Magazine

AGENDA

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Carlos Díaz-Rosillo, Julián Obiglio, Alec Shelbrooke, Álvaro Delgado,Christi Fraga, Gabriel Mato Androver, Esteban González Pons, Federico Pinedo, Alexandre Damasceno da Silva Poço, Alex Rizo, Luis Galarreta, Humberto Collado, Juan Salafranca, Mariana Gómez del Campo, Marcela Prieto-Botero.

In this edition

Western values, Israel, NATO, deep fakes, presidential elections in Uruguay, Doral - Miami, Spanish politics, European parliament elections, G20 Brazil, new government of Portugal, communist indoctrination in Florida, political situation in Peru, China's influence in Latin America, elections in Mexico, situation in Venezuela, and much more.

Monthly editorial

Julián Obiglio
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Western values will prevail

Many things have happened in the world over the past month. Undoubtedly, Iran's attack on **Israel** and the escalation of Russia's attacks on **Ukraine** show us that Western values are once again subject to the hatred and rage of those who do not share our ideas and thoughts.

AGENDA is a magazine that seeks to unite all those in the United States, Europe, and Latin America who defend the essential values of **democracy** and **freedom**, which are, in turn, the foundation upon which the Western world has been built and developed.

Western values are universal and are based on the concept that every individual is a **free** and **responsible** being, with inherent dignity and inalienable rights that precede any political system. Democracy, the rule of law, human rights, and individual freedom are the principles that uphold the West. Or perhaps we should call it Western civilization, **our civilization**.

The West is rooted in the classical Greco-Roman tradition, which has evolved through Christianity, benefited from the Enlightenment, and thrives through the free market economy. Therefore, the West is not a geographical expression but a **system of values**.

This month's attacks not only target a geographical space but also seek to weaken or destroy our way of life. They are attacks against our democracies and against our rights and freedoms, which are recognized, guaranteed, and protected in our value systems through **tolerance and pluralism**, in which very diverse political ideas can coexist and compete for political power.

The West's value system is not a conquest secured forever. Those who deny the concept of the individual, reject freedom, and resist development do not rest. Let us value and defend our way of life, our culture, our history, and our freedom. They are the only path to development and prosperity. If we stand united, they will **never defeat us**.

This month in AGENDA, we have excellent contributions from **prominent Western European leaders** who offer us their ideas and proposals from Argentina, Brussels (UE), México, Perú, Portugal, Spain, the United Kingdom, the USA, and Uruguay, inviting us to reflect on many current global and regional issues.

We open this month's edition with a must-read reflection by **Carlos Díaz-Rosillo** on NATO. Besides directing the Adam Smith Center for Economic Freedom, he has also served as **Acting Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs** at the Pentagon, where he was responsible for designing and implementing United States defense policy for the Western Hemisphere, Africa, the Middle East, and Europe (including NATO).

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

Carlos Díaz-Rosillo, Ph.D.
Director of the Adam Smith Center
for Economic Freedom (FIU).

Monthly reflection

United States and NATO: Trump was right

During his time in office, Donald Trump was a vocal critic of what he saw as a disproportionate burden that the United States carried in the context of NATO. Trump repeatedly stated that most NATO member were not meeting their defense spending commitments.

Trump argued that the United States was unfairly shouldering a greater financial burden by spending significantly more on defense compared to many of its European allies. This position reflected his "America First" approach to foreign policy, which sought to reassess and, in some cases, reject international agreements and commitments perceived as disadvantageous to American interests.

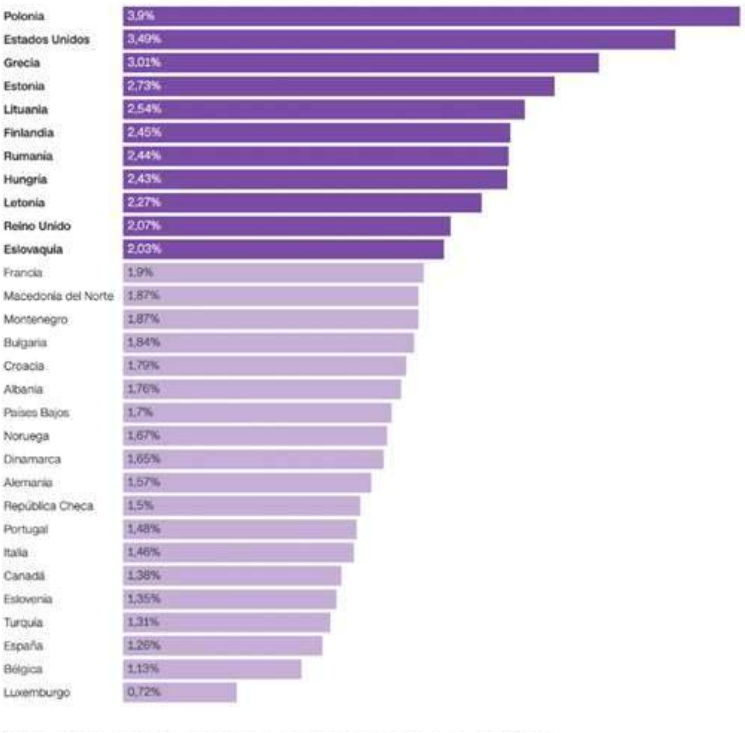
Trump's insistence that European countries increase their defense spending caused tensions within NATO and raised concerns about the stability and cohesion of the Alliance. Today, amid the conflict in Ukraine, time has proven that former President Trump is right, and the debate has resurfaced as the prospects of his return to the White House increases.

How is military spending contribution measured for NATO countries?

The NATO financing mechanism includes setting a common goal for each member country to contribute a certain percentage of its Gross Domestic Product to defense expending. This common goal was established at the NATO Summit in Wales in 2014 and was set at 2% of GDP. Additionally, it was agreed that at least 20% of this spending should be allocated to investments in military capacity and equipment development.

It is important to note that this 2% of GDP target is a goal, not a binding requirement. That means that although member countries commit to working towards this goal, there are no sanctions or coercive measures if a country does not reach this level of defense spending. Few member states have reached or exceeded the target, while others are still far from that goal.

Defense Investment by NATO Member Countries 2023



NATO has established a detailed definition of defense spending, which is periodically reviewed to adapt to changing needs. This spending encompasses a variety of payments made by a national government, specifically aimed at meeting the military needs of its armed forces, allies, and the Alliance itself.

It includes payments to the armed forces, retirement pensions for military and civilian personnel, and expenses associated with storing war reserves and maintaining military equipment.

In addition, operational costs, such as those related to military operations, peacekeeping missions, and humanitarian operations, are also included in this definition. According to the Alliance, research and development costs in military technology, including projects not leading to equipment production, are also part of defense spending.

The United States bears an unfair burden.

The turning point in NATO financing came in 2014 when Russia annexed Crimea. That year, only three members were above the 2% mark in military spending. By 2023, 11 out of 31 countries were already exhibiting meeting the defense expending goal set by the organization. However, the United States contributes more than two-thirds of the organization's total budget, approximately the proportion of its contribution to the war in Ukraine, which is still not a NATO member.

The issue has returned to the forefront of debates, as many European countries are finally increasing their investment in security, especially because a new Trump administration would necessarily demand a leading role for Europe in funding the Alliance. We are footing the bill for two conflicts on the other side of the world.

"The United States contributes more than two-thirds of the organization's total budget....."

These conflicts have clear strategic importance to the United States, but American citizens are beginning to wonder: for how long are we going to

continue to foot the bills? Policymakers must do a better job explaining why American engagement is essential to our national security.

NATO is undoubtedly much more than a purely financial commitment, but such a commitment is critical to the success of the Alliance and must reflect the basic principle that each member state must be willing to contribute resources in a way that is fair and respectful of established goals –goals to which all members agreed.

Another advantage of Europe fully assuming its responsibilities would be that, in a second term, Donald Trump could focus on other matters on the international agenda, such as paying greater attention to our neighborhood.

