AGENDA

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WORLD TRUMP

From Rhetoric to Action: Why Venezuela's Recovery Is the First Step in an Agenda to Redraw Global Alliances. The Reinvention of Foreign Power Begins.

Europe. Poland and Croatia: The Playbook of Freedom.

Cuba Is Just Steps Away from a Transition. What Is Still Missing?

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Venezuela. Caracas' Dilemma: Where Is It Headed?

Latin America. Democracy 2.0: Totalitarian Regimes Are Falling.

U.S.A. The Impact of the Global Agenda on the Midterm Elections.

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

Monthly reflection

The Strategic Return of the United States to the Western Hemisphere

The Shield of the Americas meeting, recently held in Miami, marks the strategic return of the United States to the Western Hemisphere. Convened by President Donald J. Trump, it brought together a dozen heads of state and two presidents-elect from across the region with a clear objective: to build a hemispheric coalition to confront transnational organized crime and restore the continent's strategic stability. This was not merely a symbolic meeting; it was the launch of a new phase in Washington's hemispheric policy.

For years, Latin America and the Caribbean was low on the list of U.S. geopolitical priorities. That cycle has ended. The Western Hemisphere is once again being conceived as a space of vital interest.

The logic behind this shift is clearly articulated in the National Security Strategy of the United States of America, published in November of

2025: "After years of neglect, the United States will … restore American preeminence in the Western Hemisphere, [and] protect our homeland and our access to key geographies throughout the region." Today, that premise is becoming an operational principle of American foreign policy.

The meeting also reflects a broader geopolitical concern: the growing presence of China in strategic sectors across the region –from infrastructure and energy to telecommunications and ports. For Washington, hemispheric stability is not solely a matter of internal security; it is also part of a broader global competition for economic, technological, and political influence.

This strategic shift began with an episode that sent a clear and forceful signal: the January 3, 2026, operation to capture Venezuelan dictator Nicolás Maduro and transfer him to the United States to face charges related to narcotrafficking and organized crime. The message was unequivocal: Washington is prepared to act when a state actor becomes a platform for transnational crime.

"For Washington, hemispheric stability is not solely a matter of internal security; it is also part of a broader global competition…"

Venezuela is not necessarily the center of this story, but rather a pivotal moment in a broader roadmap summarized by the words "enlist" and "expand," as outlined in the U.S. National Security Strategy. This roadmap combines two complementary instruments: deterrence against structures that threaten regional stability and cooperation with countries that share values and objectives.

This strategic framework is paired with a distinctly pragmatic approach. The Venezuelan case illustrates this clearly. Under the current transition government, Washington has restored diplomatic relations and promoted a rapid transformation of the oil sector. For example, the reform of the Organic Hydrocarbons Law, approved in recent weeks, reduces direct state control and allows for

broader participation by domestic and international private capital. The new legal framework eases fiscal terms, enables direct contracts with investors,and reinstates international arbitration mechanisms to resolve disputes —essential elements for rebuilding legal certainty in the sector. The transitional government also has launched a comprehensive review of oil agreements signed in recent years, aligning them with the new regulatory framework and international investment standards.

Taken together, these developments demonstrate the consolidation of a new U.S. hemispheric policy grounded in security, institutional stability, economic openness, and direct cooperation with partner states. The Shield of the Americas Summit and the creation of the Americas Counter Cartel Coalition represent the most recent —and most ambitious— steps in implementing this strategy. They mark the beginning of a new phase in hemispheric relations.

Latin America and the Caribbean are home to more than 600 million people, abundant strategic resources, a growing urban population, and an increasingly connected and digitally engaged youth. The region's potential is evident. Its competitive advantages range from geography and natural resources to cultural proximity and shared values. Yet the challenges of

"Latin America and the Caribbean have abundant strategic resources, The region's potential is evident. Its competitive advantages range from geography and natural resources to cultural proximity..."

achieving sustained development remain real. The difference today is that such development is no longer merely a regional aspiration; it is a strategic priority for the United States and for hemispheric stability.

"After decades of downplaying the region's importance, Washington has now placed it on its strategic agenda..."

The question is no longer whether Latin America and the Caribbean have the potential to develop. The question is whether their countries can build the institutions, infrastructure, and alliances necessary to seize the strategic moment now before them.

After decades of downplaying the region's importance, Washington has now placed it on its strategic agenda. And all indicators suggest that this time, the United States will act accordingly.

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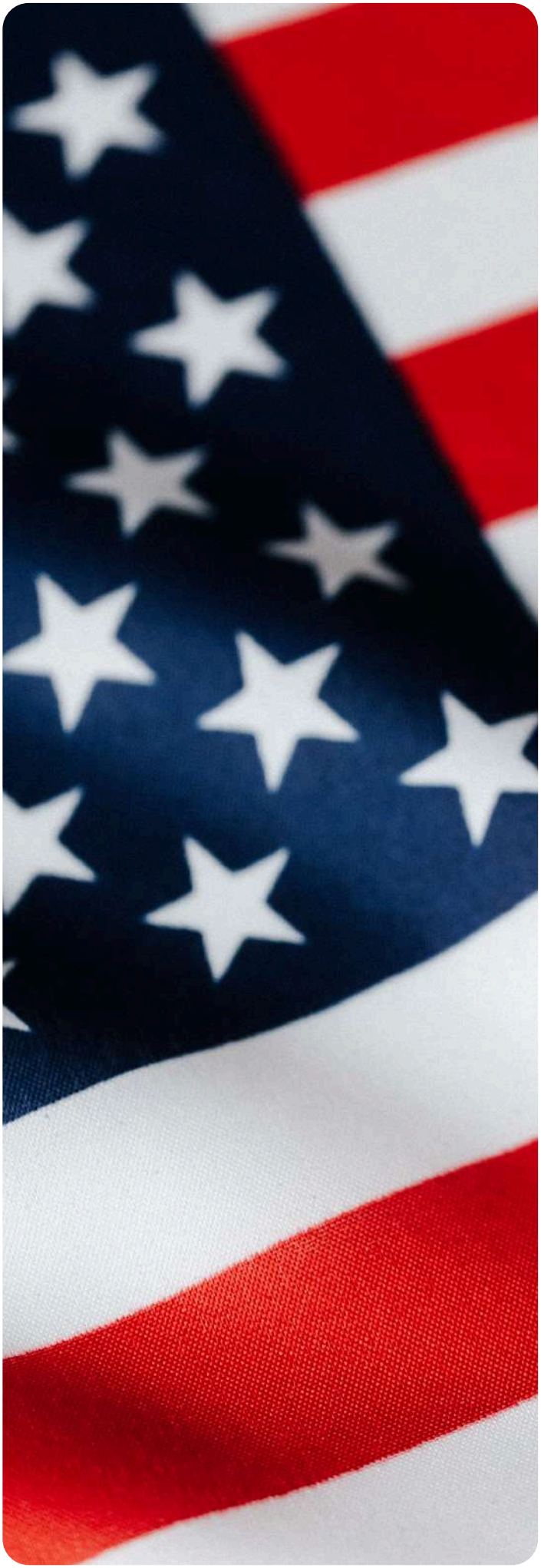

Monthly Editorial

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

Make Latin America Great Again!

