

# AGENDA



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## CRUCIAL MOMENT

With the pendulum swinging to the right, Latin America is entering an electoral period whose outcomes could shift the balance of power in the Western world. Will it follow in the footsteps of the United States and Europe?



**U.S.:** The Americas Act and strategies to counter China's advance in LATAM

**Europe:** In search of free trade

**Paraguay:** The successful Zero Hunger program

**Spain:** Cradle of Ibero-American values

**Bolivia:** Fragmented populism

**Cuba:** Is European funding coming to an end?



**Carlos Díaz-Rosillo, Ph.D.** 

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## Monthly reflection

# ¿Why the World Needs Leaders?

“Leaders think and act at the intersection of two axes: the first, between the past and the future; the second, between enduring values and the aspirations of those they lead (...) The essential attributes a leader needs are courage and character.” - Henry Kissinger, *Leadership: Six Studies in World Strategy*.

Leaders are made. Therefore, leadership can be taught and learned. This is the guiding principle behind the Adam Smith Center for Economic Freedom’s academic effort to inspire and train individuals with the capacity to tackle the challenges of both the present and the future.

Throughout history, the great transformations of humanity have been shaped by the decisions—good and bad—of those in positions of leadership.

The founders of Western civilization, the Greek philosophers, devoted much of their work to reflecting on the virtues of those in power. Since then, leadership has remained at the heart of political theory and practice.

From ancient empires to modern democracies and global corporations, the way societies choose and train their leaders has largely determined their political stability, economic development, and social progress. Understanding how the concept of

*"the great transformations of humanity have been shaped by the decisions—good or bad—of those in positions of leadership."*

leadership has evolved over time helps us grasp why, in today's world, it is essential to train capable leaders with the skills to drive change across the public and private sectors.

In the 19th century, the so-called "Great Man Theory" gained traction, suggesting that leaders were extraordinary figures endowed with innate, almost superhuman qualities. One of its main proponents, Thomas Carlyle, claimed that "the history of the world is but the biography of great men." This essentialist view inspired early 20th-century trait theories that sought to identify the qualities shared by effective leaders: intelligence, charisma, strength, and determination.

However, it soon became clear that traits alone did not explain why some people succeeded in leading under certain conditions and failed under others. In 1948, Ralph Stogdill demonstrated that possessing leadership traits was not a guarantee of success, shifting the focus toward contextual factors, challenges, and the values relevant to a particular moment.

By the mid-20th century, the debate moved toward leadership behaviors.



Behavioral theories, such as those developed at Ohio State and the University of Michigan, identified styles of leadership focused on tasks or personal relationships. Leadership began to be understood as a set of skills. Most importantly, these were not innate characteristics or fixed personality traits but techniques that could be taught and developed, such as communication, decision-making, delegation, and motivation.

At the same time, situational and contingency theories emerged, asserting that leadership effectiveness depends on multiple contextual variables: the type of task, the level of competence of collaborators, and external conditions. Scholars like Paul Hersey and Kenneth Blanchard emphasized the importance of adapting leadership style to each specific circumstance and group dynamic.

### **Inspiring Change: Transformational Leadership**

By the late 20th century, the concept of transformational leadership, developed by James MacGregor Burns and Bernard Bass, gained prominence. This model posits that a leader should do more than manage; they should inspire meaningful change in individuals and organizations. Transformational leadership is defined by a clear vision, the ability to motivate people toward higher goals, intellectual stimulation, and the personal development of followers.

Unlike transactional leadership, which relies on rewards and punishments,

*"In the 21st century, leadership operates in what experts describe as a VUCA world—an acronym for Volatility, Uncertainty, Complexity, and Ambiguity."*

transformational leadership seeks to mobilize people's deepest aspirations. This approach is especially effective in times of disruption and change, when maintaining the *status quo* is no longer sufficient.

In the 21st century, leadership operates in what experts describe as a VUCA world—an acronym for Volatility, Uncertainty, Complexity, and Ambiguity. The term was coined by the U.S. Army War College to describe the strategic environment after the Cold War: a more complex and multilateral world order. Today, that context is marked by rapid change, increasing difficulty in forecasting future scenarios, intricate networks of interaction, and limited clarity for decision-making. A hyper-connected, interdependent world, technological



disruption, polarization, and recurrent crises reinforce this volatile setting. It demands a new generation of leaders able to adapt, interpret shifting environments, and act with strategic clarity amid uncertainty—what leading thinkers now call *adaptive leadership*.

The evolution of leadership theory clearly shows that leadership today cannot be left to chance. It requires rigorous training that combines technical and strategic competence, interpersonal and communication skills, adaptability in the face of uncertainty, and a deep commitment to values that provide direction in the most complex moments.

Developing these abilities and forming such leaders is one of the great challenges of our time. It is not just about improving organizational performance, but about strengthening institutions, rebuilding public trust, and addressing today's complex dilemmas while advancing progress within a framework of freedom. This is the mission we embrace at the Adam Smith Center for Economic Freedom, where this fall we are launching an innovative undergraduate program, a Bachelor of

Science in Leadership in Business and Government, and in 2026, a Master's degree program in the same field. Educating leaders with vision—who can understand their historical moment, read their context clearly, act with principled conviction, and inspire others with purpose—is one of the most important undertakings for building a truly free and prosperous society.



# Monthly Editorial

**Julián Obiglio**

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## Latin America: Is the Pendulum Swinging Back to the Right?

Latin America is entering a new electoral season that could determine whether the region follows the trend seen in Europe and the United States—with the political pendulum swinging to the right—or whether populist leftist forces will remain dominant. For this reason, I'll dedicate a slightly longer analysis than usual to examine the outlook in each country with confirmed elections.

### **Bolivia**

The first electoral challenge comes in Bolivia, where general elections are scheduled for August 17th, 2025. The country is suffering a deep economic and social crisis caused by the longstanding populist government's mismanagement, which has affected all sectors of society. Bolivia's revenues

are declining after exhausting its gas reserves, which had sustained the economy for decades, allowing it to subsidize public services and widespread consumption.

With the end of the populist boom, a black market for U.S. dollars has emerged, fuel shortages have worsened, investment and production have declined, and the cost of food and medicine has surged—leading to a sharp rise in poverty and an economic slowdown.



*"All indications suggest a tight race between a populist leftist candidate and a center-right opponent."*

President Luis Arce announced he will not seek re-election and has called for leftist forces to unite behind a single candidate with the best chance of defeating the opposition. That effort failed, and he ultimately nominated his Minister of Government, Eduardo del Castillo. It remains to be seen whether Arce will run for the Senate.

Evo Morales is constitutionally barred from running and has nominated Andrónico Rodríguez, the current President of the Senate. Rounding out the leftist field is Eva Copa, the mayor of El Alto.

Meanwhile, the opposition is also fragmented and has failed to rally around a single candidate. The leading opposition figures are former President Jorge "Tuto" Quiroga (2001–2002) and businessman Samuel

Doria Medina, who are running neck and neck in the polls.

A significant factor this time is the possibility of a runoff election in October. Though established in 2009, the runoff mechanism has never been used, as MAS candidates (Morales or Arce) always won outright in the first round.

All indications suggest a tight race between a populist leftist candidate and a center-right opponent. Some analysts believe the economic and political crisis could even push both conservative candidates into a runoff, sidelining the populist left altogether.

Uncertainty also looms due to widespread social unrest and conflict zones such as Chapare, where Evo Morales remains entrenched and where the state may face serious challenges in ensuring free and fair elections.

## **Honduras**

On November 30th, 2025, Honduras will hold one of the most critical rule.



elections in its modern history. This single-round presidential vote could determine whether the country returns to full democracy or continues down a path of authoritarian leftist rule.

The radical leftist Libre Party, in power since 2022, has consolidated control over all branches of government, including the military and police forces, which now act as political players.

Under President Xiomara Castro—guided from behind the scenes by her husband, former president Manuel Zelaya—the country has

plunged into a severe crisis marked by economic instability, rampant insecurity, and political uncertainty. Drug trafficking and criminal gangs (maras) have returned with impunity.