Greater support is needed in Latin America for governments that protect democratic institutions and free markets, which also constitutes an important geopolitical objective to prevent China's advancement in the region.

Now is the perfect time for the United States to start providing that support, not only for the region's benefit but also because it is absolutely necessary for our country's national security.

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Honorable Sir Alec Shelbrooke MP.

Member of Parliament for the Conservative Party in the United Kingdom. Elected to local government from 2004 to 2010 in the City of Leeds. Has been an MP since 2010. Served as a Minister of State for Defense Procurement, was the International Chairman of the Conservative Party, and is an Associate Chairman of the International Democrat Union. Has led the UK Delegation to the NATO Parliamentary Assembly since 2020 and has been Chairman of the Defense and Security Committee of the Assembly since 2021.

The threat of deep fakes on elections

The author highlights the importance of not taking democracy for granted and warns about the threat of deep fakes and AI-generated content that could influence electoral outcomes and destabilize governments or electoral processes.

Furthermore, he calls for global collaboration to address these challenges and to develop systems that detect and expose such manipulations.

Finally, he reflects on the current electoral year, with a record number of processes worldwide, and the possibility of an increase in attempts of fraud and manipulation.

Democracy can never be taken for granted. It is the most precious freedom that any individual can have. Yet, we often see many long-standing democracies worldwide believing that democracy is a robust and immovable system of government. Today, the stark reality of how people communicate and how content is generated means that the traditional view of a coup d'état being the biggest challenge to democratic freedom could be usurped by the illusion of informed choices that are being broadcast through social media platforms.

Deep fakes are now critical challenges to democracy . We have already seen examples of President Joe Biden of the USA allegedly leaving phone messages to voters in the New Hampshire Primary this year, telling them to boycott the vote. This incident was not immediately exposed as the fake it was and may have influenced many people's voting patterns.

Similar experiences have happened in the United Kingdom with alleged "secret recordings" of embarrassing conversations and arguments being "revealed". All of these are designed to undermine the ability of mainstream parties and politicians to campaign effectively and be seen as credible.

Perhaps the best and most obvious examples in popular culture of how easy it is to deep fake a voice recording is to simply go to YouTube and search for "Freddie Mercury, Let it Go (Frozen) AI. Freddie Mercury was the lead singer of the rock band Queen. He died in 1991. And yet, there

is a “recording” of him singing a song written decades after his death. There are countless “Freddie Mercury songs” that the singer has never performed.

This has allowed hostile actors to have an unprecedented ability to create content and cast doubt in voters' minds, enabling them to disrupt elections and create a destabilizing effect. The modern face of global warfare starts with the undermining

of democracies, the chaos of resentment, and the lack of faith in the ballot box. If our enemies can make our elections look corrupt, they are halfway to strengthening their own arm in the world order.

Regrettably, recent meetings I have had at leading academic institutions have revealed that the leading AI developers do not believe this is their issue to be concerned about. In a chilling parallel to the Manhattan Project, the view I received was that lawmakers must deal with the consequences of their work.

The world is fundamentally shifting rapidly in a wide variety of sectors and at historically astonishing speeds, no more so than in the field of renewable energy. The South American continent is developing to be one of the most vital geopolitical areas in the world as it exploits its huge resources of critical raw materials, especially in countries such as Chile, but also in the advanced areas of renewables such as Hydrogen production in Paraguay.

The geopolitical shifts will see the strategic importance of the Middle East for the world's energy demands, move to areas that are critical for future energy, and make South America a target. The continent must have strong and stable democracies. As Paulo Neves (MP of the Portuguese Republic) said in last month's edition, we have an "Agenda of Common Interests."

This agenda must be built fundamentally around the values of economic and individual freedoms and democracy. Yet, I fear that while we are concentrating on lifting trade barriers and striking new partnerships to advance technological developments to build the economies of countries, we may be blind to the threat that is almost certainly going to play a huge role in 2024, as around half of the world's population goes to the ballot box.

An agenda of common interest must have at its heart the key objective of strengthening democracy. My experience gained with NATO parliamentary Assembly visits has shown that we cannot look to those building the capability of AI deep fakes to police the content that is a product of their creations.

"An agenda of common interest must have at its heart the key objective of strengthening democracy....."

Therefore, we must all grasp these challenges together to develop and create the ability to maintain fair and free elections free from the hybrid attacks of misinformation and the hugely convincing deception that could turn the election results of all our countries on their heads. We must not be in a situation where unrest and resentment are built

through antagonizing online content fed to voters through complex algorithms, only to see the material discredited long after any remaining relevance.

Democracy is being taken for granted. Stable and solid trading arrangements are believed to create the conditions for a longing for free and fair elections. We are blindly letting the ability of deep fake engineering develop in front of our eyes without a policing system to stop it and expose it.

In 2024, the record year in the planet's history for people casting their democratic rights; we may also be witnessing the biggest attempted fraud and manipulations ever seen in democratic elections.

Álvaro Delgado

Former Secretary General of the Presidency of the Republic of Uruguay. Member of the National Party.

Uruguay: a new development model

The author - pre-candidate for the presidential elections scheduled for this year in Uruguay - analyzes the current situation of his country and the main challenges ahead if he gets elected.

Additionally, the author analyzes the achievements made by President Lacalle Pou during the past years and the new reforms that a new administration should undertake.

Finally, the author also analyzes the composition of the government's political coalition and why it will remain united for this electoral process.

Five years ago, President Lacalle Pou offered the citizens a change. A not-so-simple alternative to break away from 15 years of an exhausted model, especially represented by the last five years, during which the economy stagnated, over 50,000 jobs were lost, and insecurity kept growing. This alternative involved bringing together the efforts of five parties with different histories but capable of prioritizing Uruguay's need for change over any differences.

Against all odds, this "multicolored coalition" continues to govern today despite having gone through crises like COVID-19 and costly reforms like the pension system. The parties' maturity and the president's leadership show a possible political path in a highly polarized world.

Today, on the eve of a new electoral process from the National Party that aspires to continue leading the governing coalition, we offer the citizens to continue on this path. The only one that allowed us to go from destroying jobs to creating almost 80,000 new positions, from co-governing with corporations to facing reforms with leadership, from the unprecedented rise in crime to its gradual decline, from more taxes to fewer taxes, and from paternalism that underestimates people to "responsible freedom."

Of course, a new coalition government cannot be more of the same; it is about renewing the agenda and looking further ahead. What does this second phase consist of?

Economy

In economics, Uruguay emerged from stagnation, improved public accounts, halved inflation, and created jobs. The second phase consists of bringing inflation to 3% annually, continuing to create employment, and lowering production and living costs in Uruguay.

Security

In security, this government stopped, for the first time in four decades, the rise in crimes and began to decrease them gradually. . The second phase of transformation will renew the fight against drug trafficking and organized crime, which greatly affects our region.

Infrastructure

The first coalition government rever-

-sed a huge deficit in road infrastructure. The second phase of transformation must build the infrastructure for the development of the next two decades.

Education:

In education, the first government launched an educational transformation that had been talked about for decades without anyone addressing it. The second phase consists of strengthening, expanding, and modernizing the Uruguayan education system, preparing the country to face the challenges of the 21st century, and promoting inclusive, quality education oriented towards the future.

" renewing the agenda and looking further ahead..."

International relations

In this government, Uruguay spoke clearly again in international forums, moving away from shameful ties with dictatorships in the region. It also wor-

-ked intensively to open markets, achieving concrete successes. The second phase of transformations will consist of achieving a much more global Uruguay, much more open for people to come and go to live, work, or invest, achieving a country brand that becomes synonymous with stability and provides certainties for everyone.

In 2024, Uruguay must choose its destiny for the next five years. What is at stake is very important and is closely followed by the entire region. We are playing for the possibility of building a second phase of transformations that brings us closer to development. Still, we are also playing to continue showing the world a way of doing politics and governing. A serene but firm political path of construction defending the interests of the vast majority.