The administration of Donald J. Trump has done what many global and regional leaders were unwilling to undertake: it formally designated Nicolás Maduro as a narcotrafficking leader and defined the Venezuelan regime under his control as a threat to both the United States and the broader region. Having established that position, it acted accordingly—launching one of the most sophisticated military operations of this century, extracting the dictator, and subjecting him to U.S. justice.

This development has delivered a stark wake-up call across the continent. Those who for years operated with impunity—subjecting their populations to authoritarian rule while enabling the expansion of organized crime in Latin America—have taken note: their era of unchecked power is coming to an end.

The successors to the Maduro regime quickly aligned themselves with Washington's demands, accepting the beginning of a transition toward a capitalist democracy. Where U.S. flags were once burned, red carpets are now rolled out to receive American officials.

"The successors to the Maduro regime quickly aligned themselves with Washington's demands, accepting the beginning of a transition toward a capitalist democracy."

At the same time, an effective clampdown has been imposed on the flow of oil and financial resources from Venezuela to Cuba. Similar signals were sent to other governments in the region whose populist leadership had hinted at supporting authoritarian allies. A handful of firm, unequivocal statements from President Trump proved sufficient to make clear that there was no room for renewed revolutionary ventures.

As a result, the Cuban regime itself has begun a process that will undoubtedly lead to a democratic transition. With it will come the reconstruction of an island whose basic infrastructure has been severely degraded. The economy has, in many respects, reverted to barter, while a population—impoverished and worn down—demands freedom with increasing urgency.

With the allies of authoritarian regimes constrained and the American administration firmly committed to advancing an agenda of freedom and democracy, the regional context has begun to shift. Electoral outcomes in countries such as Chile, Costa Rica, and Honduras point in this direction, while ideological shifts appear increasingly likely in Peru and Colombia. Within this evolving landscape, it is foreseeable that the authoritarian regime in Nicaragua will soon join the ranks of countries abandoning tyranny and embarking on a democratic transition.

All of this suggests a year filled with expectations for the region: a tangible rollback of narcotrafficking, a greater commercial and military presence of the United States, and renewed momentum for those advancing democracy and liberty. This agenda, arguably, should have begun six to eight years earlier, when the region

"With the allies of authoritarian regimes constrained and the American administration firmly committed to advancing an agenda of freedom and democracy, the regional context has begun to shift."

was governed largely by center-right administrations. At that time, however, the leadership and resolve now demonstrated by the current U.S. administration were lacking.

In this edition of **AGENDA**, we explore these developments and their implications for the Western world. We bring together voices deeply engaged in these struggles, offering perspectives from countries directly immersed in this process. We also include European authors who reflect on their experiences during the historic liberation of Eastern Europe. From the United States—leaders of this hemispheric effort—we present equally forceful analyses.

This issue opens with a compelling contribution from Carlos Díaz-Rosillo, who examines the operation in Venezuela, its outcomes, and—above all—the significance of the United States reclaiming a strategic role in the hemisphere.

Don't miss it.

AGENDA

Magazine

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Davor Ivo Stier

Member of the European Parliament for Croatia. He serves on the Committee on Foreign Affairs and on the Delegation to the Euro–Latin American Parliamentary Assembly. He belongs to the European People's Party and the Croatian Democratic Union (HDZ). He previously served as a member of parliament, Minister of Foreign and European Affairs, and Deputy Prime Minister of Croatia.

The Croatian Experience and the Longing for Freedom in Latin America

Drawing on Croatia's experience after the collapse of communism, the author highlights the dilemma between justice and reconciliation that characterizes democratic transitions. He emphasizes that external pressure and the Church's mediating role facilitated an imperfect yet effective path toward democracy, independence, and European integration.

He also examines current structural shifts in the international order and compares them with the fall of the Berlin Wall, underscoring how periods of geopolitical upheaval can create emancipatory opportunities for oppressed societies. In this context of global strategic competition, he argues that Latin America—particularly Venezuela, Cuba, and Nicaragua—could seize these circumstances to promote democratic transitions grounded in sovereign national agreements.

Changes in the international order are almost always chaotic and conflict-ridden, yet they often open new horizons of freedom for oppressed peoples. That is why anxiety and hope are once again intertwined today for thousands of Venezuelans, Cubans, and Nicaraguans striving for a democratic future in their countries.

There is little doubt that we are undergoing a new structural transformation in international relations—one as profound as, or even deeper than, the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989. At that time, communist dictatorships across Central and Eastern Europe collapsed. From the Baltic Sea to the Adriatic and as far as the shores of the Black Sea, a democratic fervor spread, toppling regimes that had masked tyranny behind the false promises of Marxist "popular liberation."

True liberation came only with the fall of these so-called "dictatorships of the proletariat." Among the peoples who benefited from that emancipatory wave were the Croats. With more than a thousand years of history and culture, this small nation of four million citizens at home—and as many abroad—seized the historic opportunity to reclaim its freedom. The popular desire for an independent and democratic future was palpable, yet so too were the fears accumulated over decades of repression. Those who had rebelled during the "Croatian Spring" of 1971 still remembered years of prison or exile, while their former oppressors feared potential reprisals should they relinquish power.

Thus, an existential dilemma confronted Croatia's emerging democracy: preserve doctrinal purity

or open channels of dialogue and cooperation with those who, until recently, had been willing to imprison, torture, and kill anyone who defended freedom.

Two key factors helped resolve this dilemma. On the one hand, external pressure and the aggressive policies of Serbian President Slobodan Milošević; on the other, the centuries-old wisdom of the Catholic Church and its decisive contribution to national reconciliation. The result was a convergence of interests and political will that produced a historic compromise.

To be sure, this compromise was not free of controversy—some of which persists to this day—due to the veil of silence cast over the crimes of the communist past and the political and economic influence retained by those who, in the name of revolution, expropriated—or more plainly, stole—the freedom and property of thousands of their compatriots. In short, it was an imperfect solution, as most political choices are in a world shaped by human imperfection. Yet it

"We are undergoing a new structural transformation in international relations—one as profound as, or even deeper than, the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989."

was a solution nonetheless—one that allowed Croatia to regain its freedom and independence, establish a democratic system, release political prisoners, welcome back exiles, and secure a future of peace and prosperity as a member of the European Union.

The Croatian experience is unique, but not exceptional. Similar stories can be heard throughout Europe and in other parts of the world. For that reason, they are worth studying and learning from at a time when the international order is once again undergoing profound change.

There are no universal or uniform recipes; each people group must ultimately determine its own path. Yet while every nation has its own identity and history, the desire for freedom is

universal. Just as the fall of the Berlin Wall offered an emancipatory opportunity to the peoples of Central and Eastern Europe, today's global realignment—driven by geopolitical competition between the United States and China—may likewise create opportunities to advance the cause of liberty in Latin America.

The motivations of the American superpower may be debated in academic circles, but the prospect of Nicolás Maduro's removal from power should be welcomed by those who dream of a democratic Venezuela. The same could be said of Cuba and Nicaragua. Pressure is mounting, and the foundations of these authoritarian structures are beginning to shake. The second tiers of these regimes know it well.

They know it, and they fear it—and it is precisely that fear that opens the door to bold, emancipatory, and above all patriotic political proposals. International circumstances may create opportunities, but the decision to become truly sovereign—to take ownership of one's own destiny—must ultimately be made by each people. By acknowledging internal differences, healing the wounds of the past, and crafting their own solutions, nations may arrive at outcomes that are more or less imperfect than Croatia's or those of other sovereign states. What matters most is that they secure for their people—those who remain oppressed today—and for their children and grandchildren, the enduring benefits of freedom.