The main opposition candidate is Nasry Asfura, former mayor of Tegucigalpa and a businessman popularly known as “Tito Asfura” or “Papi a la orden.” He represents a center-right, conservative-liberal coalition (Partido Nacional de Honduras) that has previously governed the country.

## Chile

Chile’s presidential election for the 2026–2030 term will be held on Sunday, November 16th, 2025, alongside parliamentary elections. If a runoff is required, it will take place on December 14th.

For the first time, mandatory voting will be implemented, which is likely to boost turnout. Polls suggest a strong chance for a right-wing victory, either through traditional or more conservative political forces.



The traditional right is represented by Evelyn Matthei, supported by a coalition that includes the National Renewal (RN), the Independent Democratic Union (UDI), and Political Evolution (Evópoli). Meanwhile, José Antonio Kast of the Republican Party represents a more conservative, anti-establishment right. He reached the runoff in the previous presidential election.

On the left, the electoral field is highly fragmented. The major leftist parties will attempt to consolidate their forces in a primary scheduled for June 29th. If the winner represents the Communist Party, it could increase the chances of both right-wing candidates making it to the runoff.

## **Costa Rica**

Costa Rica will hold general elections on Sunday, February 1st, 2026. Voters will elect the president, two vice presidents, and all 57 members of the Legislative Assembly.

The constitution prohibits immediate re-election, so President Rodrigo

*"Under President Xiomara Castro the country has plunged into a severe crisis marked by economic instability and political uncertainty."*

Chaves Robles is not eligible to run. He is unlikely to name a successor before the final deadline (around September), preferring to keep the spotlight on himself. The leading contender for the official nomination is Laura Fernandez, a former Minister of the Presidency.

On the center-left, Álvaro Ramos has been officially nominated by the National Liberation Party.

Also of note is Juan Carlos Hidalgo, a former CNN presenter, who has been confirmed as the sole candidate of the Social Christian Unity Party (PUSC). Representing a center-right, conservative-liberal platform, Hidalgo has gained strong public support.

## Perú

Peru's general elections are scheduled for Sunday, April 12th, 2026. Voters will choose the president, vice presidents, congressional representatives, and delegates to the Andean Parliament for the 2026–2031 term.

These elections may be the most complex in Peru's history, not only due to the number of positions at stake but also because of the record number of political parties eligible to participate. This vote also marks a return to a bicameral legislature after 32 years of unicameralism.



Major candidacies will be defined in the second half of 2025. Given the extremely low approval ratings of the current president, many anticipate a rightward shift. The Popular Force party (Fuerza Popular) and its leader, Keiko Fujimori, who has just turned 50, are expected to play a key role.

## Colombia

Colombia will hold two major elections in 2026: legislative elections on March 8th to renew both chambers of Congress, and the presidential election on May 31st, with a potential runoff on June 21st.

President Gustavo Petro, a populist leftist, is facing a sharp decline in popularity, according to all major polls. However, the center-right has yet to consolidate behind a single candidate. One of the most prominent figures, Miguel Uribe of the Democratic Center party (Centro Democrático), was recently targeted in a shooting. After sustaining multiple gunshot wounds, he remains in critical condition.

## Paraguay

Paraguay will hold municipal elections in 2026, with party primaries scheduled for June 7th and general elections for October 4th. These elections will serve as a barometer of support for the national government, whose term runs until August 15th, 2028. Party primaries for the presidential election are expected in late 2027, followed by general elections soon after.

The results will also indicate whether the ruling Colorado Party will remain united behind President Santiago Peña or whether competing factions will emerge. Peña's administration is gaining recognition for its economic liberalization, investment attraction, modernization, and poverty reduction efforts. This trajectory could position him and his allies for continued leadership in 2028.

In this issue of AGENDA Magazine, Paraguay's Minister of Education details the country's successful "Zero Hunger" initiative—a model for reducing poverty and improving

*"Given the extremely low approval ratings of the current president, many anticipate a rightward shift..."*

public welfare. It's a must-read.

## Brazil

Brazil's general elections will be held on October 4th, 2026. Voters will elect the president, vice president, members of the National Congress, governors, lieutenant governors, and all state legislators. If no presidential or gubernatorial candidate wins a majority in the first round, a runoff will be held on October 25th.

President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva of the Workers' Party (PT) is eligible to run for a fourth term, though he has stated he will not seek re-election. However, such announcements in politics are often fluid. The center-right has several strong potential contenders, but none have officially launched their campaigns. Many are watching Tarcísio Gomes de Freitas—



a 49-year-old military officer and engineer, former Infrastructure Minister under Bolsonaro, and current governor of São Paulo—as a potential conservative leader. He remains a strong possibility, though much remains to be seen.

Currently, national politics are shaped by the “centrão”—a powerful bloc of legislators with no clear ideological alignment who support the government in exchange for political concessions. Brazil’s main challenge is whether it can shift its ideological course while restoring coherence to a fragmented legislature dominated by personal interests.

## Conclusion

As we’ve seen, the region is heading into a crucial electoral period with a clear shift toward the center-right. Whether this trend materializes remains to be seen. If it does, Latin America could once again resemble the political landscape of a decade ago, when most governments were in the hands of conservative or liberal forces.

If such a scenario unfolds, it may be an opportunity to reform many supranational organizations that have long been co-opted by the left and whose actions are often ideologically biased. Ten years ago, there was a political majority to do so but no regional leadership to lead the way. Hopefully, this time, we’ll see a different outcome.

In this edition of **AGENDA** Magazine, we examine the pressing challenges facing the Atlantic space, with a special focus on Latin American countries that warrant closer attention.

Don’t miss it!



# AGENDA

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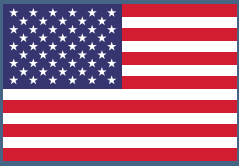
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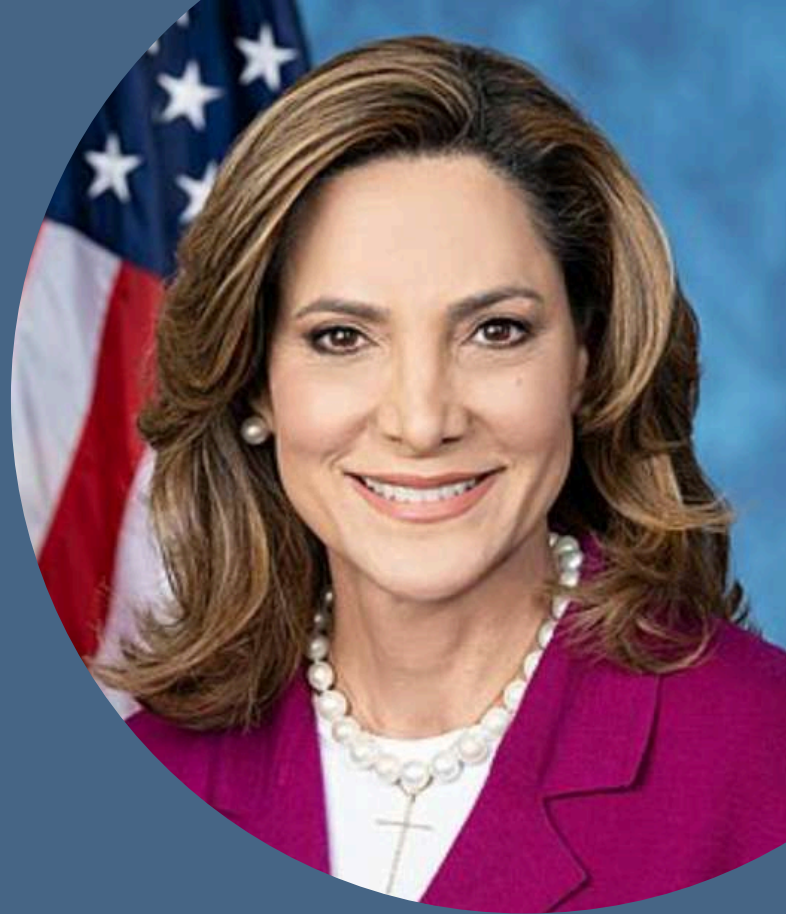