Christi Fraga

First female Mayor of Doral. Elected in 2022 after serving on the Miami-Dade County School Board for District 5. Previously, she held an 8-year term on the Doral City Council, including 3 years as vice-mayor.

The diverse tapestry of Doral and Miami-Dade County: a refuge for exiles and a beacon of hope

The author, Mayor of Doral (Miami-Dade), highlights the crucial role of the Venezuelan community in her city and draws a parallel between the experiences of Venezuelan and Cuban exiles. She refers to two groups of people who have sought refuge from totalitarian regimes within the freedom and opportunities provided by the United States.

Furthermore, the author discusses the current political situation in Venezuela and reviews the involvement of the Doral community in demonstrations against electoral manipulation and political repression in that country.

Finally, she calls for unity and collective action to support those seeking refuge from oppression, recalling lessons from history and a commitment to the values of freedom and democracy.

Miami-Dade County, with its bustling streets, vibrant culture, and diverse communities, stands as a shining example of the American Dream in action. At the heart of this rich tapestry lies the city of Doral, a melting pot of cultures and experiences that has been shaped by the stories of its residents, particularly those who have fled oppression and dictatorship in search of freedom and opportunity. Among them, the Venezuelan community has emerged as a driving force, drawing parallels to the Cuban exile experience that has long defined Miami's identity.

The exodus from Venezuela: echoes of Cuba's past.

The parallels between Venezuela and Cuba are striking, with both countries grappling with authoritarian regimes that have stifled freedom, prosperity, and basic human rights. Just as Cubans fled the Castro regime in search of refuge in the United States, Vene-

-zuelans have sought sanctuary from the oppressive rule of Nicolás Maduro and his predecessor, Hugo Chávez.

For many Venezuelans, Doral has become a beacon of hope a place where they can rebuild their lives, pursue their dreams, and embrace the freedoms denied to them in their homeland. The city's vibrant Venezuelan community has infused Doral with a rich tapestry of culture, cuisine, and entrepreneurship, shaping its identity as a diverse and multicultural hub in Miami-Dade County.

"For many Venezuelans, Doral has become a beacon of hope a place where they can rebuild their lives..."

As someone of Cuban heritage, I am deeply drawn to the Venezuelan community, understanding all too well the stories understanding all too

well the stories of struggles and sacrifices that come with fleeing dictatorship and seeking refuge in a foreign land. Like my Cuban family, Venezuelan families have brought with them a resilience and determination to thrive in the face of adversity—a spirit that has defined Miami's Cuban exile community for over six decades.

Shaping the growth of Doral: from refugees to citizens.

The impact of the Venezuelan diaspora on Doral's growth and development cannot be overstated. Many Venezuelan immigrants have not only established successful businesses but have also invested in the city's infrastructure, driving economic growth and revitalization in the process. Their entrepreneurial spirit and work ethic have transformed Doral into a thriving commercial hub, attracting investment and talent from around the world.

Moreover, as time has passed, many Venezuelan immigrants have gained legal status and citizenship, enabling them to fully participate in American society and exercise their rights as citizens. In doing so, they have become active members of the Doral community, contributing their voices and perspectives to local governance and civic life.

With the upcoming election in Venezuela looming large, the issue of political repression and electoral manipulation has once again come to the forefront. The Maduro regime's refusal to allow opposition leader

María Corina Machado to register her name for the ballot has sparked outrage among Venezuelans both at home and abroad. On April 6th, Venezuelan diasporas around the world, including in Doral, held protests condemning the regime's attempts to control the electoral process and silence dissent.

This year's election serves as a stark reminder of the ongoing struggle for democracy and freedom in Venezuela—a struggle that resonates deeply with Miami's Venezuelan community and all those who stand in solidarity with them. As citizens of the United States, many Venezuelan Americans in Doral view voting as not only a right but also a responsibility - a means to protect the freedoms and values that define America and ensure that the country does not veer off course.

"This year's election serves as a stark reminder of the ongoing struggle for democracy and freedom in Venezuela..."

Looking ahead: A brighter future through unity and action

As we reflect on the diversity and resilience of Miami-Dade County, it is clear that the stories of its residents - whether Cuban, Venezuelan, or from elsewhere - serve as a testament to the enduring power of the human spirit in the face of adversity. Together, we must continue to stand in solidarity with those who seek refuge from oppression and dictatorship, offering them a welcoming embrace and a pathway to a brighter future.

In the words of José Martí, the Cuban poet and patriot, "Liberty is the right of every man to be honest, to think and to speak without hypocrisy." As we strive to uphold these ideals in our own lives and in our communities, let us remember the lessons of history and the sacrifices of those who have come before us.

Through unity, resilience, and collective action, we can build a better tomorrow for all who call Miami-Dade County home.

In conclusion, the diversity of Miami-Dade County, particularly in Doral, is a testament to the strength and resilience of its residents. As we navigate the challenges of our time, let us draw inspiration from the stories of those who have fled oppression and dictatorship, finding refuge and hope in the promise of freedom and democracy. Together, we can shape a brighter future for Miami-Dade County and all who inhabit it.

Esteban González Pons

Deputy Secretary General of People's Party of Spain. Member of the Spanish Parliament. Vice President of the European People's Party. He has served as a Member of the European Parliament and Senator in Spain.

Gabriel Mato Androver

Secretary of International Policy of the People's Party of Spain. Member of the European Parliament (EPP).

Spain's political situation

The authors refer to the economic and institutional crisis that Spain has been experiencing in recent years, jeopardizing democratic agreements and social cohesion. They also analyze the resurgence of bipartisanship and the weakening of the new forces that had emerged in previous years.

Furthermore, they describe the corruption issues affecting the current government of the country, as well as the local and regional electoral challenges that will be faced by the ruling coalition in the coming months.

Finally, they predict a strengthening of the People's Party and a near comeback to the presidency of the Spanish government

In recent years, Spain has been immersed in an unprecedented process of institutional breakdown, threatening the democratic coexistence agreements that the Spanish society established during the transition period in the late 1970s.

This debacle has occurred gradually. Our country has not been immune to the changes and tensions occurring at a systemic level, and both the financial crisis of 2008 and the consequences of COVID-19 and the Russian invasion of Ukraine have affected the internal political lanscape in various ways. In this context, populism erupted in what was called the "new politics," the parties that aimed to revolutionize Spanish politics and change everything have practically disappeared from the political scene or have been reduced to a token representation.

The consolidation of bipartisanship was evident in the elections called unexpectedly on July 23 , 2023, a day after the Spanish Socialist Workers Party (PSOE) lost most of its territorial power in May's regional and local elections. After insufficient results and - for the first time in democracy - not allowing the most voted list to govern, the current Prime Minister has crossed every red line he had set for himself in exchange for a handful of votes to remain in power for a few more months.

Moreover, just as the legislature seemed to be getting underway (the government was finally formed at the end of November), a corruption case

affecting both the government and the main political party supporting it, the PSOE, has come to light. In this regard, information is being published implicating not only the President of the Government – through the business dealings of the President's spouse, who bears no resemblance to Caesar's wife – but also the President of the Congress of Deputies (the third authority of the State) and the last two Secretaries of Organization of the PSOE, along with numerous mid-level officials in different entities who have been implicated in this corrupt scheme that incubated during the worst moments of the pandemic, taking advantage of the emergency and vulnerability of Spanish society. A society confined to their homes at the expense of a succession of illegal declarations of states of alarm.

Therefore, the country's current situation is one of heightened tension. We must take into account the attempt to subjugate the rule of law to political power through interferences in the judicial system by the government, with the nullification of certain appointments due to their proximity to political power or their lack of professionalism, such as the President of the Council of State, the promotion of former minister Dolores Delgado, or, for the first time in democracy, the lack of suitability attributed by the General Council of the Judiciary to an Attorney General.