James Uthmeier

39th Attorney General of the State of Florida, United States. Graduate of Georgetown University Law Center. During the first Trump administration, he served at the U.S. Department of Commerce as a senior advisor and counselor. He later served as Chief of Staff to Florida Governor Ron DeSantis.

Florida Confronts Human Trafficking: Emerging Structural Challenges

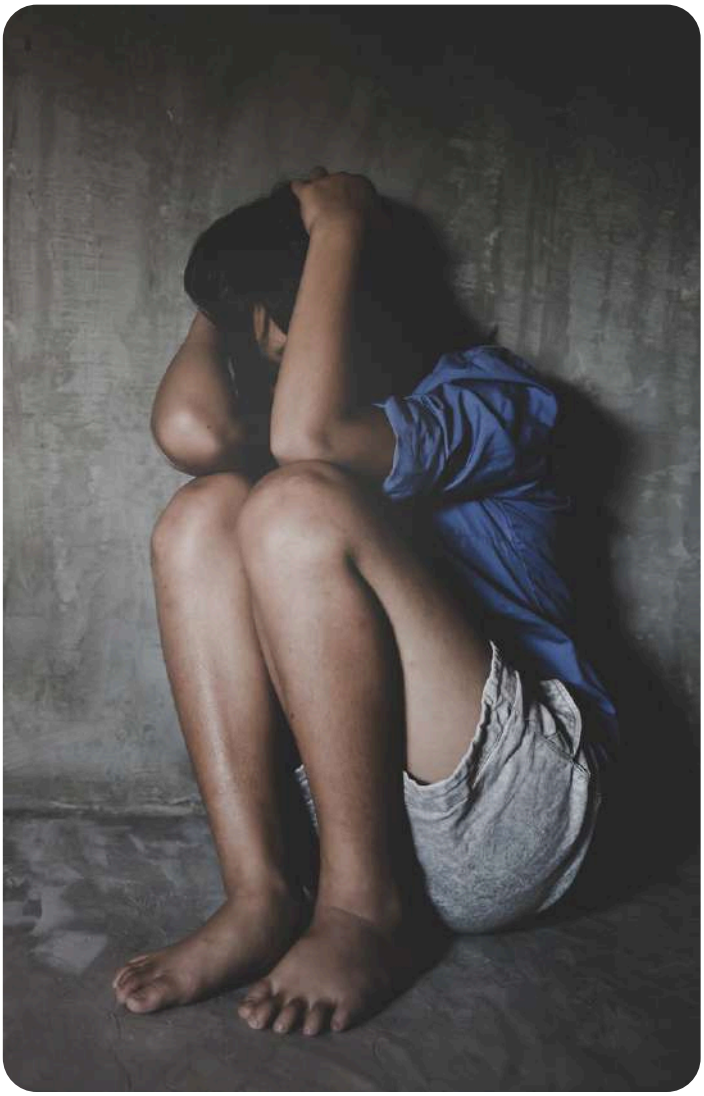
The author examines the State of Florida's strategy to combat human trafficking in a context defined by economic growth, population expansion, and increased global exposure. He argues that, despite advances in public safety and declining overall crime rates, trafficking has emerged as a major structural challenge—driven by factors such as tourism, migration, and social vulnerability.

He further contends that the state's approach combines tough-on-crime policies, institutional strengthening, and public–private cooperation, with the aim of dismantling exploitation networks and protecting victims, particularly women and children. He warns that the growing number of international events hosted in Florida may intensify this phenomenon, requiring enhanced efforts in prevention, prosecution, and public awareness.

The "Free State" of Florida is now ranked number one in every meaningful metric—economic growth, education, parental rights, and individual liberties. As a state, we have record crime lows, and parents are flocking from blue states in record numbers to make Florida home. We are proud to be the safest large state to raise a family.

Unfortunately, we are also a top-ranked state in a concerning category: human trafficking. Despite the hard work of our incredible law enforcement, tough-on-crime policies, and prosecutions, Miami remains the country's number three region when it comes to human trafficking cases. Florida's influx of capital and people, international visitors, coastal communities, and a hub of tourism and entertainment, has created a dangerous recipe for illegal prostitution and large-scale trafficking.

When most people hear about "human trafficking," scenes from the movie "Taken" come to mind—vans pulling up on the side of the road, predators throwing women and children into trunks, violent offenders fueling the sexual slave trade economy. Though it can happen, that's not the typical case. Rather, most human trafficking cases involve young women who fall into a bad place. It often begins with drugs, financial challenges, homelessness, or pornography, and these struggling women are led to men who offer them the prospect of lavish wealth, a "fun" party lifestyle, and maybe even a relationship. But before they know it, they are coerced into prostitution and fall victim to a life of abuse.



In South Florida, sadly, this story is all too common.

It's time to fight back! In 2026 and beyond, the Florida Office of Attorney General—as the state's chief law enforcement officer—will dedicate more attention and resources than ever before to fight human trafficking. As South Florida prepares to host events of global importance, like the FIFA World Cup, Formula 1 Race, G-20 summit, and numerous sporting events, Florida will face record human trafficking activity.

Our statewide prosecutors have already begun levying strong punishments on human traffickers. Just last month, we secured a 120-year sentence against Marquette James, a trafficker who profited from selling multiple victims into sex slavery. Following an anonymous tip, our team —working with these brave women— took down Mr. James in trial and demanded the harshest sentence possible.

As a state, we aim to send a message: if you prey upon and abuse women in Florida, we are coming for you and will

"As South Florida prepares to host events of global importance, Florida will face record human trafficking activity."

seek to lock you up for as long as possible. Earlier this year, we secured a life sentence for a criminal illegal alien who overstayed a work visa and then trafficked and abused a female child. Florida also took a nation-leading step this past year through legislation to reinstate capital punishment for offenders who sexually abuse young children. Those who want to prey upon children and their innocence must face the toughest form of justice—we must protect our kids at all costs.

Our AG's office has also realized success in training local governments and private businesses across the state on ways to spot and report signs of human trafficking. "See something, say something" is more than a slogan in our line of work. Credible tips from hotel staff and transportation workers, among others, have led to arrests, convictions, and life-saving efforts to rescue victims. We're working with

multiple industry associations and the Florida Chamber to make the fight against human trafficking a top priority this year. Through our "100% Club Recognitions," we are certifying and highlighting all Florida companies and agencies where one hundred percent of their employees have completed the training.

We recently awarded $1.5 million in operating budget to the Miami-Dade State Attorney's Office to fund investigators and law enforcement efforts to combat human trafficking. We will continue working to secure funding—through public and private means—to equip our sheriffs, police chiefs, and state prosecutors with the tools and manpower they need to combat this evil. Undercover cops, online investigators, and cyber financial analysts are using cutting-edge techniques to identify and take down trafficking networks.

During my first year as Attorney General, we made protecting children our top priority. In just a year, we arrested over 1,400 child predators, rescued over 300 children previously reported missing, brought civil and criminal legal actions against social media companies that enable online perverts to get to kids, and secured more violent felony criminal convictions than ever before in Florida history.

It is no surprise or coincidence that Florida is at record crime lows. We back the blue and love law enforcement, levy strong sentences against criminals, and leave no stone unturned in hunting down those who go after our kids. There is zero tolerance for those who engage in or support human trafficking, and we will continue to make that widely known.