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# María Elvira Salazar

*Congresswoman Maria Elvira Salazar represents District 27 in Miami-Dade County, Florida. She belongs to the Republican Party. She is a journalist and has been a prominent television host.*



## The Americas Act: The Key to Beating Communist China in Our Hemisphere

*After warning about the strategic advance of the Chinese Communist Party in Latin America, Congresswoman María Elvira Salazar argues that the Americas Act (the Americas Trade and Investment Act) is a concrete and urgent response to curb Beijing's influence in the Western Hemisphere.*

*The author states that the bill aims to reorient supply chains toward democratic allies in Latin America and the Caribbean, promote job creation, and strengthen trade ties with countries committed to freedom.*

*She believes that, through massive investments in infrastructure and trade agreements, China has overtaken the United States as the region's main economic partner, exporting surveillance technology and authoritarian models.*

China is not just competing with America; it is quietly conquering our Hemisphere while waging, and arguably winning, a war without firing a single shot. Its weapons are not tanks or missiles, but investments and trade deals. These economic entrapments in Latin America and around the world are part of China's calculated strategy to dominate global trade, influence political outcomes, and export authoritarian governance. And it's working. Today, China is outpacing the United States as the dominant trading partner in Latin America, slowly reshaping the region in its authoritarian image.

That's why, in the coming weeks, I will reintroduce the Americas Trade and Investment Act ("Americas Act"), a bold and strategic response to this growing threat. The bill provides the United States with a real economic plan to confront China's aggression, bring critical supply chains back to our shores, and reclaim leadership in our own backyard.

For Miami and South Florida, the undisputed Gateway to the Americas, this bill means more trade, more investment, and more good-paying jobs right here at home. It strengthens our role as the Hemisphere's hub for commerce and logistics, while ensuring Miami remains the beating heart of U.S. engagement with Latin America

## The Problem

The Chinese Communist Party's (CCP) strategy is clear: invest in critical infrastructure, such as ports, roads, and telecommunications, and then trap nations in dependence.





These aren't just economic deals; they are Trojan horses for authoritarian influence. By replacing the United States as the primary economic partner of Latin America, Beijing is exporting surveillance technology, undermining the rule of law, and fueling corruption that strengthens criminal cartels.

With each deal, China moves Latin American nations closer to its oppressive, authoritarian model and further away from democracy. And the deal volume has increased exponentially.

China's investments in South America have increased by 3,000% over the last 20 years, overtaking the U.S. as the region's top trading partner. This isn't just an economic threat; it's a national security risk. China's control over critical infrastructure and supply chains in our Hemisphere directly weakens America's strategic position, compromises regional stability, and increases migration pressure at our border.

*"With each deal, China moves Latin American nations closer to its oppressive, authoritarian model and further away from democracy."*

We cannot allow this to continue. The Americas Act is our answer, bold, urgent, and strategic.

### **The Solution**

The Americas Act will provide a powerful and urgent response to China's growing threat by restoring our economic ties with Latin America and reshoring jobs we have lost back home to our Hemisphere. My Americas Act incentivizes American businesses to shift critical manufacturing away from Communist China and toward our democratic allies in Latin America and the Caribbean, promoting job creation through targeted loans and tax incentives.

While we are still finalizing the full



legislative text, I want to share how we expect this vision to take shape through targeted, transparent, and democratic partnerships that will anchor the economic future of our Hemisphere.

At the heart of this effort is a new initiative: Growth in the Americas.



Housed within the U.S. Department of Commerce, it offers a framework for trade and investment rooted in free-market values. Countries that meet specific standards will gain access to investment incentives, trade privileges, and a pathway to deeper integration with the U.S. economy.

Backing this effort is a powerful new tool, the Americas Investment Corporation, a \$100 billion U.S.-owned development bank that will finance infrastructure, energy, and logistics projects across the region. This is a genuine alternative to China's Belt and Road Initiative, free from the Communist Party's corruption strings.

For American workers and companies, the benefits are direct. The Act is expected to include \$10 billion in tax incentives to reshore and nearshore critical manufacturing away from China and into the United States and our allies. It targets key industries essential for our survival, such as textiles, pharmaceuticals, and semiconductors, and includes enforcement mechanisms to ensure

that supply chains are free from slave labor and are linked to trusted partners.

We also end Beijing's backdoor into our economy by closing the de minimis loophole, which has allowed billions of dollars in Chinese goods to flood the U.S. market duty-free. The Act restores fairness by requiring reciprocity and cutting off duty-free access for China and Russia.

And finally, we will reward those who choose freedom. The Americas Act opens the door to deeper trade ties for nations that defend democracy. It lays the groundwork for expanding USMCA, the gold standard of trade agreements. If our neighbors embrace democracy and build sound institutions, they should be able to conduct more business with

*"The Americas Act opens the door to deeper trade ties for nations that defend democracy."*

the United States. The Act creates a gateway program to help countries like Uruguay and Costa Rica prepare to join the USMCA and become a democratic trade bloc capable of standing up to China.

As Chairwoman of the Western Hemisphere Subcommittee on the House Foreign Affairs Committee, I have made it my mission to stop the spread of authoritarianism in our region, from Havana to Caracas to Beijing. The Trump Administration shares this vision.

Recent breakthroughs demonstrate what's possible when we act with clarity and courage, as seen in Secretary of State Rubio's announcement that Panama is departing from China's Belt and Road initiative. But isolated victories aren't enough. America needs a strategy. The Americas Act is that strategy. And these are just a few of the highlights. It will grow the American economy. It will bring manufacturing back from China. It will strengthen democracy and stop the criminal networks

driving illegal migration. And it will let every country in the region know: if you stand with freedom, America will stand with you.

We cannot afford to wait. China is moving quickly and quietly, everywhere we are not. If we fail to act, our Hemisphere will be lost to complete Communist influence. But if we lead, clearly, proudly, and boldly, we can secure the future of our region and restore America's rightful place as the economic and moral leader of the Western Hemisphere.

The future of our children, and our children's children, depends on it. It's time to draw a clear line in the sand and let the world know we will not relinquish economic and strategic leadership in Latin America, or elsewhere, to Beijing's authoritarian, communist playbook.

That is the purpose of the Americas Act. And that is the future we must fight for, together!







## Davor Ivo Stier

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### Latin America and the European Union: Challenges for Cooperation in a Fragmented World

*How should we respond to this new global context and the rise of trade fragmentation?*

*The author argues that the European Union must not remain a passive observer but must take action. He stresses the importance of pushing forward pending trade agreements and finalizing the nearly completed deal with Mercosur.*

*He also highlights the strategic value of these actions and the positive effects of free trade areas.*



“There is a time for everything under the heavens.” Paraphrasing this verse from Ecclesiastes, we might say that in international politics, there are times of integration and times of fragmentation. Today, we are at a turning point: globalization no longer serves as the dominant ideological framework, and the rules-based international order is beginning to fracture.

The return of Trump to power may have accelerated this process, but the seeds of fragmentation had already been sown. “America First” is more a symptom than a cause—an outcome of globalization, which shifted production from the West to the East, sparking deep frustration among middle classes unable to adapt to the new global economy. Their objective impoverishment was further compounded by waves of migration, which populist politics quickly identified—and blamed—as the root of widespread discontent.

In short, globalization itself gave rise to

*“In international politics, there are times of integration and times of fragmentation. Today, we are at a turning point”*

the very factors that led to its decline, disproving Fukuyama’s “end of history” thesis, which envisioned the triumph of market economies and liberal democracy. Now, the very power that founded the postwar liberal order is working to dismantle it because liberal democracy relies on strong, satisfied middle classes. When they are impoverished, they turn to strongman leaders who build walls, impose tariffs, and shut out foreign competition. And with that, globalization ends—not as a reality but as an organizing ideology in international relations.