All of them demonstrate the attempt to undermine the separation of powers outlined by Montesquieu in Spain. It is also worth noting that the appointments of individuals closely linked to the Socialist Party are in organizations such as the Center for Sociological Research or many key state-owned companies. Most of these appointments go against all ethics and aesthetics.

In the same vein, the government insists on passing an amnesty law for those accused in connection with the events that strained national unity in Catalonia in 2017. A law that is clearly unconstitutional but which the PSOE has pushed through using legal subterfuge and a passage through the Congress of Deputies of dubious legality.

Beyond our borders, Europe is also beginning to realize the type of leadership Pedro Sánchez is exercising in Spain. This leadership flirts with maximum polarization and the country's division for mere political gain.

With the Galician elections, where the governing party has been relegated to a third position due to a meager result, and the upcoming electoral appointments - in April, the elections in the "País Vasco," in May the Catalan elections, and June 9 the European elections - a period of interregnum is expected, with a succession of dismal results for the PSOE, along with the siege by corruption, placing the country at the starting line in terms of political action and foreign influence of an executive tied and subdued by its partners.

"the type of leadership Pedro Sánchez is exercising in Spain. This leadership flirts with maximum polarization and the country's division for mere political gain..."

Thus, Spain is going through a period of turmoil and uncertainty where suspicion about Socialist leaders grows daily as judicial investigations expand. The question is how long new schemes and their ramifications corner this government will last, or how long the President of the Government of Spain will be able to put his personal interest before the needs of a country whose society has repeatedly stated that it does not want him.

Spanish people are above political noise and expect a government that addresses their real day-to-day problems, which include democratic regeneration, restoring coexistence and reducing tension, economic recovery, and tackling unemployment (Spain remains the country with the highest unemployment rate in the European Union), supporting families and strategic sectors, and ultimately ensuring that all citizens live better and in freedom.

The People's Party has ample experience in pulling Spain out of the most complicated situations (where the PSOE has always put it), and we are prepared to do so once again as soon as Pedro Sánchez adheres to the anti-corruption standards with which he came to power through a motion of no confidence in 2018. Socialism can also be overcome. Spain knows it; Argentina does, too. Spain and the Spanish people have no time to waste.

Federico Pinedo

Argentine Sherpa to the G20.
President of the Argentine Senate (2015-2019).
He has served as a Member of the Argentine National Congress for three legislative terms.

The G20 from the South

The author emphasizes the need to address global issues with a comprehensive and collaborative approach, especially in the context of the world's transformation into a "global village." The role of the G20 as a forum for addressing systemic issues such as economic crises, pandemics, climate change, and the digital revolution is highlighted, sidelining national rivalries in favor of joint solutions.

He also analyzes geopolitical rivalries and their effects on global focus and international cooperation.

Finally, the author describes the position of the new Argentinian government in this global context and the objectives it has set for the G20 meeting that will be celebrated this year in Brazil.

It is necessary to see the village's problems comprehensively to solve them When the world became a village - because of the Internet and communications- itrequired building a way to face the problems of all countries (systemic economic crises, pandemics, climate change, digital revolution, minimum levels of dignity). This had to be done with a global perspective and not a partial one, integrating the differences between one another and not emphasizing national confrontations. Such was the action of the G20, which in 2008 resolved the crisis of American mortgages that spread throughout the planet.

This concept of the G20 implies the ability to postpone or temporarily set aside rivalries between countries to analyze everyone's problems. In the beginning, this worked well because the most serious issues – security - did not interfere with each other since there was a dominant military superpower in a regime that some called unilateralism. Russia's invasion of Ukraine, which was a decisive attempt to change the post-war world order (which gave the world a period of local wars - but no world war for 70 years), disrupted that status quo. Now, the rivalries of war override diagnoses and solutions to collective problems. War postpones everything: development, investments, job creation, healthcare, energy sources, poverty reduction. This is noticeable in the G20.

Russia claims to be at war with the G7 and NATO. It also says that the future belongs to the BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa) -a group that Argentina decided not to join, and that Iran ultimately joined.

Additionally, it says that the multilateral institutions that govern us are a thing of the past. Other BRICS claim they are not part of Russia's or China's political agenda.

On the other hand, Iran attacks Israel and the West. The G7 attacks Russia and China, maintaining a certain distance from those clashes and seeking to be part of the solution to conflicts, but sharpening its strategic competition with the United States, which depends on the upcoming elections but will not withdraw from the world.

In that context, Brazil's G20 puts general issues on the table: the fight against hunger and poverty, sustainable development and transitional energy, and new global governance. While Brazil's leadership questions Israel more than Russia and Iran, its government seeks to maintain diplomatic space for these issues to be addressed. At the same time, no one knows the political situation at the presidents meeting in November, just a few days after the American election.

The new Argentine government shares the Western occidental values but is responsible for building its presence in the South. Its local priorities coincide with global ones. It wants to be part of the solution and not of the problem. To end poverty, it is destroying what creates it massively: inflation; and to end inflation and poverty, it believes that macroeconomic balance, institutional

quality, rule of law, respect for people's freedom and human rights, market openness, a rules-based world, predictability, are needed to create decent work.

Argentina, along with countries in its region, can be a formidable export platform for transitional energy (gas), minerals for new mobility (lithium and copper), affordable food of all kinds, knowledge-based services, and tourism. All these global markets will provide food and energy security and mitigate climate change. All these global markets will dramatically change an economy that has been closed until now, doubling food production, increasing mining tenfold, boosting foreign trade, and creating more jobs.

Within a decade, Argentina will be very different from what it is today. In the G20, we will be a constructive force and seek to collaborate as much as possible to address global issues and limit confrontations that worsen them.

Alexandre Damasceno da Silva Poço

Member of the Portuguese Parliament (PSD), Vice President of the Parliamentary Group of the Social Democratic Party, and President of the Social Democratic Youth of Portugal (JSD).

Political change in Portugal

The author explains the political change that occurred in Portugal after the recent elections, which saw the center-right emerge victorious, sending the traditional center-left into opposition.

Furthermore, the author discusses the challenges that the Social Democratic Party will face in governing after almost nine years of socialist government, the reforms that need to be carried out in the country, and the expectations of society.

The author also addresses the role of the new right, the need for responsible political agreements, and the impact of the youth vote.

The recent elections marked a clear willingness of the Portuguese people to change policies and government. The Democratic Alliance (AD) - the center-right alliance between the Social Democratic Party (PSD) and CDS (Center Democratic and Social Party) - won, and the PSD and Luís Montenegro (president of the PSD and current Prime Minister of Portugal) will now have the opportunity to govern after almost nine years of socialist governments. It hasn't been easy since 2015, but this is a great opportunity for the Social Democratic Party. We must be able to capitalize on this opportunity, reform the country, and improve the living situation of every Portuguese citizen, giving the new generations a future in Portugal.

The new framework is difficult and complex, but these conditions emerged from the elections. The government must take the initiative, be proactive, and be willing to solve problems. The opposition forces, both on the left (Socialist Party) and on the right (Chega - a party of the radical right that has quadrupled its seats in Parliament reaching 48), will have to be responsible and committed without implying a loss of identity or adherence to the government's program. Everyone needs a sense of responsibility and the notion that the country is above partisan politics for the good of the country and everyone.

I would like to point out that once again, the support of young people for our ideas was clear, with a clear victory for the AD among young people aged 18 to 34 (28% of the youth vote), while the PS plummeted to third place among young voters (only 13% of young people voted for PS). Currently, Portuguese youth vote for and clearly prefer center-right policies.

The inauguration of the XXIV Constitutional Government of Portugal opens a new chapter in the country's political history. This change, led by the Social Democratic Party (PSD) under the leadership of Luís Montenegro, reflects not only a transformation in the dynamics of power but also in the perspectives and challenges that Portugal will face in the coming years. That is why I say that in the context of marked parliamentary fragmentation, responsibility will have to be a motto for everyone.