Florida is the beacon of hope for the country—we'll fight to keep it safe, strong, and free.

Delsa Solórzano

Attorney and president of the political party Encuentro Ciudadano (Venezuela). She is currently in Venezuela after having spent seventeen months under protective concealment for political reasons.

Venezuela: Transition, Preconditions, and the Risk of Democratic Simulation

Venezuelan political leader Delsa Solórzano—who until recently was forced into hiding to avoid abduction by the regime—analyzes the political moment that has emerged following the valuable intervention of American forces and warns against confusing a potential transition with a mere change of leadership.

She argues that Venezuela is not yet in a democratic transition phase but rather in a preliminary stage that requires essential institutional conditions: re-institutionalization, separation and independence of powers, lifting political bans, restoring political parties, and the release of political prisoners. She emphasizes that without basic freedoms and legal certainty, there can be no credible elections or sustainable economic recovery.

The author concludes that only a genuine transition—one oriented toward real democratization—can prevent democratic simulation and the recurrence of crisis.

The events that have unfolded in Venezuela since January 3 mark a political and institutional turning point that cannot be analyzed in isolation. Their origins lie in what occurred on July 28, 2024, when an overwhelming majority of Venezuelans clearly expressed their desire for political change. That civic expression irreversibly altered the previous balance of power and opened a new historical moment whose outcome remains uncertain.

My intention is not to examine in detail the events of January 3, nor to dwell on the process through which the democratic opposition consolidated legitimate leadership—initiated with the primary organized by the Democratic Unitary Platform on October 22 and later ratified by a broad citizen majority on July 28, 2024. That leadership is now clearly embodied by Edmundo González Urrutia, María Corina Machado, and the Democratic Unitary Platform as a coordinating political body.

My focus is different: to reflect on the stage that begins now and to raise a central question that Venezuela must confront honestly. How can this moment lead to a genuine transition to democracy rather than merely a replacement of figures within the same power structure that has dominated the country for decades?

Comparative experience shows that not every transition necessarily leads to democracy. Some processes, under the rhetoric of change, end up reproducing authoritarian practices and preserving intact the very structures that caused the crisis. Venezuela today faces this risk with particular clarity.

There are widely recognized principles that guide democratic transitions: progressive re-institutionalization, effective guarantees of fundamental rights, separation and balance of powers, genuine political inclusion, truly free elections, and a framework of transitional justice that ensures truth,

reparation, and guarantees of non-repetition. Yet no transition is identical to another. Each country faces unique constraints that require realism and responsibility in designing change.

The Venezuelan case presents distinctive features. One of them is the significant weight of international factors, particularly the role played by the United States. Officials from that country have described the Venezuelan process as unfolding in three differentiated phases: stabilization, recovery, and transition. This framework is relevant not only because of its source but because of its political implications.

Taking this framework seriously leads to an uncomfortable but necessary conclusion: Venezuela is not yet in a proper democratic transition phase. A transition remains incipient—an open possibility, not a completed fact. The preliminary stages must be completed to avoid a failed transition.

In this context, the regime's leadership has announced the possible activation of political negotiation mechanisms. Without dismissing dialogue as a tool,

"Venezuela is not yet in a proper democratic transition phase. A transition remains incipient—an open possibility."

it is clear that negotiation channels have previously been used as delaying or diversionary tactics. At present, such dialogue has largely taken place between the Venezuelan regime and international actors—particularly the United States. The central challenge is to ensure that the real interests of Venezuelans are directly and effectively represented in any such process and that its ultimate objective is unequivocal: achieving democracy in Venezuela and, as international spokespersons have stated, advancing toward truly free and competitive elections.

Following the events of July 28, 2024, public confidence in the electoral process has been severely eroded. Both the Venezuelan experience and comparative evidence converge on a fundamental point: free elections

cannot exist without prior institutional conditions that make them credible. Citizen participation, organization, and political will are present; what is in doubt today is the institutional framework within which elections would take place.

For this reason, re-institutionalization cannot be conceived as a later consequence of transition. On the contrary, it must be understood as a prerequisite for a genuine transition. Concretely, this entails:

- The appointment of a truly independent National Electoral Council, free from partisan affiliation and fully compliant with constitutional requirements;
- The establishment of a Supreme Court that upholds the rule of law rather than political interests;
- The lifting of administrative bans used as mechanisms of political exclusion; and
- The restoration of political parties to their legitimate leadership, which has been stripped of symbols and legal representation.

These structural conditions are compounded by an issue that is both decisive and impossible to relativize: the existence of nearly one thousand individuals imprisoned for political reasons, alongside a generalized climate of fear, persecution, and forced exile. Venezuela today lacks full guarantees for freedom of expression, association, and political participation. Without basic freedoms, any process risks becoming little more than a democratic façade.

There has also been discussion of advancing economic liberalization and reforms in strategic sectors, particularly energy. This debate is legitimate and entirely necessary. However, history shows that economies depend on trust—and trust requires legal certainty. Legal certainty, in turn, is not built solely through laws or sectoral reforms, but through genuine political stability, reliable institutions, and effective respect for the rule of law.

Without these elements, any attempt at economic recovery will remain fragile and reversible. Neither domestic nor international investment flourishes in environments marked by institutional arbitrariness or systems in which the rules can be changed at the convenience of those in power.

For all these reasons, I maintain that a transition in Venezuela is possible—but only if it is understood as an orderly, gradual, and authentically democratizing process. Confusing a transition with a mere substitution of power would not only be a political mistake but also a historic injustice to a society that has already paid too high a price.

The choice is clear: either the country advances toward a real democracy grounded in institutions, freedoms, and historical accountability, or it perpetuates a cycle of superficial changes that fail to address the root causes of the crisis. If a Venezuelan transition is to exist, it must be built on solid foundations. Otherwise, it will not be a transition, but a repetition.

Orlando Gutiérrez Boronat

Orlando Gutiérrez-Boronat
Secretary General, Asamblea de la Resistencia Cubana.
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Ph.D. in International Studies (University of Miami). Graduate and undergraduate studies in Political Science and Communications (Florida International University).
Author of several books and publications on human rights.

Cuba Today

The author examines the structural weaknesses of Cuba's communist regime, which have deepened following U.S. intervention in Venezuela and subsequent measures affecting oil supplies.

Economic collapse, an energy crisis, de facto dollarization, and growing social fragmentation now converge with sustained and increasingly confrontational civic resistance. The regime faces rising costs of control, shrinking economic margins, and erosion of its narrative monopoly.

The democratic resistance leader concludes that change will not emerge from internal reforms, but rather from an organized civil society that requires effective international backing to articulate a sustainable democratic transition.

Communist Cuba is facing a perfect storm: economic collapse, social fracture, and political closure. Most significant is not only the depth of the crisis, but a new development: internal resistance has become constant, widespread, and increasingly direct.

In recent weeks, the Cuban peso has hit a historic low on the informal market—around 500 CUP per U.S. dollar. While wages and savings are already largely irrelevant, this has pushed the population into de facto dollarization simply to survive. The figure underscores a harsh reality: meager salaries have not covered food, medicine, or transportation costs for decades.

This compounds an everyday emergency: energy and fuel. For years, the island has endured generalized blackouts and chronic supply shortages that paralyze services, reduce transportation, and damage tourism—one of the few remaining sources of hard currency. Recent reports indicate that authorities anticipated leaving most of the country without electricity during critical periods, reflecting a collapse in both generation capacity and fuel availability. Access to potable water is also compromised, as pumping and purification systems lack reliable power.