This is not the first time it has happened. A century ago, a globalized economic system—by the standards of the technology of the day—also collapsed. But a hundred years later,

technological advances have brought global connectivity to unprecedented levels. So, while globalization as an ideology may be exhausted, the global challenges it sought to address still remain and require international cooperation.

Climate change, for example, is a global phenomenon that knows no borders and cannot be stopped by walls or tariffs. Solutions lie in the development of new technologies, which require significant investment and global supply chains. Yet, as multilateral institutions are increasingly marginalized, a new form of geopolitical competition has emerged—one that centers on securing rare earth minerals, market access, and investment flows.

In this new context, Latin America and Europe can choose to remain mere observers of the global power shift—subjects of other powers' ambitions—or they can take their fate into their own hands and become true players on the international stage. Choosing the latter, the



European Union has modernized its agreements with Chile and Mexico and, after more than two decades of negotiation, has finalized a deal with Mercosur.

The strategic importance of the EU-Mercosur relationship cannot be overstated. The agreement reached in Montevideo in December 2024 creates one of the world's largest free trade areas, encompassing 780 million people trading goods and investing together in mutual development.

So far, Latin America and Europe are expected to be the slowest-growing regions in 2025. However, in an increasingly fragmented world, the EU-Mercosur agreement offers both sides of the Atlantic a comparative advantage. The trade chapter alone could increase exchanges by 37%. On top of that, there are significant investment commitments in the development cooperation chapter, combining natural wealth with financial and technological potential from both partners.

Furthermore, the relationship between Europe and Latin America stands out from other free trade and cooperation agreements because of a long, shared history that has created a unique community of values, culture, and destiny. The political dialogue chapter of the EU-Mercosur agreement reflects this reality and provides an institutional framework to find common responses to today's challenges.

There is a time for everything. In this era of fragmentation, Latin America

and Europe have both the opportunity and the responsibility to face that challenge together—pooling their strengths and capacities and laying the foundation for a future international order in which they stand united as allies and key players.





# Luis Ramírez

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## Zero Hunger: A Policy of Equity, Education, and Social Development

In August 2024, the Government of Paraguay launched the Zero Hunger program—an unprecedented inter-ministerial initiative for the country—with an action plan centered on student health. Key components include:

Dental care; the implementation of a Nutritional Food Surveillance System (SISVAN) to monitor indicators such as weight, height, and waist circumference; the promotion of schools serving healthy meals; teaching proper handwashing; eye and hearing screenings; vaccination plans against chickenpox, tetanus, and human papillomavirus (HPV); mass deworming campaigns; and access to clean drinking water.

The Minister of Education shares the excellent results achieved thus far.



Upon taking office, President Santiago Peña—who entrusted me with the responsibility of leading the Ministry of Education—faced the following statistics in our country: a monetary poverty rate of 22.7% among a total population of 5,871,816 people. This represented approximately 1,330,893 individuals earning below the cost of the basic food basket.

In rural areas, poverty reached 28.8%, affecting 639,144 people, of whom 207,171 lived in extreme poverty. In urban areas, the poverty rate stood at 19.4%, impacting about 691,748 people. Indigenous communities were in an even more critical state, with poverty rates of 66.16% and extreme poverty at 34.4%. The monthly per-person cost of the food basket—or the extreme poverty line—in urban areas was 359,480 guaraníes, while the total poverty line was 853,778 guaraníes.

This population was not only facing economic hardship but also a

multidimensional poverty scenario that affected key areas such as housing, health, education, and employment. The open unemployment rate was 5.2%, which translates to approximately 162,275 people. In terms of education, 4.7% of those over the age of 15 could not read or write, equating to approximately 249,513 people. Around 100,000 individuals aged 5 to 19 were not attending educational institutions due to economic limitations. Meanwhile, only 9.9% of the population had an average of 15 years of schooling. Obesity affected 32.4% and overweight 36.9% of the adult population.



We were thus faced with a multidimensional problem that required solutions of the same magnitude. That's why Zero Hunger became a state policy, based on proper nutrition to provide healthy food to the new generations. The goal is to help students grow up healthy with balanced meals while also creating incentives to keep children in school.

Before Zero Hunger reached these underserved communities, school participation rates hovered between 50% and 55%. Today, that average has jumped dramatically to 98%. The first major step to improving the quality of learning is simply being in school. For many years, the education system struggled to retain students through various programs. This initiative has achieved that goal in an exceptional, nearly unbeatable way. It is the foundation for ensuring that well-nourished children have the proper neural connections to support quality learning, to remain alert, engaged, and focused. Nutrition is essential to support all components related to

*"This project is the first step for ensuring that well-nourished children have the proper neural connections to support quality learning"*

learning, including mental health. Well-nourished, healthier, and happier children are more likely to enjoy good mental well-being.

This project extends beyond the classroom, revitalizing the entire educational community. Nearly 40,000 women—mothers, sisters, aunts, and grandmothers—have been trained, educated, and certified to work as school cooks. This not only dignifies employment but also transforms lives, as they can now support their families with meaningful work.

Small-scale family farming is more active than ever. Those who own small plots of land can now sell their produce to the Zero Hunger program, which prioritizes purchases



from these small producers. This supports the growth of small and medium-sized enterprises, increases formal employment, and promotes dignified labor. All of this creates a significant economic dynamic in the community, with the school becoming the epicenter of local development.

This is a project with great social impact. Families now have the means to feed their children, and adults can work and earn decent wages to support their households. This generates social stability, well-being, joy, and progress, helping build the human capital needed to tackle the country's major challenges.

Education is the core—the focal point where all these transformations

begin. It must radiate that sense of community, that spirit of encounter, and that path of development. It must also be a place where we learn to live together in peace and harmony, allowing our children to grow up happy and reach their full potential.

For all these reasons, the Zero Hunger project has become a highly impactful public policy—one that creates the conditions for social development and targets the eradication of poverty. The allocation of over 300 million dollars from the national government to this initiative is a clear sign of confidence in its success.

To ensure long-term sustainability, Paraguay has established a National School Nutrition Council, supported by a dedicated fund to sustain and expand the program. Today, nine million meals are served to children every week—an extraordinary number that mobilizes society and calls us to build a completely different, transformed community.



## Ildefonso Castro

*Secretary of International Policy and Foreign Policy Advisor to the President of Spain's Popular Party. He has served as Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs and Director General of International Affairs in the Office of the Prime Minister.*



### Spain is an American Nation

*The author, an expert in international affairs, analyzes Ibero-America as a community of values that unites both sides of the Atlantic.*

*He emphasizes the importance of preserving its identity and maintaining an international presence, as well as developing a strategy for renewal and future growth. America cannot be understood without Spain, and Spain cannot be understood without America.*

*Let's find out why.*



America cannot be understood without Spain, and Spain cannot be understood without America. Spain is an American nation—not by geography, but by history, language, and destiny. Spain cannot be fully understood without Spanish America, without the deep bond that links it to a space of free and equal citizens, diverse yet united by a shared civilization. The Ibero-American community is a political project, a space for cooperation with the potential to exert influence—if it is structured with a clear purpose. Traditions that endure never remain frozen: they transform without ceasing to be, and they project themselves forward without betraying their essence because the past gains greater meaning when it helps us imagine the future.

Latin America is more than just a group of culturally connected countries—it is also one of the regions with the greatest global potential, a key component of the transatlantic relationship, and a substantial part of the West and its system of values. It

holds the largest area of arable land on the planet, making it a reserve for global food security. It also possesses vast energy resources and critical minerals, such as lithium, copper, and rare earths, essential for a rational, non-ideological green transition and even for the technological revolution. Moreover, it is a demographically young, dynamic, and creative region. It produces science, culture, and talent. Its cities are innovation hubs. Mexico, Brazil, and Argentina are members of the G20 (the forum of the world's twenty most important economies), underscoring the region's growing weight on the global stage.

Adding to all this is a structural fact: millions of people in Spain have close family ties with Latin America. These bonds form a living network of



constant connections. These communities are not just present—they are protagonists. They work, start businesses, and create. Reality demands ideas, policies, and a clear awareness that what's at stake is significant. Spain's policy toward Latin America must once again become a priority.