The distribution of seats in Parliament will require the PSD to have a great capacity for dialogue with all parties so that political decisions can progress. The government will have to take the initiative and be proactive in its actions and initiatives, as well as be able to negotiate and reach agreements with other political forces. Fluctuating alliances and the need to support important legislative initiatives will test everyone's capacity for commitment, dialogue, and responsibility. The great challenge will, therefore, be to achieve a majority in Parliament for decisions that affect the lives of all Portuguese citizens and, at each moment, see who is against or in favor of those measures.

Furthermore, the new government has a dual responsibility: to reform the country, the state, and the economy to make the country more competitive, fair, and developed, and at the same time, to solve and respond to the urgent demands of various professional groups that the previous PS government failed to address. The need to implement new measures for education, initiate negotiations with security forces, and implement an emergency plan in the

health sector to ensure greater access to healthcare are immediate priorities that require attention and decisive action.

In summary, the new PSD Government, led by Luís Montenegro, is at a critical moment in Portugal's political history. The ability to successfully navigate the complex parliamentary dynamics, respond to the expectations and demands of citizens, and address economic, social, and health challenges will determine not only this government's viability but also Portugal's long-term future. The key to success will be to work, not for propaganda, but with real results in people's lives, and to adopt a dialogue stance with everyone to move the country forward. A political change was expected; now we must fulfill that change by reforming the country and ensuring the future of Portugal.

Alex Rizo

Florida House of Representatives 2020-2024; Choice & Innovation Subcommittee Chair. Chairman, Miami-Dade Republican Party.

Teaching of communism to Florida's youth

The author reflects on the shift in perception of communism in the United States from the 1970s and 1980s to the present day, highlighting an increase in acceptance among youth.

Representative Rizo, son of Cuban immigrants, contextualizes his perspective within his personal experience and against the backdrop of the Cold War, noting a significant change in the view of communism, especially among young people, who now see it more as an economic principle than as an oppressive form of government.

Finally, he emphasizes the importance of recent legislation in Florida, which aims to teach students about the dangers and lessons of communism, emphasizing the need to understand history in order to avoid repeating past mistakes.

Growing up in Miami in the 1970s and 1980s, the son of Cuban immigrants sent to the U.S. to escape the Castro regime's Marxist-Leninist ideology, I was well-versed in the ills of Communism. In fact, the Cold War was still ever-existent in my formative years, with all the usual headlines of the Soviet Union and its surrogates filling the evening news: proxy wars, invasions of sovereign countries, and, of course, an endless stream of refugees risking their lives to escape communist oppression and find freedom (whether over the Berlin wall, seeking asylum in free countries, or navigating the Florida Straits on makeshift rafts). Simply put, my gene-

-ration and those that preceded me generally viewed Communism as an oppressive form of government, one that overwhelmingly was frowned upon in this country.

Since the end of the Cold War roughly thirty years ago, there has been a startling change in the view of Communism as a form of governance by the youth of America: polls of college students show an approximate 35 percent favorable view for it, be it the economic principle or the managing paradigm for a government, which in my view are one and the same. It is no coincidence that there is a favorable view among our youth as Communism is mostly taught in schools as an economic principle, and for those growing up in a World where mutually assured destruction is a phrase that is seldom used, it is no wonder that we see Communism's increased popularity. Let us also notice that Communism has now been radically changed by the Chinese government into a hy-

-brid now combining the best of Capitalism to make it both appealing to the governed and profitable to the governing.

"Let us also notice that Communism has now been radically changed by the Chinese government into a hybrid, now combining the best of Capitalism to make it both appealing ..."

During this past Legislative Session, I was honored to co-sponsor and support at its many stops, HB 1349 entitled "History and Instruction of Political and Socioeconomic Systems," which, among other things, directs the Florida Department of Education to devise and implement age-appropriate curriculum for the instruction of Communism to public school students in Florida. The topics will be myriad, no doubt, and will be based on facts, anecdotes, and history.

The bill ultimately passed both the House of Representatives, as did its Senate counterpart and is now on its way to the Governor for signature into law.

Legislation like this is a necessary tool in teaching the youth of America the perils and pitfalls of the past. Like so many other times in human history, the experiment that has been Communism has failed due to its overwhelming control of human core values of freedom and self-worth. Its imposition of onerous and soul-wrenching obstacles for that most basic human tenet, that is, the freedom to live without an oppressive state, is at its core what is its downfall (and let us not forget the over 100 million lives lost under the Communist heel in the 100 years since it first took hold after the Russian Revolution).

Students must make up their own minds about what is best for themselves, their families, and their communities, and only through education can we achieve the goal of a population of critical thinkers who have an unobstructed view of the past to help guide them on the future.

As a society, we have endeavored to teach some aspects of human history so that they may not be repeated due to the detriment and inhumanity that they brought as a result. The history of human slavery, both in America and the rest of the world, is one such example. Another is the Holocaust in Europe in the 1930s and 1940s. Both examples have not been witnessed by Americans and are universally vilified as gross human conduct that can never be allowed to scar us as a society. It is my hope that the teaching of the history of Communism will serve the same purpose and offer the same outcome. As the famous quote says, "Those who do not study history are doomed to repeat it."

Luis Galarreta

Member of the Andean Parliament and former President of the Chamber of Deputies of Peru.

Historical reflections on Peru: political and economic trajectory

In the following article, the author starts his analysis from the context of Peru's bicentennial of independence and reflects on the country's foundational principles and its political and economic evolution over the last two centuries.

Likewise, he analyzes how various governments and political movements have impacted the country's development. He highlights the importance of maintaining economic stability and openness to private investment, emphasizing poverty reduction and monetary stability achievements.

Finally, he presents the country's current situation , along with the challenges that lie ahead.

In recent years, the various countries in our region have celebrated the bicentennial of our independence. In the case of Peru, it was on July 28th, 2021. On that date, we commemorated the country's proclamation of independence by General José de San Martín. In Peru, this December 9th will mark the bicentennial of the famous "Battle of Ayacucho," which took place on the "Quinua Pampa" of that beautiful city. It is said that this battle ended the wars of independence in South America. Many myths and somewhat inaccurate narratives about independence and Spain have also been generated, which we will address on another occasion without chauvinism or complexity.

Two hundred years have passed since all these efforts and sacrifices of thousands of people who sought independence and the birth of new republics in our region. It is worth asking how close or far we are from the foundational principles that inspired our liberators and patriarchs. And especially from the thoughts, ideals, and dreams of the first government ("Junta de Gobierno") and the first Constituent Congress.

Like many countries in the region, Peru has experienced numerous military governments and short democratic periods. Last century, we had a lot of populism (except for the years 1959 to 1961, when we had a brief gust of economic freedom with Pedro Beltrán as Minister of Finance) and a terrible dose of communism with the agrarian reform and the revolutionary government of the armed forces led by General Velasco Alvarado (1968 - 1975), who at the time proclaimed: "peasant, the landowner will no longer feed off your poverty," and handed over land to small farmers without capital o moderniza-

tion. Of course, the system failed. If only Velasco were alive to see today that agro-exportation is the engine of Peruvian growth, reducing the poverty gap.

"If only Velasco were alive to see today that agro-exportation is the engine of Peruvian growth, reducing the poverty gap...."

After the communist revolutionary fever, Peru experienced in the 1980s the golden age of unprecedented populism. During those years, we isolated ourselves from the financial world, with inflation reaching 7,649% annually in 1990, losing international reserves each year, a negative trade balance, attempts to nationalize banking, and, as if that weren't enough, a growing group of terrorist murderers, almost putting the state in check.

What happened to that almost-failedc ountry? In the 2000s, the GDP grew steadily at almost 6% for several years, inflation remained in single digits, and international reserves exceeded $75 billion. After the almost-destructive populist fever that almost destroyed Peru, the structural reforms of the 1990s came, based fundamentally on the 1993 Political Constitution of Peru approved in a referendum. The economic regime was the clearest and most important, where the state went from entrepreneurial to regulatory.