Fuel shipments received from regime allies are frequently resold, with proceeds diverted into private accounts. The limited supply that remains for public use is tightly rationed, privileging the political hierarchy over ordinary citizens.

Blackouts do more than turn off the lights: they spoil food, halt water pumps, close schools, sink small businesses, and multiply stress. Cellular and internet communications are reduced to a minimum. The

transport of people and goods is severely constrained. Emergency measures—shortened workdays and closures—signal a state attempting to manage scarcity rather than govern effectively.

Meanwhile, informality has become the real marketplace, and migration continues to serve as a pressure valve. Cuban society no longer debates "improvements," but simply how to endure each day.

Social resistance grows steadily, as documented month after month by the Observatorio Cubano de Conflictos. Between August 2025 and January 2026, the group recorded 7,005 events, including street protests, pot-banging demonstrations, road blockades, public denunciations, and other civic actions.

More tellingly, January 2026 showed an increase in confrontational tactics: the Observatory registered 395 "direct challenges" to the police state in that month alone—evidence that the resistance is no longer merely about outages, but about freedoms.

"Informality has become the real marketplace, and migration continues to serve as a pressure valve. Cuban society no longer debates "improvements," but simply how to endure each day."

At the same time, repression has remained constant since 1959. Monitoring organizations documented hundreds of coercive actions in January—arrests, harassment, police sieges—amid what has been described as "nervousness" within the security apparatus. Even as resources dwindle, the regime continues to prioritize repression.

Together, these dynamics yield three major consequences for the regime:

1. Higher costs of control. More surveillance, more police, more arrests, and greater operational strain. This may not immediately topple the system, but it makes

domination increasingly expensive and corrosive.

2. Reduced economic maneuverability. The energy crisis forces permanent emergency management. The state rations electricity and fuel in survival mode, while its own personnel endure the same shortages.
3. Loss of narrative monopoly. When protest becomes routine and local, official discourse collapses under the weight of evidence shared through networks and communities across the island and abroad.

Despite internal deterioration, Havana persists through a combination of institutional inertia, coercive control, and external support. Russia and Mexico have emerged as contingency backers. In February 2026, both reportedly prepared shipments of crude oil and fuel framed as "humanitarian aid" precisely as shortages peaked. Such support does not resolve the crisis—it merely buys time.

Externally, a notable development is that the United States has elevated Cuba to a national security concern. A January 29, 2026, executive order declared a national emergency regarding Cuba, framing the regime as an "unusual and extraordinary threat" to U.S. national security and foreign policy.

History suggests that change will not come from technical adjustments within the regime, whose priority is self-preservation. Rather, it will come from an organized civil society capable of sustaining pressure, documenting abuses, building mutual aid networks, and articulating a credible transition agenda.

But that civil society requires tangible external support, including:

- International protection and visibility for activists, journalists, and resistance leaders, particularly the hundreds of political prisoners.
- Material assistance to civic networks (humanitarian aid delivered with traceability to civil society rather than through the state apparatus).
- Targeted diplomatic pressure, including sanctions on those responsible for repression and corruption.
- An active Resistance Assembly prepared to coordinate civic investment, training, and technological support, and to lay the groundwork for national liberation.

Month after month, Cuba shows that resignation has disappeared. The historic challenge now is to transform dispersed protest into an organized social capacity. That is where the tipping point will soon emerge.

Valentina Martínez Ferro

Former Member of Parliament for Spain's Popular Party. Spain Representative of the Adam Smith Center for Economic Freedom at Florida International University.

One Step Closer to Democracy

The author analyzes the announcement of a general amnesty for political prisoners in Venezuela with a mixture of relief and skepticism. While recognizing it as a necessary step, she warns that it is insufficient to guarantee a genuine democratic transition.

She denounces the arbitrariness, systematic repression, and torture exercised during more than two decades of Chavismo, emphasizing the impunity of those responsible. She also questions the real scope of the amnesty, the restrictions still imposed on released detainees, and the lack of accountability.

She concludes that the release of political prisoners is an indispensable—but not definitive—condition for restoring freedoms and institutional order in Venezuela.

I must admit that all the news coming out of Venezuela since January 3 has left me with a bittersweet feeling—like a dish that has every flavor in place but still lacks salt. When I heard Delcy Rodríguez announce a general amnesty for all political prisoners, what I felt was closer to relief than to joy.

I thought of so many of them, and of so many families who have endured weeks of anguish, learning "little by little" the fate of their loved ones. Will I be next? When will it be my turn? Will today be the day they come for mine? Few things are as profoundly unjust as not knowing why you are serving a prison sentence. Yet even worse is not knowing why you might be released.

In this case—as in almost all dictatorships and totalitarian regimes where there is no meaningful limit on power—the reason was simple: the arbitrary whim of those who abuse it. Maduro, Delcy, her brother Jorge, Padrino, or the ever-ominous Diosdado decided who had to be removed from public life for being too brave, too popular, or simply too free.

Sometimes they began with intimidation—for example, raiding homes in the middle of the night, as they did with Mayor Antonio Ledezma, to signal what they were capable of. Other times, they went straight after you, as they did with Edmundo González's son-in-law, who was forcibly taken in front of his young daughters at the school gates.

Some endured horrific torture in prison, like Lorent Saleh. Others did not survive, beaten to death, like Jesús Manuel Martínez, Alexander Gómez Pérez, Jesús Rafael Álvarez, or former governor Alfredo Díaz. There was no reason—only caprice. You, yes, you, no, until it ultimately became everyone.

After the July 2024 elections, those who could not leave the country ended up dead, imprisoned, or forced into a kind of living death—like María Corina Machado, compelled to live in total secrecy.

That is why it is impossible not to feel relief at the announcement that the house of horrors known as El Helicoide will be closed—a name that alone sends chills down the spine. I had heard about it many times and thought I understood the testimonies of the few who survived. I did not. I realized this when, from the comfort of my parliamentary office and alongside two Venezuelan friends, I experienced Realidad Helicoide, a virtual-reality film that places you for fifteen minutes in what they endured for months or even years.

For those few minutes, I found myself trapped in a gray, damp, windowless cell, surrounded by cockroaches and the screams of someone being tortured nearby. That was when I truly understood the terror of wondering: Will I be next? When will it be my turn? And for those waiting outside: Will today be the day they take mine?

"After the July 2024 elections, those who could not leave the country ended up dead, imprisoned, or forced into a kind of living death—like María Corina Machado, compelled to live in total secrecy."

Such cruelty, such impunity, such helplessness.

Of course, the announcement of a general amnesty—and the knowledge that those who were screaming in pain in El Helicoide may soon return home—is good news. Above all, it is a necessary step, though by no means sufficient, on the path toward a democratic transition in Venezuela.

"I want to announce that we have decided to promote a general

amnesty law covering the entire period of political violence since 1999," Delcy Rodríguez said. As stated plainly, that "period of political violence" has lasted twenty-seven years. From Chávez to Maduro: twenty-seven years of uninterrupted violence. I am not saying this—Delcy is. This fact should matter to those who have refused to condemn the Venezuelan dictatorship by claiming that there was no repression until the stolen elections of July 2024. Does that sound familiar?