Furthermore, Latin Americans who arrive in Spain fully integrate into our society, sharing values, assuming responsibilities, and contributing their talents. Not only do they integrate easily into our society, but they also enrich it with their hard work, their culture, and their commitment to freedom. It is a tremendous asset for Spain to have an immigrant population that is already a vibrant part of our shared present and future. Spaniards, too, were—and in some ways still are—emigrants across the ocean.

The Ibero-American community undoubtedly holds geopolitical value. In a time of global redefinition, where historic alliances are strained and new

*"Latin Americans who arrive in Spain fully integrate into our society, sharing values, assuming responsibilities, and contributing their talents."*

power blocs emerge, strengthening the Ibero-American community increases our capacity for influence. This requires broad vision, a sense of responsibility, and strategic intelligence: knowing who we are so we can understand what we can achieve in the world, if we act together.

Thanks to this close and sustained connection, Spain can help foster better mutual understanding between Europe and Latin America. Our ties to both regions allow us to engage with knowledge and sensitivity in spaces for dialogue and collaboration between the two shores. That is a geopolitical advantage we must turn into leadership, into initiative, into effective influence.

However, to have a voice, one must first know what they want to say. Ambiguity doesn't build leadership. What's needed is will, vision, and action. Being a bridge is not about neutrality—it's about sustaining ties, shouldering responsibility, and building paths where there is distance.

It takes will and ambition. We must recognize that historical ties need to be updated in line with public policies, financial tools, business partnerships, academic cooperation, and active diplomacy. Unfortunately, Spain's current government is the main obstacle to this undertaking. The words written by Miguel de Unamuno 110 years ago in his article *National Will* resonate strongly today:



“There is no national will, no national consciousness because there is no international will, no international consciousness... And I am convinced that even the resolution of the smallest local issue depends on our feeling like a nation in relation to, and alongside, other nations.”

The United States is—and will continue to be—an essential actor in the future of the American continent. Preserving and strengthening a constructive relationship with the U.S. is important. Though there may be differences, problems, and challenges, it is encouraging to see that today's Administration includes senior officials with sensitivity, knowledge, and vision for the Western Hemisphere—especially in the defense and promotion of freedom and democracy, which are necessary (though not sufficient) conditions for prosperity.

Latin America recovered democracy in the 1980s, a process influenced by Spain's exemplary democratic transition. Our democracies must be



nurtured and defended on a daily basis. Today, the region faces three dictatorships: Cuba, Venezuela, and Nicaragua—regimes that persecute, repress, and intimidate. Dictatorships are factories of indignity and poverty, both material and moral. To these three scourges, we must add the troubling phenomenon of “elected autocrats,” who, under the guise of legitimate origins, undermine democratic principles. We must act together and with determination to denounce these dictatorships and “elected autocracies” because our agenda is—and must remain—an unwavering commitment to freedom, democracy, and prosperity.

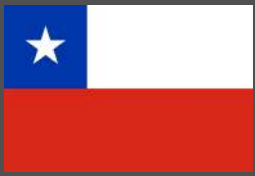
Ideologizing the relationship with Ibero-America is a mistake. This is not about right versus left. It’s about

democracies versus dictatorships, freedom versus autocracy, human rights versus repression. This is a battle of principles and values that goes beyond day-to-day political disputes. Let us defend an agenda of freedom, individual rights, and democracy—with clarity, with conviction, and with vision, because we are a family. And families don’t divide—they take care of each other.

Spain is an American nation because its identity, its global presence, and its internal renewal are deeply tied to what happens in Latin America. Acknowledging this is not only an act of insight but a strategy to build a freer, fairer, and more prosperous future for all. As Octavio Paz once said, America is not so much a tradition to be continued as it is a future to be realized.

*“Ideologizing the relationship with Ibero-America is a mistake. It’s about democracies versus dictatorships,”*





## Guillermo Ramírez Diez

*President of the Independent Democratic Union (UDI) party in Chile. Member of Parliament for Las Condes, Vitacura, Lo Barnechea, La Reina, and Peñalolén. He has served as a senior advisor at the Pontifical Catholic University of Chile and as president of the Gremialist Movement. During President Sebastián Piñera's first term, he worked at the Ministry General Secretariat of the Presidency.*



### Presidential and Parliamentary Elections in Chile: What's at Stake?

What political scenario is unfolding in Chile ahead of the upcoming presidential elections scheduled for late 2025?

After several years under a radical left-wing government marked by instability and uncertainty—and failed constitutional reforms—the center-right now leads all electoral polls.

Will Chile return to sound state policies and reclaim the leadership role it once held in the southern part of the continent? One of the main leaders of the Chile Vamos coalition reflects on these questions.

At this point, it seems almost obvious to say that Chile is undergoing a period of intense political and social upheaval. We have gone from attempts to completely refound the country—breaking away from the very foundations that built our society—to a situation unprecedented in our history: three right-wing presidential candidates currently lead all the polls.

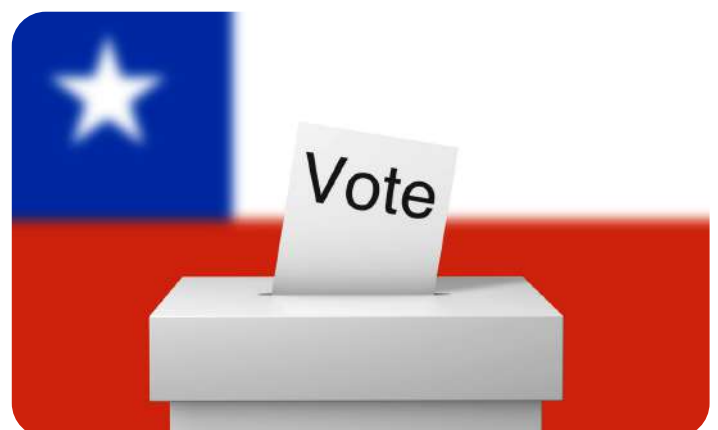
Indeed, the Chile of today is vastly different from the country that existed between the social unrest of 2019 and the first constitutional referendum of 2022. Today, we have a democratically legitimized Constitution, a government with historically low approval ratings, and a society that appears to be calling for more security and better economic conditions, along with greater freedom.

If the presidential elections were held today, the top three candidates would likely be from the right. This is a unique situation in the country's history—and, frankly, one that may

never happen again.

This diagnosis may seem obvious and will surely be the subject of future studies in history and sociology. What's less obvious, however, is that this period of turbulence may be drawing to a close, opening the door to a new phase of stability and growth. That is exactly what will be at stake in Chile during the November presidential and parliamentary elections: the economic and social takeoff of our country in a climate of political stability and peace.

In Latin America, presidential and parliamentary elections are often turning points, where the fate of political power has a clear and direct impact on society—much more so than in Europe or the United States. After years of instability and



uncertainty—largely caused by the rise of a radical left whose agenda was embedded in a failed new Constitution and a government ultimately outmatched by reality—Chile now has a real opportunity to reclaim its leadership in the region and return to being a model state, one where good policies were not only conceived but also well implemented.

After years of political instability—brought on by the 2019 unrest, the pandemic, and a constitutional process that included proposals such as the creation of a plurinational state, the elimination of the Senate, the establishment of multiple judicial bodies, and sweeping economic changes—President Gabriel Boric took office in March 2022. This opened the possibility for the center-right to win both the presidency and a parliamentary majority for the first time in Chilean history.

In that context, our challenge is to offer an alternative that not only presents the right ideas but also has

*"Chile now has a real opportunity to reclaim its leadership in the region and return to being a model state, one where good policies well implemented."*

the capacity to guarantee the peace, stability, and certainty that Chile has lost in recent years. In short, we must prioritize economic freedom, tax policies that promote productivity, and a balanced approach to labor responsibilities between employers and employees—with pragmatism.

Having the right ideas is not enough—especially from the standpoint of political power. It is also essential to secure both political and social legitimacy and to properly assess the conditions necessary for implementing policies.