Currently, Peru's economic regime is based on principles of economic freedom and free enterprise, with a strong emphasis on promoting private investment and competition. The country has adopted a policy of economic openness and has signed numerous free trade agreements (FTAs) with countries around the world. This has facilitated access to new markets for Peruvian exports and promoted the economy's competitiveness.

Both national and foreign investments are treated equally.

Peru has sought to maintain a stable macroeconomic policy, including fiscal discipline (although there have been minor exceptions during the pandemic) and monetary stability. The Central Reserve Bank of Peru has absolute autonomy established in the Constitution. When I chaired the Economy Committee, I verified that the enemies of freedom do not rest. Since the 2000s, they have wanted to return to the interventionist model. Still, there have been more of us who understood the need to defend progress because Peru managed to reduce poverty from 59% to 20% (it rose to 26% during the pandemic).

Considering that the Peruvian political scene has been tumultuous in recent years, marked by instability and polarization (we have had six presidents in almost 7 years, including current President Dina Boluarte), monetary stability remains firm, the "Sol" is a currency that has not been devalued, even when Pedro Castillo assumed the presidency, and everything shows that political instability has stopped. Investment conditions are recovering, with new infrastructure projects such as the great port of Chancay.

I firmly believe that all efforts made to pacify the country, grow economically, and reduce the poverty of Peruvians bring us much closer to the principles that inspired our founding patriarchs. Doing the opposite would distance us from them. A different case is our brother country of Venezuela, as I do not believe that the foundational principles of the great Liberator Francisco de Miranda (the only South American whose name appears on the *Arc de Triomphe*) were for his compatriots, 200 years later, to undergo the largest exodus in the region.

Humberto Collado

Senior Program Manager at the International Republican Institute (IRI) with 17 years of experience in democracy and governance work in Latin America, the Middle East, and North Africa. He established IRI's programming in Brazil focused on monitoring disinformation and countering violence against women in politics. Previously, he led the interagency coordination effort for Cuba policy at the U.S. Department of State.

Contours of influence: PRC's expansion in Latin America

The author highlights the complexity of Chinese influence in Latin America and the importance of the United States government taking steps to address these challenges. He uses three case studies to illustrate the various impacts of Chinese regional investments. He describes China's influence over Panama, Ecuador, and Brazil through investments and trade agreements.

Finally, he discusses the strategy of the People's Republic of China to trap countries in predatory loans to influence their policies and secure favorable votes in international organizations.

The People's Republic of China's (PRC) influence in Latin America continues to expand, a topic extensively covered in international media. This attention is warranted because the PRC's involvement in the region varies significantly from country to country. While the overall objectives, such as seeking influence and access to resources, are standard fare in international politics, the specific impact of the PRC's economic investments differs in each case. Three case studies illustrate the way in which PRC investments come with strings very much attached.

Beginning with Panama, the country has maintained a democratic system since 1989 and holds significant strategic importance for the U.S. government due to the critical economic and military infrastructure provided by the Panama Canal. Although Panama has controlled the canal since 1999, it remains a primary protection target for the U.S. Southern Command.

The PRC also recognizes the strategic significance of Panama and has made substantial investments in the country, not only in infrastructure but also through cultural exchanges and active diplomatic engagement, with its ambassador playing a prominent role in Panamanian politics.

The PRC's efforts in Panama have yielded considerable success. Panama joined Beijing's Belt and Road Initiative in 2018, a year after the PRC successfully persuaded Panama to sever diplomatic relations with Taiwan, making it the first nation in the Western Hemisphere to embrace Beijing's extensive infrastructure development strategy. As of 2022, Pa-

nama has received $2.5 billion in investments from China since 2005, marking it the largest investment recipient in Central America, with additional investments following Panama's establishment of official ties with the PRC in 2017. Despite Panama's history of democracy, its institutions are strained, with concerns about government transparency leading to widespread protests. The prevalence of corruption, persistent inflation, and economic stagnation further expose Panama to continued entrenchment by the PRC.

Ecuador is notably more vulnerable to democratic backsliding, but not only due to the influence of the PRC. Ecuador struggles with organized crime involvement in elections and political parties, as well as the legacy of former president Rafael Correa's authoritarianism. Despite being a current ally of the U.S. government, Ecuador seeks to strengthen ties through trade and partnership, yet it struggles to find a receptive audience.

Currently, the U.S. is failing to rise to the occasion, allowing the PRC to exploit this situation. On February 7, Ecuador's National Assembly ratified a free trade agreement between Ecuador and the PRC. This agreement grants preferential access to 99% of Ecuador's exports to China, particularly in the agricultural and agro-industrial sectors. While the deal is expected to significantly boost non-oil exports by several billion dollars within the next decade, it also allows the entry of Chinese waste into the country, posing challenges for waste management. This waste includes pharmaceutical products, electrical components, batteries, scrap metal, plastics, glass, and contaminated liquids.

"the U.S. is failing to rise to the occasion, allowing the PRC to exploit this situation...."

Given Ecuador's current lack of sufficient infrastructure for waste management, this agreement exacerbates the situation.

Brazil's relationship with the PRC has been fluid in recent years. While the public-facing posture of the Bolsonaro administration seemed hostile, dependency on the PRC grew in practice. According to Lin Hua, an associate researcher at the Institute of Latin American Studies of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, from 2007 to 2022, China directed a cumulative investment of $71.6 billion towards 235 projects in Brazil. Moreover, in 2022, the number of Chi-

-na's significant investment endeavors in Brazil rose to 32, marking a 14 percent increase compared to the previous year.

This relationship became much more overt and active under the presidency of Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva. Lula traveled to Beijing and Shanghai accompanied by a substantial entourage consisting of business leaders, multiple state governors, and over 40 congress members, including Rodrigo Pacheco, the president of the Senate. The purpose of the visit was to mend the bilateral relationship, which had been strained during Bolsonaro's contentious four-year tenure. Lula's 2023 visit to Washington was notably more low-profile.

China seeks to entrap countries in predatory loans whenever possible, aiming to influence their internal and external policies to advance the PRC's objectives regarding access to resources, relations with Taiwan, and securing favorable international votes

through governing bodies such as the OAS and the UN. There are numerous reasons for the PRC's growing engagement with regional organizations. These organizations serve as useful windows into Latin American politics and diplomatic predispositions, as well as valuable platforms to communicate the PRC's policy priorities for the region.

The U.S. government must identify opportunities to address these challenges by actively engaging in the region. While acknowledging the deserving attention and support of countries like Ukraine and Israel, the U.S. can also pursue self-serving efforts that benefit its interests. This includes promoting trade and increasing support for anti-corruption measures and journalism training aimed at countering the PRC's efforts and practices in the region.

Juan Salafranca

Deputy Secretary-General and Director of Foreign Policies of the European People's Party Group in the European Parliament.

The EU ahead of the upcoming European elections.

The author analyzes the upcoming European parliamentary elections, reviewing the last legislative period's main milestones and the challenges posed by the current global context for Europe.

Furthermore, the author explains the special electoral system of this regional Parliament, the possible outcome suggested by the main polls, and the expectations for the new parliamentarians who will be elected.

From June 6th to 9th, 2024, elections will be held across the 27 member states of the European Union to select the members of the European Parliament who will make up the X legislature. This institution began with the first democratic elections in 1979. Every five years, Europeans are called to the polls to choose their representatives in the Eurochamber, the only European institution whose members are directly elected to represent 450 million citizens.

For these elections, there is no single electoral regime; instead, they are governed by the electoral system of each country. While significant progress has been made in European integration, there is no single model

or transnational list where citizens could vote for the same candidates in different countries of the Union. So once again, the lists will be exclusively national but recognize the right to vote and be elected for Union nationals in the country where they live, even if it differs from their nationality.