Even now, many questions remain. What will happen to those who have been released—but not fully freed—these past weeks, still facing charges and precautionary measures that prevent them from speaking to the press or traveling abroad? What exactly will this amnesty law include to heal "the wounds of political confrontation, violence, and extremism," as promised? Will those in hiding due to threats finally be able to reemerge? And above all, will anyone be held accountable—particularly Diosdado Cabello, twice Minister of Interior Affairs, directly responsible for so many arbitrary detentions, acts of torture, and even killings?

One final question lingers in my mind: what will Zapatero do now?

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Mariana Gómez del Campo Gurza

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The Mexican Government Under Pressure from Trump

The author analyzes the impact of Donald Trump's strategy toward Latin America on Mexico's international position. She argues that the hardening of U.S. policy is reshaping the hemispheric landscape and limiting Mexico's diplomatic room for maneuver.

She also contends that the Mexican government faces growing difficulty sustaining its longstanding doctrine of non-intervention. The increasing U.S. focus on security and on Mexican drug cartels, she warns, could intensify bilateral tensions and force Mexico to balance its sovereignty-centered political narrative.

In international politics, there are moments when the decisions of a great power reshape the regional chessboard. What is happening with Donald Trump's strategy toward Latin America is one of those moments. His position regarding Venezuela, the hardening of U.S. policy toward Cuba, and increased pressure on security issues are transforming the political environment of the hemisphere. But beyond Caracas or Havana, there is a country where these decisions carry particularly sensitive implications: Mexico.

For the Mexican government, Washington's moves are not a distant matter of regional policy. They directly influence Mexico's room for diplomatic maneuver, its bilateral relationship with the United States, and its ability to sustain its political narrative on sovereignty and autonomy.

The first element altering the regional context is what occurred in Venezuela at the beginning of 2026. The capture of Nicolás Maduro during a U.S. military operation marked a turning point in hemispheric politics. For years, Washington had relied on economic sanctions, diplomatic pressure, or international isolation against governments it considered problematic. This time the message was different. The United States demonstrated its willingness to act directly against a government it considers linked to drug trafficking. The political impact of that decision reverberated across Latin America.

For Mexico, this precedent is far from trivial. Mexican foreign policy has for decades defended the principles of non-intervention and the self-determination of peoples. This diplomatic tradition has allowed Mexico to maintain relations with governments of very different ideological orientations. However,

when the United States decides to act directly in the hemisphere, the space for that doctrine becomes narrower.

The situation becomes even more complex when examining Washington's position toward Cuba. U.S. strategy has hardened, and economic and political pressure on the island has intensified. In that context, the historic relationship between Mexico and Cuba takes on a new dimension.

For decades, Mexico has maintained a consistent diplomatic relationship with Havana, even during periods of international isolation of the Cuban regime. That relationship forms part of a foreign policy tradition aimed at maintaining open channels with governments across the region. Yet in the current context, any rapprochement with Cuba may become a point of friction with Washington.

This forces the Mexican government to operate on delicate ground. Mexico has continued its policy of cooperation and humanitarian assistance toward Cuba. However, every diplomatic gesture or economic cooperation initiative now carries a different meaning in the context of relations with Washington. As a result, the room for maneuver of Mexican diplomacy becomes increasingly constrained.

"For the Mexican government, Washington's moves are not a distant matter of regional policy. They directly influence Mexico's room for diplomatic maneuver."

The area where U.S. pressure becomes most direct, however, is security. The fight against drug trafficking and organized crime has moved to the center of Washington's regional agenda. In U.S. political discourse, Mexican cartels appear with increasing frequency as a threat to national security.

When drug trafficking ceases to be seen solely as a criminal issue and begins to be treated as a national

security concern, the type of measures the United States may consider also changes.

In the American political debate, proposals have emerged advocating more aggressive actions against cartels, including operations targeting criminal organizations operating from Mexican territory. The mere fact that such ideas are being discussed increases pressure on the Mexican government.

For Mexico, this is particularly sensitive terrain. The government has built much of its political narrative around defending national sovereignty and rejecting any form of foreign intervention. Yet the expansion of organized crime and violence in several regions of the country makes external pressure increasingly difficult to ignore.

Another structural factor shapes the bilateral relationship. The Mexican economy is deeply integrated with that of the United States. Trade flows and a significant share of foreign

investment depend on the American market.

All of this places the Mexican government before a complex dilemma. On the one hand, it seeks to uphold a discourse centered on sovereignty and respect for the historic principles of its foreign policy. On the other hand, it must manage a relationship with the United States that is inevitably asymmetric.

If Trump's strategy toward Latin America continues to harden, Mexico

could face even more delicate scenarios. The intervention in Venezuela has set a regional precedent. Pressure on Cuba may generate new diplomatic tensions. And the fight against drug trafficking threatens to become the central axis of the bilateral relationship.

The challenge for the Mexican government will be to respond to these pressures without weakening its internal political position and without jeopardizing a bilateral relationship that remains fundamental to the country's economic stability and security.

"If Trump's strategy toward Latin America continues to harden, Mexico could face even more delicate scenarios. The intervention in Venezuela has set a regional precedent."

Diego Guelar

Argentine. Author of numerous books. Former Member of Congress. Served as Ambassador to the United States, the European Union, Brazil, and China. Member of the Honorary Council of the Union of Latin American Parties.

María Corina Machado: A Champion of Democracy

The author, an expert in international affairs, examines María Corina Machado's leadership as the central figure of the Venezuelan opposition after more than two decades of Chavismo. He highlights her ideological consistency, her resistance to both internal and external pressures, and her role as a democratic reference point.

He interprets the recent U.S. intervention as part of a new geopolitical model—what he calls "Trumpism"—designed to safeguard strategic interests without direct military occupation. Once that phase has passed, he argues, democratic consolidation depends exclusively on Venezuelans themselves.

He concludes by underscoring the need for amnesty, full civil liberties, and the return of exiles, and contends that, after this transitional period, Machado should lead a process without shortcuts toward national reconciliation and democratic institutionalization.

María Corina Machado has been fighting for democracy throughout the 26 years of rule under Chávez and Maduro. She has consistently identified as a liberal and a centrist, never yielding to political extremes on either the right or the left. She has had to overcome the prejudices of a deeply male-dominated society, as well as the fragmentation of an opposition that repeatedly stumbled through failures and miscalculations. Despite this, she steadily became a symbol of hope for a people betrayed too many times.

Today, the United States has done what many had long urged it to do—but there is no such thing as a free handout. President Trump acted decisively and, in my opinion, effectively: he minimized bloodshed and avoided invading Venezuela. At the same time, he displaced China, Russia, Iran, and Cuba from what had long been their sphere of influence—Venezuela's oil resources. This did not undermine Venezuelan sovereignty, which had already been usurped by a

dictatorial regime that aligned itself with those foreign interests.

President Trump appears to be developing a model that is, until now, unprecedented. One might call it "Trumpism." It combines a strong nationalist focus with assertive interventionism wherever U.S. commercial interests or national security are at stake—from Venezuela to Iran, through Cuba and Ukraine, and extending to India or Brazil. Once these core concerns of the American administration are addressed, however, Venezuela's democratic normalization becomes the

responsibility of Venezuelans themselves.

We should not expect more from the U.S. government. This is now the moment for the Venezuelan people, who must once again do what they have done so often over the past three decades: mobilize with courage and demand that the political transition—now unavoidable—be carried out. Much remains to be done: the repeal of repressive laws, the return of passports to the nine million exiles, the release of all political prisoners, full press freedom, and the establishment of a clear electoral timetable, among other measures.