Otherwise, there is a real risk of building a political project plagued by the same flaws we have so strongly criticized—especially now when the pendulum seems to be swinging in



our favor. These are precisely the moments when good governance demands restraint—both in substance and in style. It's not just about winning power but also about providing guarantees and demonstrating competence in wielding it.

In Chile, there has never been a better opportunity to implement the ideas of liberty by those of us who genuinely believe in them. But with great opportunity comes great responsibility: to propose wisely and to govern well.

The paradox is that the years of socialist dominance in Chile—brief as they were—ultimately solidified, at least in terms of public support, the highest levels of approval for those of us who advocate the opposite. The lesson here is clear: if liberty once again rises to prominence, it must be governed wisely, lest it fall into disrepute at the hands of leaders who squandered the trust they were given.







## **Björn Söder & Markus Wiechel**

*Members of the Swedish Parliament  
for the Sweden Democrats party*

### Europe Must Stop Sending Cooperation Funds to the Cuban Regime

*How is it possible that the European Union continues to fund Cuba's dictatorial regime? The absence of democracy, the persecution of democratic resistance, and the constant violation of human rights seem like obvious reasons to stop such economic cooperation.*

*Now, the deployment of Cuban troops to fight alongside Russia in the invasion of Ukraine adds to this.*

*In their article, the two Swedish parliamentarians question the continuation of this cooperation and call on the European Union administration to immediately halt the transfer of funds to the Castro regime.*

The European Union (EU) prides itself on being a global champion of democracy, human rights, and the rule of law. However, its ongoing financial support of Cuba's dictatorship flagrantly contradicts these principles. While the EU commits billions to support Ukraine in its defense against Russian aggression, it simultaneously funds institutions in Cuba that are not only complicit in internal repression but also aligned with Russia's war effort. This contradiction undermines the EU's credibility and strategic coherence.

Since the 2016 Political Dialogue and Cooperation Agreement (PDCA), the EU has provided over 300 million euros to Cuba, with the declared aim of promoting development and dialogue. However, the vast majority of these funds have gone to institutions controlled by the regime, sidelining independent civil society. According to recent reports, nearly 155 million euros are currently funding about 80 projects, all managed by organizations linked to the Cuban government.

These institutions are not neutral. They are fundamental in maintaining the

regime's control, repressing dissent, and spreading propaganda. Political prisoners—including minors and women—remain incarcerated on vague charges such as “pre-criminal danger.” Torture, forced labor, and surveillance are widespread practices. Instead of fostering reforms, EU funds are effectively subsidizing repression.



Perhaps most alarming is Cuba's growing military involvement in the war in Ukraine. Investigations by Ukrainian and international media have revealed that thousands of Cuban citizens have joined the Russian army, many serving in frontline units such as the 106th Airborne Division.

These Cuban fighters have participated in some of the war's bloodiest battles, including the siege of Bakhmut.

Although the Cuban government has tried to distance itself from these actions, claiming many were victims of trafficking or deception, the evidence suggests otherwise. Reports indicate that Cuban citizens are being recruited with promises of high salaries and Russian citizenship—offers hard to refuse in a country where the average monthly salary is less than \$25. Some estimates from Ukrainian military intelligence suggest that up to 20,000 Cubans may have been sent to fight in Ukraine, either as mercenaries or with the tacit approval of the regime.

This military collaboration with Russia is not an isolated fact. Cuba has deepened its ties with Russia and

*"The EU's simultaneous support for Ukraine and the Cuban regime represents dangerous double standards..."*

Belarus, aligning itself with regimes that openly oppose European values and security interests. At the United Nations, Cuba systematically votes against resolutions supporting Ukraine and condemning Russian aggression.

The EU's simultaneous support for Ukraine and the Cuban regime represents dangerous double standards. On one hand, Europe rightly condemns the Russian invasion and provides military, financial, and humanitarian aid to Ukraine. On the other, it funds a regime that not only diplomatically supports Russia but also contributes troops to its war effort.

This inconsistency weakens the EU's moral authority and strategic coherence. It sends a confusing message to both allies and adversaries: that the EU is willing to compromise its principles for the sake of engagement



(with Cuba), even when that engagement empowers tyranny.

The Cuban people suffer the most from this policy. EU funds do not reach independent journalists, human rights defenders, or grassroots organizations. Instead, they reinforce the regime's control, allowing it to expand its surveillance apparatus and silence dissent. Meanwhile, young Cubans are being lured—or coerced—into fighting in a foreign war that has nothing to do with Cuba's national interests.



*"If the European Union is truly committed to defending democracy it must ensure that its actions reflect those core values..."*

The European Parliament has repeatedly condemned these abuses. In early 2024, it passed a resolution urging the EU to impose sanctions on Cuban officials responsible for human rights violations and to reconsider the Political Dialogue and Cooperation Agreement. However, the European Commission has delayed action, citing the need to maintain dialogue.

Europe cannot afford incoherence in its foreign policy. If the European Union is truly committed to defending democracy and human rights, it must ensure that its actions reflect those core values. This requires a decisive shift in its approach toward Cuba.

First, the EU must cease all financial support to institutions controlled by the Cuban regime, as those funds only serve to strengthen authoritarian

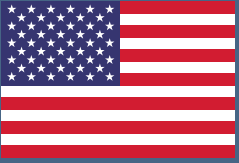


control and repress dissent. Instead, aid should be redirected to support independent civil society organizations and Cuban exile communities who tirelessly work for freedom and democratic reform. Additionally, the EU must impose targeted sanctions on Cuban officials complicit in human rights abuses and the regime's military collaboration with Russia. Finally, the PDCA must be reevaluated in light of Cuba's growing alignment with Russia and Belarus—two regimes that directly oppose European values and security interests.

The EU's continued funding of the Cuban regime is not just a policy mistake—it is a betrayal of the values Europe claims to uphold. As Cuban troops fight alongside Russian forces in Ukraine, the EU must ask itself: can it truly support democracy abroad while subsidizing dictatorship at home?

It is time for the EU to act with moral clarity and strategic coherence. Supporting Ukraine means opposing all forms of tyranny, including those from Havana.





## Nina Shea

*Senior Scholar and  
Director of Hudson  
Institute's Center for  
Religious Freedom*



### China's Threat to Chinese- Americans' Religious Freedom

In 1999, after fleeing religious persecution by the Chinese regime, Ying Chen and her family took refuge in the United States, where they helped found Shen Yun, an artistic group affiliated with Falun Gong. Although they are now American citizens, they continue to be targeted by harassment from the Chinese Communist Party, which extends its repression beyond its borders.

The author outlines how China uses networks of espionage and coercion within the U.S. to monitor, intimidate, and silence members of Falun Gong, as well as Uyghur Muslims, Tibetan Buddhists, pro-democracy dissidents, and advocates for Taiwan's independence. The text documents legal cases, threats, sabotage, and disinformation campaigns driven by Chinese agents; it also underscores the urgent need for a broader institutional response from the U.S. government.