The number of members of Parliament is decided before each election and has increased from the current 705 to 720 in June, and according to the Treaty, it cannot exceed 751 (750 plus its president). The distribution of seats by country follows a "political" criterion of population that tends to over-represent small countries and under-represent larger, more populated ones. Thus with 80 million inhabitants, Germany elects 96 MEPs, while Malta and Luxembourg, with half a million each, elects 6 MEPs each.

The June election marks the end of a tumultuous and eventful five-year period. The European Union is accustomed to managing crises, so-

-metimes taking steps back, perhaps to gain momentum, but the current legislature has exceeded all expectations and predictions. For the first time, a woman was elected President of the European Commission, German Ursula von der Leyen, who is now also a candidate for re-election. The unprecedented withdrawal of a member state, the United Kingdom, had to be dealt with. The EU, a privileged club, had never experienced one of its members wanting to leave. Still digesting Brexit, the colossal pandemic that changed everything had to be faced in terms of the cost in human lives and economic and social destruction. After the pandemic, large-scale war returned to the heart of the old continent following Russia's illegal and unjustified invasion of Ukraine, and later, another crisis erupted with the war in Gaza following Hamas' terrorist attack on October 7th against Israel.

Additionally, various attempts to put the house in order by promoting le-

-gislation respectful of the planet through the Green Deal, digital transformation, economic recovery after the pandemic through recovery and resilience funds, and control of external borders through the migration pact have not been without controversy and have added significant doses of division among the political families driving the community project and will be the great focal point of the electoral campaign. At the same time, the harmful effects of these policies have generated discontent in economic and social sector, such us the influen-

-tial agricultural sector, which fuel populism and extremism so that all polls point to an increase in radical and anti-European options.

Fear of war within EU territory in its various forms - armed conflict, hybrid war - together with evidence of Russian interference threats, have raised all alarms, emphasizing the need to strengthen security and defense, tasks until then entrusted to the Atlantic Alliance, capitalized on the trust in U.S. military power.

A victory for Donald Trump in the year-end elections could undermine the Atlantic link and has put governments and public opinion in EU countries on alert, also divided between those who see a risk of an almost imminent war scenario on the continent and those who consider that the threat should not generate additional tension in society.

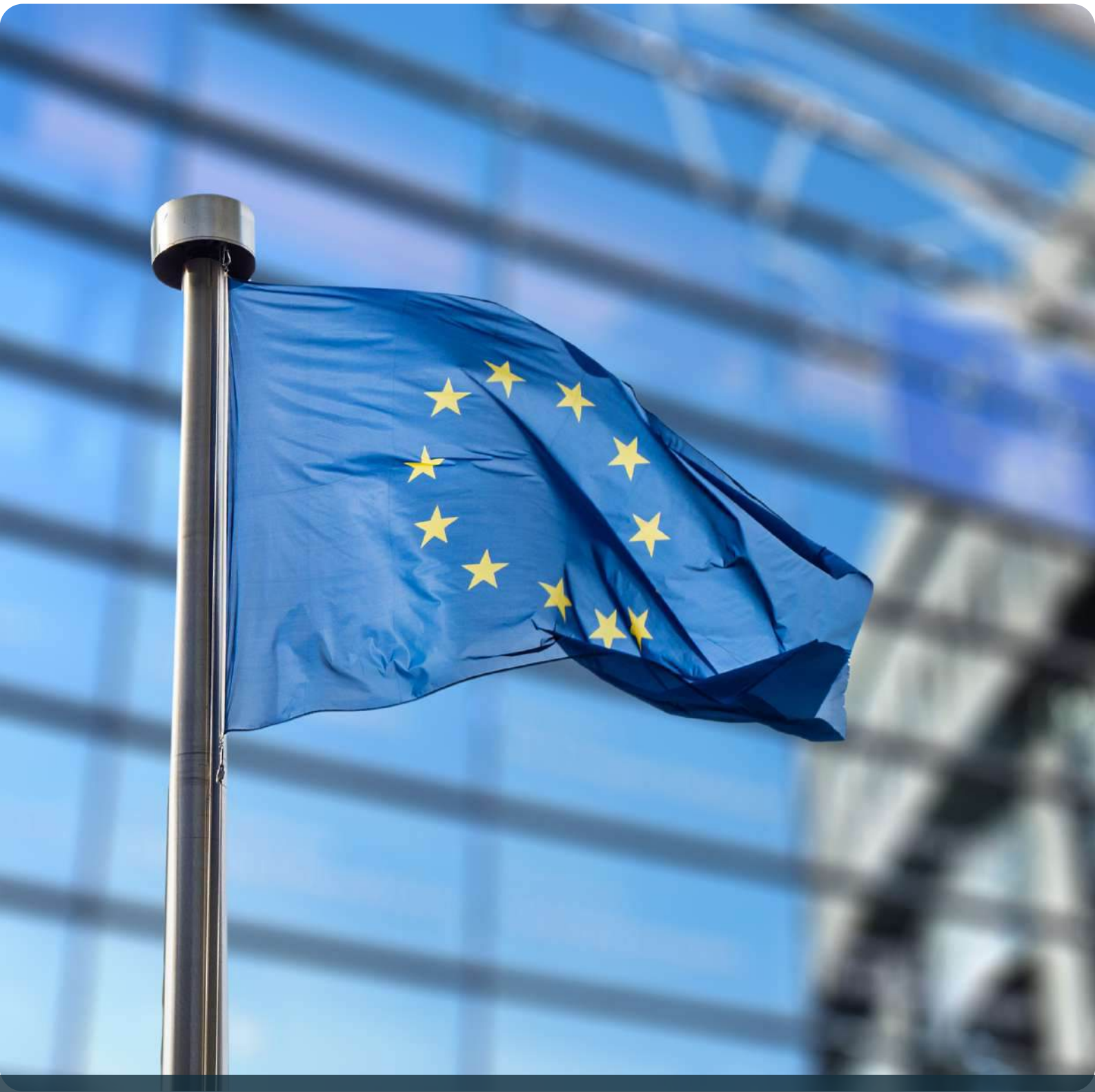
"A victory for Donald Trump in the year-end elections could undermine the Atlantic link..."

All polls predict a clear victory for the European People's Party, the majority force since 1999, followed by the Socialists at a distance. In contention for third place are liberals, conservatives, and the more Eurosceptic right-wing. The Greens will pay dearly for their lack of attachment to reality and for having promoted an environmental agenda that has left much of society behind. However, the fact that the Chamber, where European sovereignty resides, lacks a clear majority requires constant dialogue to reach agreements.

The next legislature must be one of competitiveness, employment, and economic growth, abandoning un-

-attainable pipe dreams and betting that the European dream of integration will make prosperity and well-being a reality for citizens within the space of freedom, security, and justice that inspired the founding fathers.

It will not be easy because balances in Europe never were, and it cannot be forgotten that the birth of the EU originated from the need to relieve future generations of the scourge of war that had repeatedly struck the battered European continent on a large scale throughout history.



Mariana Gómez del Campo

Federal Deputy, Secretary of International Affairs of the National Executive Committee of the National Action Party (PAN), and President of the ODCA (Organization of Democratic Parties of America).

Origin of the opposition coalition in Mexico

The author describes the political-electoral alliance that has been formed in Mexico between the National Action Party (PAN), the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI), and the Party of the Democratic Revolution (PRD) to compete together in the same coalition in the general elections on June 2nd.

Due to the number of national, regional, and district positions that will be elected in this electoral process, it is considered one of the largest and most important in Mexico's history.

Furthermore, the author indicates what, in her opinion, is at stake in these elections for the present and future of her country.

Three naturally distinct political parties of different origins and undoubtedly antagonistic, the National Action Party (PAN), the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI), and the Party of the Democratic Revolution (PRD), are now forming a political alliance. They will compete together on June 2nd in the largest and most important elections in Mexico's history, involving all 32 federal entities of the country.

98.9 million citizens will go to the polls to cast their votes and choose those who will occupy 20,708 positions both at the federal and local levels. In addition to the presidency of the Republic, 9 governorships, 500 deputy positions, and 128 senatorial seats of the Congress of the Union - among others - will be elected.