Delcy Rodríguez has been complying with decisions conveyed by Secretary of State Marco Rubio, who is overseeing the process. Yet she seeks to appease all sides, attempting to preserve a share of local power while keeping the opposition sidelined. Meanwhile, María Corina has skillfully established herself in Washington, strengthening ties with all three branches of government and

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reinforcing her image as a pragmatic and dialogue-oriented leader. She has provided firm assurances that, if elected president, there will be no witch hunts or vendettas, and that national reconciliation will be the foremost objective.

There is one step that requires no one's permission: the immediate return of opposition leaders, most of whom remain in exile. Some argue that "conditions are not yet in place." This is false. The country has seen

journalists and relatives of detainees holding vigils outside El Helicoide prison. Those who claim to lead must stand at the forefront of their people. Certainly, there are risks—but this is precisely the time to face them. Secretary Rubio has pressed the Chavista leadership to enact a broad amnesty and close El Helicoide. What comes next must be earned by Venezuelans themselves.

Argentina offers a sobering lesson. In 1982, the intervention of British armed forces, backed by NATO, defeated a dictatorship that irresponsibly sent thousands of young Argentines to their deaths, poorly equipped and unprepared. We remember our heroes with pride, but we condemn those who proved capable only of repression, torture, and forced disappearances against their own citizens.

Yet it was Raúl Alfonsín who subsequently won his party's primary and then secured 54 percent of the vote in the 1983 general election, leading Argentina's democratic restoration.

In Venezuela, that unambiguous democratic standard-bearer is María Corina Machado. Her place is not in Washington or Brussels, but at the head of her people in Caracas—and only there. She, and she alone, can serve as the catalyst for this irreversible process, one that should culminate in her election as president of Venezuela. There are no shortcuts to take and no permissions to request.

"Traveler, your footprints/ are the path, and nothing more/ traveler, there is no path/ the path is made by walking/ By walking, the path is made/ and when you look back/
you see the trail that never/ will be walked again/ Traveler, there is no path/ only wakes upon the sea."(poem by Antonio Machado).

Mariusz Kamiński

Polish politician. Member of the European Parliament (ECR Group). Former Minister of the Interior and Administration of Poland (2019–2023). Member of Law and Justice (PiS). Anti-communist activist.

Communism Fell in Europe. It Will Fall in Cuba.

A prominent Polish anti-communist leader draws a parallel between the fall of communism in Eastern Europe and the present crisis of Cuba's regime, which he characterizes as criminal and oppressive. Drawing on his experience in the anti-communist struggle, he argues that every dictatorship has an end—and that the Castro system is now undergoing irreversible erosion.

He sharply questions the EU–Cuba Political Dialogue and Cooperation Agreement (PDCA) and warns about Havana's collaboration with Moscow in the war against Ukraine. He calls for suspending concessions to the regime and decisively supporting the Cuban people's freedom.

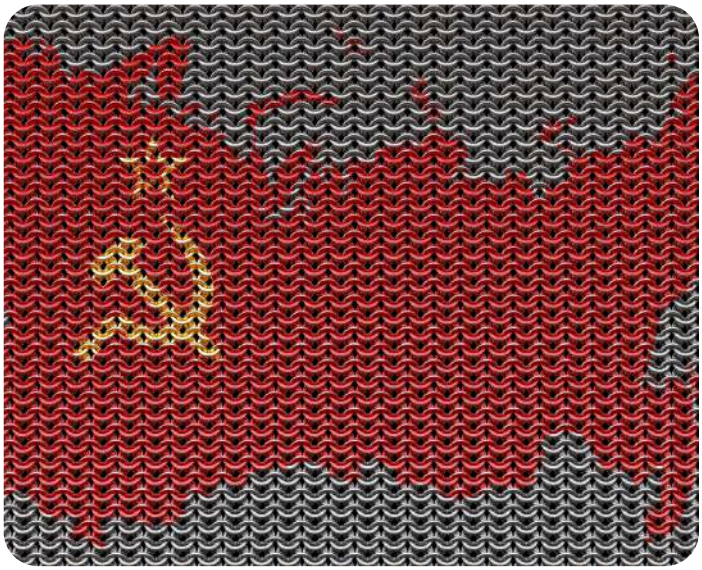
When, in the late 1980s and early 1990s, the Iron Curtain collapsed and the Soviet Union began to disintegrate, many of us believed that communism's final defeat worldwide was at hand. Yet that was not the case. The criminal and oppressive system—responsible for the deaths of millions and discredited before humanity—survived in Cuba.

But every dictatorship has its end. And the definitive fall of the Castro red dynasty—a regime that for decades destroyed freedom, family, faith, and human dignity—is now unfolding before our eyes.

I am Polish, and I know well what it means to live under communist oppression. I come from the country of Pope John Paul II, of Blessed Father Jerzy Popiełuszko, and of the ten-million-member "Solidarity" movement—Solidarity—from a nation that never accepted imposed communism and ultimately defeated it. My youth was defined by that struggle. We prevailed because the truth was on our side. Because we believed that evil cannot endure forever, that communism is criminal, inefficient, and contrary to human nature.

Today, looking at Cuba, I see the same courage. In Brussels, I have met many times with Cuban political prisoners—individuals who spent long months in prison cells for the price of speaking truth. They are noble and unbreakable people—true heroes. Their testimonies recount suffering, injustice, and state violence, but also deep patriotism and faith—proof that a human being cannot be broken when anchored in truth.

One of the first major issues I worked on in the European Parliament was the debate on September 18, 2024, dedicated to José Daniel Ferrer García. Following his release, we



welcomed him remotely at the Subcommittee on Human Rights meeting. We heard the voice of dignity—the dignity that the communist regime fears. That is why Ferrer was returned to prison, and why the world again demanded his immediate release.

Today, José Daniel Ferrer is free—but exiled from his homeland, deprived of the right recognized in Article 13(2) of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights: the right to return to one's own country. That right is illegally denied by communists to millions of Cubans.

The same occurred in my country. Communists brutally persecuted those who dared to call communism by its name, imprisoned them, and—under public pressure—handed them a "one-way passport." Yet Poles in exile organized, continued the struggle, and placed Poland's cause on the international agenda. For that reason, I watch with admiration my friends Rosa María Payá and Orlando Gutiérrez-Boronat, whose energy and commitment to their compatriots' freedom are exemplary.

"Communists brutally persecuted those who dared to call communism by its name, imprisoned them, and handed them a "one-way passport."

A few months ago, I had the honor of co-organizing the Transatlantic Parliamentary Forum for a Free Cuba in Brussels. Alongside lawmakers from four continents, we spoke with one voice in demanding the release of political prisoners and expressing a clearly negative assessment of the EU–Cuba Political Dialogue and Cooperation Agreement (PDCA).

Why? Because the regime in Havana not only tramples the rights of Cubans, it also threatens European security. Thousands of Cubans—under the control of communist intelligence services—have reportedly participated in Vladimir Putin's criminal aggression against Ukraine. In doing so, the regime demonstrates contempt not only for international

"The regime in Havana not only tramples the rights of Cubans, it also threatens European security. Thousands of Cubans—under the control of communist intelligence services—have reportedly participated in Vladimir Putin's criminal aggression against Ukraine."

law but also for the lives of its own citizens, whom it treats as a "resource" to repay its patron in Moscow.