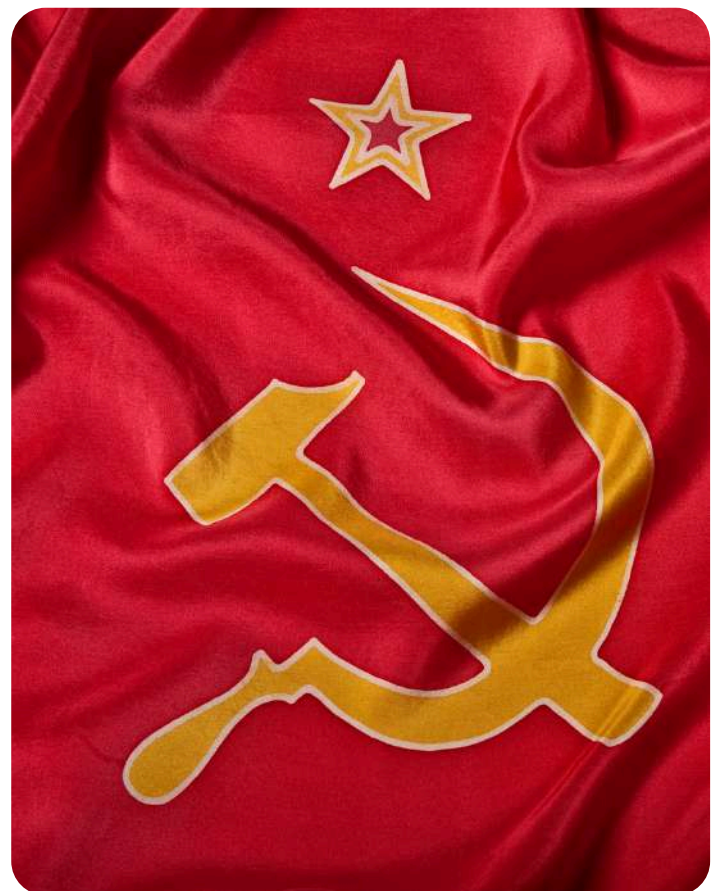


Ying Chen's family members were prominent classical musicians with China's National Philharmonic Orchestra in 1999, when Beijing suddenly decreed a ban on their Buddhism-based Falun Gong religion and persecuted them in harsh labor camps, where they were tortured with electric batons. Twenty years ago, they fled China and resettled in New York's Orange County, drawn to the Falun Gong spiritual center there. They helped establish Shen Yun, the center's performing arts troupe. Ying is now an American and successful Shen Yun conductor, but she and her religious community have yet to breathe free.

Falun Gong is being targeted by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) within the United States. China is working for the worldwide suppression of it, the Tibetan Buddhists, Uyghur Muslims, Chinese pro-democracy dissidents, and Taiwan independence advocates – groups the CCP calls the "Five

Poisons." This isn't limited to cyberattacks. A shadowy network of China's agents, directed and funded by Beijing, is active within U.S. borders to silence and undermine the freedoms of religion and speech of Ying and her community, as well as the other four groups.

Religious freedom is the first freedom in the U.S. Constitution's Bill of Rights and is considered among the "unalienable rights" endowed by our Creator, as phrased in the Declaration of Independence. Over the last 250



years, this right has been continuously strengthened and fiercely defended to meet various challenges. Today, a serious new challenge to Americans' constitutional freedoms comes from the Chinese Communist Party (CCP).

A recent congressional report shows that Chinese spies have been operating under America's nose for two decades. In 2022, the FBI discovered a Chinese secret police station was spying, plotting against, and reporting back to Beijing on Falun Gong and other Chinese Americans from the heart of New York's Chinatown. The FBI reports that such operations are run by China's ministries of state security (MSS) and public security (MPS). The latter has an elite "912 Special Project Working Group," specifically targeting Falun Gong and the other four poisons abroad. Not only does China spy and carry out influence campaigns on them -- along with Americans generally -- it also directs character assassinations, physical assaults, intimidation, and other coercive measures to stifle their

*"Not only does China spy and carry out influence campaigns on Americans it also directs character assassinations, physical assaults, intimidation..."*

constitutional freedoms.

Jianwang Lu, who was charged with opening up and operating the clandestine police station, also reportedly targeted Falun Gong in 2015. An ongoing federal case alleges that Lu worked as an MPS agent to help China's consulate disrupt a lawful Falun Gong protest. The FBI affidavit states that Lu described working with the Chinese consulate to bus a rent-a-mob of hundreds from Chinese community associations in New York and Philadelphia and paying each \$60 to block a Falun Gong demonstration in Washington. A photo shows Lu receiving an MPS plaque, which he explained was for "ensuring that members of the Falun



Gong religion did not disturb [Chinese] President Xi's visit."

Beijing finds Shen Yun intolerable for performances showcasing Chinese spirituality and artistic traditions before communism and dramatizing CCP atrocities. Performing in prestigious cultural venues, its ballets are a highly visible counterpoint to China's ballet companies, which still feature "The Red Detachment of



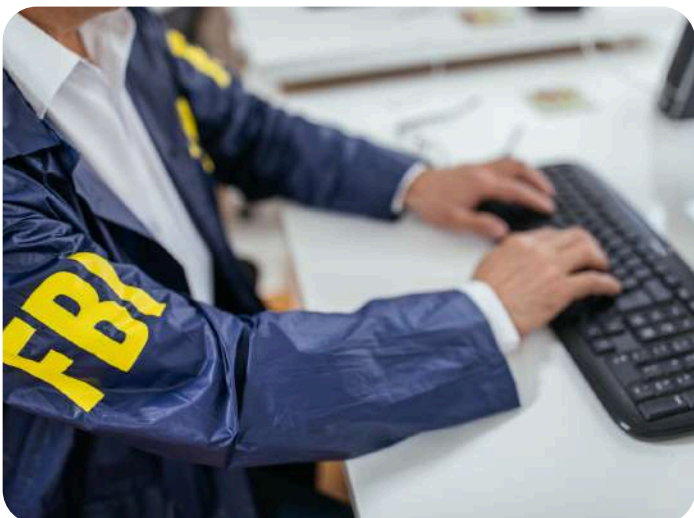
Women," a paeon to China's communist revolution, replete with the ballerina corps doing split leaps with raised rifles. Ying told me that Shen Yun is constantly harassed. While on tour, its buses' tires and parts were slashed and sabotaged, sets vandalized, and venues pressured to cancel. The FBI has repeatedly alerted it to death threats (I reviewed a recent one). Just before I saw Shen Yun in February at Washington's Kennedy Center, it received a bomb threat, forcing a hours-long delay.

Shen Yun was also targeted by John Chen, who, last November, was sentenced to 20 months as an unregistered Chinese agent who furthered China's "campaign to repress and harass Falun Gong practitioners," according to the Justice Department. Chen exploited a U.S. whistleblower program in an attempt to "strip the tax-exempt status" from Shen Yun by bribing a purported IRS agent. Next, he offered the undercover officer \$50,000 to open an audit of Shen Yun. Chen stated that he was carrying out Beijing's aim

to "topple" Falun Gong.

Federal cases have been brought for all Five Poison groups. In 2022, Qiming Lin was charged with allegedly plotting violence at the MSS's direction. The alleged target, a retired Christian military chaplain, was a U.S. congressional candidate in New York who criticized the CCP and had led Tiananmen protests. Court filings include a transcript of Lin's voicemail to a private investigator in which Lin stated, "manufacture something" against the candidate, "violence would be fine too," and "beat him until he cannot run for election.... Car accident, [he] will be completely wrecked [chuckles], right? "

In 2023, the U.S. Attorney for New York's Eastern District charged 40



defendants as MPS 912 agents who harassed members of the disfavored religions and Tiananmen critics. Working with an alleged Chinese agent inside an American telecommunications company, they reportedly deplatformed and disrupted the groups' video conferences with vulgar screams and threats in the chat function. The Justice Department wrote that they aimed to "censor the political and religious speech" of the targeted groups. Last August, a federal jury convicted Shujun Wang, a former Columbia University visiting scholar, as an MSS spy while embedded for years within a Chinese-American pro-democracy group, where he reported on it, Uyghurs, and Tibet's Dalai Lama. A top aide to New York's Governor

*"Falun Gong, Uyghurs, and Hong Kong democracy activists report being surreptitiously followed and photographed by Chinese spies,..."*

Hochul also faces spying charges after canceling Uyghur Muslim and Taiwan concerns from the governor's agenda.

Falun Gong, Uyghurs, and Hong Kong democracy activists report being surreptitiously followed and photographed by Chinese spies, even on Washington's National Mall. In 2023, Tibetan protestors were bloodied by thugs in San Francisco. Beijing's agents are suspected to be behind all this.

Washington has responded with a case-by-case prosecution of China's agents, typically on winnable but minor charges, such as violating the Foreign Agents Registration Act and lying to the FBI. While essential, this alone won't stop the threat.

A federal inter-agency task force is needed. The National Security Council and departments of State, Treasury, and Homeland Security should all be helping Justice protect Chinese-Americans' "unalienable" rights against a repressive foreign power.