This alliance arises from the need for a coalition government project in which political parties and civil society jointly make appropriate decisions to pursue the common good through genuine dialogue. Under this principle, a new way of politics in Mexico materialized. As a result of a legal and transparent process that began with the registration of candidates, followed by obtaining support signatures, surveys, polls, and forums, the candidate for the presidency of the Republic of the coalition "Strength and Heart for Mexico" Xóchitl Gálvez, was chosen.

The current government has been a failure in every sense. The participation of organized crime has permeated the country to such an extent that 29 candidates from all political parties have already been killed, and it is expected that the figure will exceed the crimes that occurred during the 2021 mid-term elections.

"The current government has been a failure in every sense...to such an extent that 29 candidates from all political parties have already been killed..."

For this reason, from the PAN, we have made a respectful call to the international community to participate in electoral observation. Their collaboration will be fundamental to defending democracy and helping us maintain the electoral process's transparency or point out any illegal acts that may occur at the polls on election day.

The ruling party is destroying Mexico; the damage that authoritarianism and the whims of one man have done - and continue to do - is incalculable. For this reason, after listening to the citizens, concerned and occupied by the future of our country, and agreeing on a common objective, PAN, PRD, and PRI together, with civil society, will achieve the presidency of the Republic this 2024, as well as the head of government of Mexico City, and the majority of deputies and senators in the Congress of the Union.

Marcela Prieto-Botero

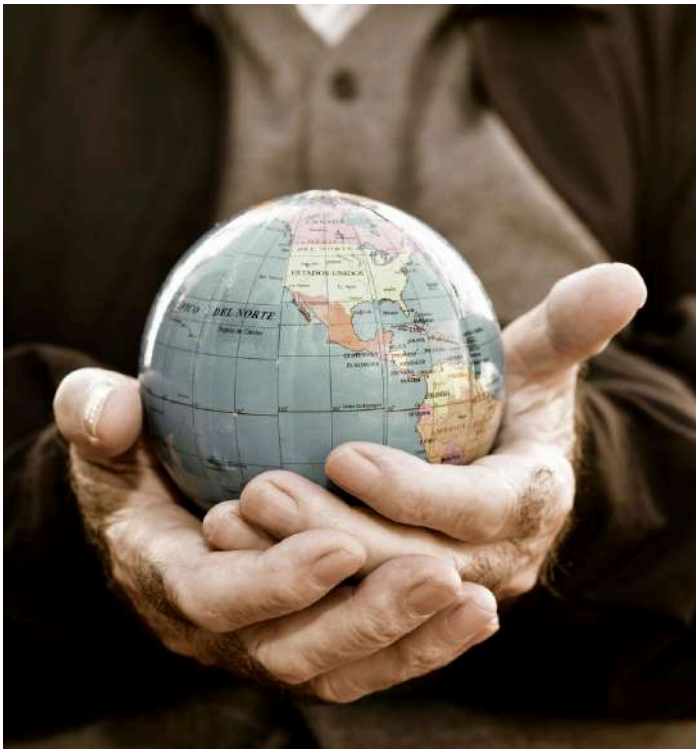
CEO Vision Americas International.
LAC Advisory Council Member, IRI (International Republican Institute)

The cost of courage

The author highlights the courage and struggle of the Venezuelan people in the face of political and economic adversity, as well as the sacrifice of leaders like María Corina Machado for their persistence in defending democracy.

Furthermore, she criticizes the lack of attention to real human problems in political debates and calls on the international community to support leaders who defend democracy in Venezuela.

In the same way, she emphasizes the need to recognize Venezuela's geopolitical role and take measures to uphold the will of the Venezuelan people.



The history is built upon stories of brave men and women who have fought for their goals and ideals. On this occasion, it is pertinent to pay tribute to the Venezuelan people who, despite adversity, continue to strive forward. Likewise, to political leaders like María Corina Machado for persisting and standing firm in the fight.

María is a 32-year-old woman forced to leave her country due to political instability and lack of opportunities. She states that she has been able to rebuild her life and find stable work in the USA, "but the longing and concern for my family in Venezuela remain a daily challenge." "I crossed the border from Venezuela with my 5-year-old daughter, seeking a better life. It was a difficult journey, but worth it for the opportunity to give her a better education and future." Gabriel, 35, is a nurse who could not find work in his native Caracas due, as he indicates, to the economic crisis. "Here in the USA, I have been able to resume my career and financially support my family in Venezuela." Lucia, 42, was forced to leave Venezuela due to violence and political harassment. According to her own words, she assures that "here in the USA, I have found refuge and a community that has supported me in my struggle for justice and democracy in my country."

These are some illustrative examples of brave individuals willing to sacrifice their lives to escape an increasingly overwhelming, repressive, and bleak situation. But they are testimonies that are continuously repeated among the masses of immigrants who daily seek to cross the border between Mexico and the USA. The Venezuelan population is the second

largest nationality - after the Mexican - seeking opportunities, work, justice, and freedoms to individually progress and provide their families physical and/or economic stability.

Those of us who defend liberal democracy must be aware of the fortune we have in living in countries where we can freely express our political opinions, where human rights are respected, fair trials are conducted based on the rule of law, and where there are guarantees and incentives for creativity, entrepreneurship, and individual initiative, and where both intellectual property and private property are respected.

In liberal democracies, many people are not aware of what it means for Venezuelans to live each day as if it were the last because tomorrow is uncertain. Often societies in the so-called "first world" engage in debates that only affect minority groups of the population fighting to reclaim rights that have nothing to do with the true challenges that humanity is facing. I do not mean to disregard the importance of the struggles of minorities. Still, do criticize the waste of political capital and the misfocus in electoral debate, where we are losing sight of the problems that can have many serious consequences for society.

"engage in debates that only affect minority groups of the population fighting to reclaim rights that have nothing to do with the true challenges that humanity..."

The discussion about democracy and freedoms must regain maximum relevance at the table where world leaders sit. Believing that the fight against poverty, inequality, insecurity, or lack of opportunities is detached

from this discussion is profoundly mistaken. Fighting against totalitarian, autocratic, corrupt regimes, often linked to international organized crime, once again becomes a global priority. The crisis of political leadership is closely linked to the disconnection regarding the defense of democratic principles and values and economic freedom.

Venezuela is the most emblematic case - preceded by Cuba and degraded by Nicaragua in Latin America , not only for its influence in the region but also for its size, geographical position, and wealth in terms of natural resources. Therefore, staying in silence or inactive is not an option.

Since the arrival of Hugo Chávez 25 years ago, it has been hard to identify a more difficult and hostile scenario in Latin America than Venezuela in which to engage in politics from the opposition.

Throughout these years, many resi-

-lient political leaders have emerged from the opposition who have wanted to confront the regime from different fronts. The electoral is just one of them. But today, one leader remains standing, embodied in a brave and unwavering woman, such as María Corina Machado.

Like in the testimonies exposed at the beginning of this text, she is another Venezuelan woman who has sacrificed her life and her family to remove her country from the nightmare of "Chavismo."

Undoubtedly, she is the only undisputed leader of the opposition - having obtained 87% of the votes in the primary elections - but also represents the most serious threat to the regime's survival. Therefore, it is imminent that both her life and her political project survive.

This will largely depend on the support she receives from the international community, with the USA being a relevant actor. The voices of democratic countries must unite to protect and support her. The first step must undoubtedly be disregarding any electoral scenario where she is not present as a legitimate opposition representative. If this is possible, the international community must actively assist in the transition.

The first step is to be aware of Venezuela's role in regional and global geopolitics. The threat to the national security of the USA comes not only from the migratory problem. It must be remembered that Russia and China always want to occupy the space that Americans leave vacant. The second is to uphold the will of the Venezuelan people, and in doing so, it is imminent to recognize that the Barbados agreement was a resounding failure. The trial of the regime and its accomplices will come later, but that will be the result of another discussion.

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