Havana's hostile actions must be exposed. Recently, I invited U.S. Congressman Mario Díaz-Balart, Senator Alexis Calatayud, and Congressman Carlos A. Giménez, along with diplomats, policymakers, intelligence representatives, and Ukrainian experts, to the European Parliament. They were unequivocal: the Havana regime has participated in every military intervention Moscow has required. This demonstrates the Cuban communists' full political, economic, military, and intelligence dependency. The European Parliament recognizes this alarming reality and will reaffirm it in a resolution marking the anniversary of Russia's aggression.

The Havana regime counts among its allies governments known for brutality and contempt for human rights—in Moscow and Minsk. Yet democratic Belarusians and free Cubans also cooperate, supported not only by my political group, the European Conservatives and Reformists, but—according to recent votes—by a clear majority of Members of the European Parliament. I am proud to have contributed to that effort.

Only lasting and irreversible change can improve the condition of the Cuban people. Concessions to the regime merely prolong its existence:

they provide oxygen, funding, and legitimacy. The Cuban people are not the beneficiaries of such concessions. They remain prisoners of a communist dictatorship.

For that reason, we appeal to Kaja Kallas, High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs, not to repeat the errors of her predecessors. The European Parliament has adopted my proposal stipulating that no new EU funds reach the communist regime and that existing funds be audited by the European Court of Auditors. My call—and that of my conservative colleagues—to suspend the PDCA has now become the position of the entire European Parliament. This is a stain on European policy that must end.

I belong to the generation of Solidarity, and I know what it means to fight for freedom. Though thousands of miles separate Poland from Cuba, the Cuban struggle for liberty is deeply personal to me. Poles have always stood with those who fight for freedom. Cubans know well the perseverance of my compatriot Carlos Roloff Mialowski, who never lost faith in an independent Cuba.

Let me say this clearly: Cubans are not alone in their struggle for freedom. We who have endured the darkness of communism stand with you today. Freedom always prevails. And so, it will in Cuba.

Long live a free Cuba.

Berta Valle

Human rights advocate and communicator. Co-founder of the "Political Prisoner Support Program" of the World Liberty Congress, and of the "End Arbitrary Detention Initiative" at the University of Virginia.

After the Bars: Reintegration, Trauma, and Life After Political Imprisonment

In light of the political prisoner releases currently taking place in Venezuela, this article examines the experience of political imprisonment and its enduring effects on formerly detained individuals and their families, emphasizing that release marks only the beginning of a complex process of reintegration.

Drawing on the account of the 611 days of incarceration endured by Félix Maradiaga and his subsequent exile in Miami, the author analyzes trauma, the reconfiguration of family roles, and the legal, psychological, and economic challenges that persist after release.

The article highlights the absence of structured support mechanisms, which prompted the creation of practical guides and international support networks. It concludes that defending freedom requires not only securing release, but also fostering healing, reintegration, and repair.

When I think of the word freedom, I no longer imagine fireworks or solemn speeches. I think of a breath that becomes deep again, of a bottle of water without surveillance, of an embrace that does not fear clocks or cameras. Freedom, after political imprisonment, does not arrive as a single, definitive act. It comes in fragments, like light slipping through a crack. And in that process, families hold the delicate balance between hope and exhaustion, learning that leaving prison is not the end of the journey, but the beginning of a longer, more complex one: reintegration, healing, and rebuilding their lives.

I write from experience. My husband, Félix Maradiaga, survived 611 days of unjust imprisonment under extremely inhumane conditions. February 9 marked three years since his release—a date that marks not only our reunion after nearly four years of forced separation, but also the beginning of a silent and largely invisible process: learning how to live after political imprisonment. That day did not close a wound; it opened a new stage, full of personal, family, and collective challenges.

Writing from Miami—a city shaped by successive waves of political exile—I have come to understand that freedom often arrives hand in hand with displacement. Here, stories like ours coexist with thousands of others marked by forced departure, interrupted lives, and the slow work of rebuilding dignity far from home. Exile is not only a geographical condition; it is an emotional and civic one, deeply intertwined with the process of reintegration after political imprisonment.

Being the family member of a political prisoner means living a form

of suspended grief. One suffers for the person inside and for those of us who must remain standing outside, without permission to break. I learned that silence is not an option: in silence, abuse is perpetuated and harm becomes normalized. That is why, together with other brave women, we walked the halls of international organizations, gave interviews despite exhaustion, documented violations, and knocked on closed doors—not only for our loved ones, but for all political prisoners and their families.

That collective effort—with families from Nicaragua, Venezuela, Cuba, Russia, Iran, Rwanda, and other countries—left a clear lesson: there was no structured path to accompany the struggle for liberation. From that need came "Pathway to Freedom: Manual for the Liberation of Political Prisoners", which systematizes legal, political, and communications lessons and is now available online to other families through the Political Prisoner Support Team of the World Liberty Congress. But very soon, we understood something fundamental: no one

"Exile is not only a geographical condition; it is an emotional and civic one, deeply intertwined with the process of reintegration after political imprisonment."

prepares you for the day after.

Society celebrates release as an ending. For those of us who live it, it is only a comma. What do you do when the "free" person cannot sleep? How do you accompany a body that has endured isolation, humiliation, and fear? How do you rebuild a life when the present still feels like vertigo? From these questions emerged "After Liberation: Handbook for the Reintegration of Political Prisoners", a guide conceived as an outstretched hand for the first days, weeks, and years after release, also available online through the same support network.

Reintegration is not automatic. It requires medical care, attention to mental health, physical and digital

"For those released into exile, challenges multiply: migration, employment, housing, healthcare, language, and identity. Added to this is a little-discussed reality: financial exclusion. Reintegration also means recovering the minimum conditions of autonomy."

security, legal support, and the rebuilding of routines, work, and study. Trauma is not weakness; it is a natural consequence of sustained violence. Accompanying well means not forcing testimonies, not imposing rhythms, respecting silence, and creating space for words to emerge when they are ready.

Within families, reintegration also demands learning to live together again. During forced absence, roles change; upon reunion, everything must be renegotiated. It is a slow process that requires listening, patience, and tenderness. The same applies to children: they, too, are survivors of political imprisonment and need truth without cruelty, rituals of safety, and spaces to heal.

For those released into exile, challenges multiply: migration, employment, housing, healthcare, language, and identity. Added to this is a little-discussed reality: financial exclusion. Many former political prisoners are shut out of the banking system through blacklists or by being classified as "Politically Exposed Persons". Reintegration also means recovering the minimum conditions of autonomy.

Even so, I have witnessed deep resilience. I have seen people return to studying, working, laughing, and

loving. I have seen post-traumatic growth, community, and purpose. Small rituals—a shared meal, a walk, a song—become acts of resistance against those who tried to reduce us to a case file.

For this reason, together with my husband, I committed to advancing the "End Arbitrary Detention" campaign—an international initiative that seeks to recognize arbitrary detention for political reasons as a crime against humanity. Liberation is not enough: we must accompany, heal, reintegrate, and repair.

To the families who are waiting today for a call that does not come, I say: you are not alone. To those who have just reunited, I say: give yourselves time. External freedom needs internal freedom to mature at its own pace. And to the international community, I make a concrete request: accompany the aftermath.

Freedom is not celebrated once. It is cared for every day.

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