appreciate at the polls that the opposition offers an alternative to a government that cannot solve the social problems that afflict it. This will positively highlight an approach that prioritizes the cohesion of the opposition over individual interests and party disputes.

This unity must be based on an identi-

"The center-right must be a constructive opposition that guarantees the country's governance by promoting dialogue and reaching agreements that translate into sustainable the public..."

-ty and a project that stands out for its majority vocation and a reformist agenda anchored in its principles. This approach implies a dialogue-driven policy: a center-right that, without abandoning its convictions, seeks to promote beneficial agreements for the country.

However, the obstacles on this path will not be few. Trench politics and purely adversarial character, along with populisms, are just around the corner. Examples of these dynamics abound in the region. Therefore, a serious commitment to dialogue and cooperation, even in a polarized politi-

-cal environment, is of vital importance.

The Chilean center-right has the historical responsibility to consolidate a political offer that is not only attractive to voters but also capable of carrying out the necessary reforms to boost the country's development. This requires strong and visionary leadership, capable of articulating a national project that inspires confidence and hope in the public. It is essential that this leadership be inclusive and seeks to integrate the diverse voices and perspectives that make up Chile's rich and diverse society.

In summary, the Chilean center-right is at a crucial turning point as it prepares for the upcoming municipal and parliamentary elections. The ability to coordinate and unite around common goals is seen as the key to successfully confronting a leftist government criticized for its intransigence. Personal sacrifices and a willingness to engage in dialogue are essential elements of this strategy, which aims to consolidate a center-right with its own identity and a clear reformist agenda.

In a moment of great responsibility for Chile, unity and cooperation within the opposition bloc are more important than ever. History will judge those who, at this critical moment, dare to look beyond their immediate interests and commit to building a better Chile.

Bertrand Dupont

Candidate for the 2024 legislative elections for the second constituency of French residents abroad. Elected counselor for French residents abroad in the third constituency of Brazil. Member of “Les Républicains” party in France.

What’s happening in France?

The author analyzes the impact of the results of the European parliamentary elections in France and the political movements that occurred following President Emmanuel Macron's decision to call for elections.

He also discusses the political possibilities that could arise from these elections and the prospects of a new French government in relation to Europe.

France is going through a moment of great political crisis. For the first time in the country of liberty, equality, and fraternity, both the far-right and the far-left extremes could come to power. On the night of the European Parliament election results, President Macron decided to dissolve the National Assembly and call for new legislative elections in a record time of three weeks. This was motivated by the harsh defeat of his presidential majority and the strong rise of the far-right Rassemblement National (RN) party.

"For the first time in the country of liberty, equality, and fraternity, both the far-right and the far-left extremes could come to power..."

This decision stirred up turmoil in French political circles. The left, divided during the European campaign, rallied around the creation of the Front Populaire. On the right, the advance of Rassemblement National (RN) led to unexpected reactions. An attempt at reconciliation with the Parti de la Reconquête ended in failure and division.

Within the republican right, Eric Ciotti, president of Les Républicains (LR), unilaterally decided to negotiate an agreement between RN and LR. He thought he could bring along a significant portion of the 61 LR deputies in the Assembly. However, this ended in failure—only two deputies, including himself, allied with RN. The rest of the LR leaders, including the majority Senate group, held a political bureau meeting and excluded Éric Ciotti. The battle is now legal and has caused unrest over nominations, which can only be officialized by the party commission, having so far endorsed 577 candidates. Apart from Ciotti and a minority, LR remains steadfast in their independence from both RN and the "Macronists."

This unstable political situation naturally raises great concern in

French and European economic and financial circles, especially as French debt has reached a worrying level of 3.2 trillion euros.

The European elections witnessed a strong growth of the far-right across Europe. The conservative EPP party also strengthened. Of the 720 seats in the European Parliament, EPP holds 189, the two far-right groups have 130, and independents hold 45. Renew, the group where the "Macronists" sit, lost significant ground with only 83 deputies. All left-wing parties together now hold only 223 seats.

As expected, the majority has shifted significantly, with proponents of a federal Europe now in the minority compared to supporters of a more conservative and protectionist Europe of nations. The influence of Member States will also be much greater, inevitably leading to tensions with the European Commission and a redefinition of their spheres of influence.

Certain policies such as the Green Deal, the Common Agricultural Policy, energy policy, and potential future trade agreements will be heavily affected and redefined (including notably the agreement with Mercosur). On the other hand, support for Ukraine remains strong while projects for EU expansion are being questioned.

The outcome of the late June legislative elections will be crucial for the future of France and Les Républicains, the party that is part of the EPP and the leading political group in the European Parliament. It is important to remember that France is the second largest financial contributor to the European Union. The potential rise of extreme parties could raise doubts about the level of this contribution.

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