## Hernán Bonilla

*Economist. President of the Center for Development Studies (CED) in Uruguay.*

*Full member of the National Academy of Economics of Uruguay. Professor of Economics and Uruguayan Society at ORT University. Former Director of Macroeconomic Advisory at Uruguay's Ministry of Economy and Finance during the early years of President Luis Lacalle Pou's administration.*



### Uruguay: End of the Electoral Cycle

*Uruguay has elected new national and local authorities.*

*The author analyzes the new political landscape and outlines the main challenges facing the three parties that form the center-right coalition previously led by President Luis Lacalle Pou.*



With the departmental and municipal elections held in May, Uruguay's 2024–2025 electoral cycle has come to a close. Last October, the new parliament was elected, and in November, a new president was chosen. In an unprecedented scenario in the country's recent history, President Yamandú Orsi—of the left-wing Broad Front—will have to govern without a majority in the lower house. This already poses challenges to his administration, as seen in the current difficulties surrounding the passage of certain legislative proposals.

Following the May elections, Uruguay's new political map is now complete. As is traditional, the National Party controls the majority of the intendencias (the main administrative divisions in Uruguay), as well as a broad majority of the municipios (smaller subdivisions within departments). Fourteen departments will be governed by the National Party, four by the Broad Front, and one by the Colorado Party.

The most significant developments occurred in the departments that switched political alignment. Salto—the most important of these due to its population—shifted from the Broad Front to the Republican Coalition, with a National Party candidate winning the seat. Meanwhile, the National Party lost two less-populated intendencias, Río Negro and Lavalleja. The Colorado Party retained its traditional stronghold in Rivera, in the north of the country.

In Montevideo—the capital and most populous department—the Broad Front secured victory once again, as it has for the past 35 years, though by a smaller margin than in previous elections. Notably, Martín Lema, the



nationalist candidate representing the Republican Coalition, finished within single digits of the winner. This suggests that with strong groundwork over the next five years, a more competitive result could be achieved in the 2030 elections.

One of the key elements tested during this election cycle was the use of the “Republican Coalition” label—a joint electoral banner used to pool votes across departments by the National, Colorado, Independent, and Cabello Abierto parties. This strategy was deployed in Montevideo, Canelones, and Salto and proved decisive in winning Salto. Conversely, defeats in traditionally National Party-controlled departments like Río Negro and Lavalleja were partly due to the local leadership’s tactical decision not to use this electoral tool—a mistake in hindsight.



*“A key argument in favor of running together under the coalition label in October’s national elections is that it allows vote pooling for parliamentary seat allocation...”*

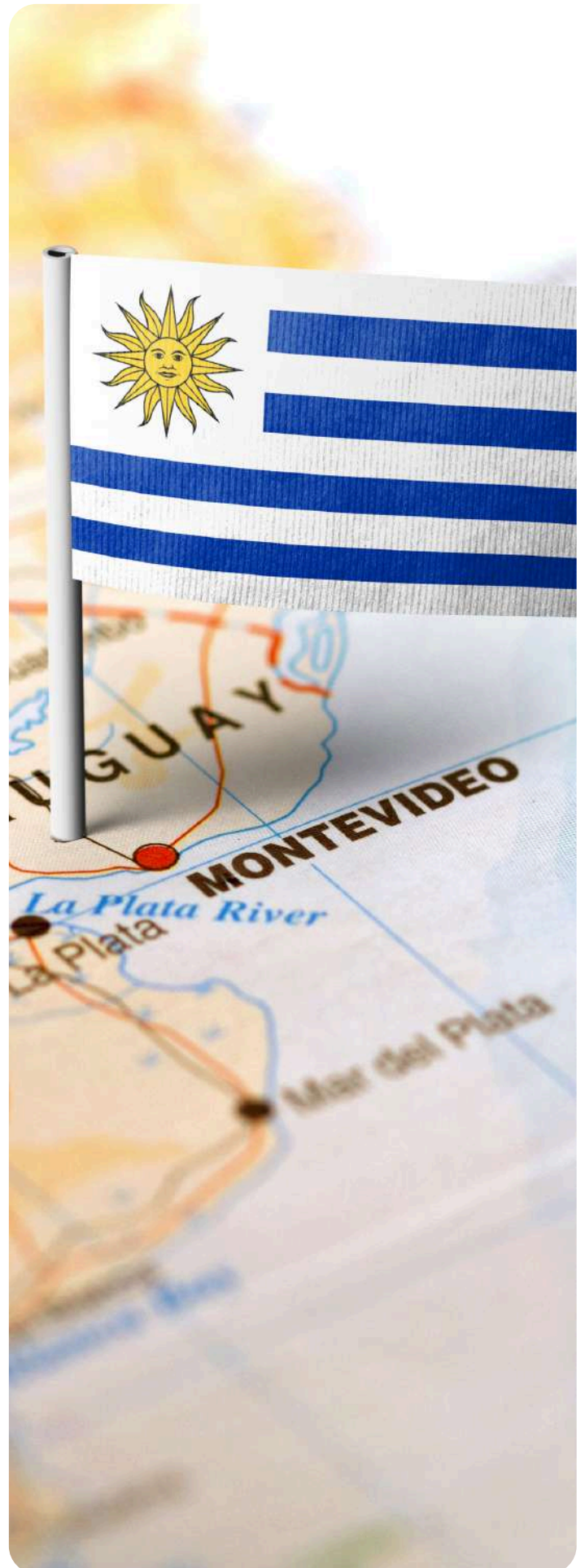
A major topic in Uruguay’s political debate in the coming years will be whether or not to adopt the Republican Coalition label in national and departmental elections across the country. There is a strong case for doing so at the local level, as it helps prevent defeats in places where the coalition collectively holds a majority. However, using the common label in national elections remains a more contentious issue.

A key argument in favor of running together under the coalition label in October’s national elections is that it allows vote pooling for parliamentary seat allocation. One consequence of

the parties running separately in the last election was that the Broad Front secured a Senate majority with less than 44% of the vote. Still, some believe that having separate presidential candidates within the coalition actually boosts the total vote count.

This issue is also becoming relevant for the presidential runoff. The Republican Coalition typically loses votes from its constituent parties when supporters of losing first-round candidates fail to rally behind the winner in the runoff. Using a common coalition label from the first round could help unify the vote across party lines.

In any case, Uruguay's political map showed only slight changes in May, but it yielded several important lessons. Over the coming years, the major question for the opposition will be how they present themselves in the next electoral cycle. It will be a crucial decision.







## Edgardo Rodríguez

*Honduran political scientist and journalist. University professor, researcher, and political analyst.*



### Honduras Democracy Hangs by a Thread

What is the current political landscape in Honduras, and what are the prospects for the elections scheduled for the end of this year? Will the populist left remain in power, or will we witness a shift toward the center-right?

These are the questions explored by the esteemed Honduran analyst and author of this article. He focuses on the country's complex political and economic situation, as well as the international impact the outcome of the presidential elections could have.



On November 30 of this year, Honduras will face the most important election in its recent history. At stake is whether the country will continue to live under a democratic and republican system or descend irreversibly into a leftist totalitarian regime, sheltered and encouraged by the São Paulo Forum.

The outlook could not be more complex due to the background of rule-of-law violations, abuse of power, and institutional breakdown promoted by the current government, led since 2022 by the radical left-wing Libre Party. In just three and a half years, it has consolidated all power, including subjugating the Armed Forces and National Police, which have become politically active actors—greatly narrowing the opposition’s ability to act.

The administration of current President Xiomara Castro—with her husband, former president Manuel Zelaya, orchestrating the entire

political structure behind the scenes—has plunged the country into a severe economic crisis, widespread insecurity, and political uncertainty. Drug trafficking and gangs (maras) now operate in Honduras with total impunity.

On the streets, the people are clamoring for a regime change. The latest independent public opinion and electoral preference poll, conducted by the Jesuit-affiliated organization ERIC, shows a wide lead for the center-right Liberal Party over the leftist Libre Party. However, as the weeks and months go by, fear grows that electoral fraud will occur on voting day. This fear is fueled by the events of March 9, during the public and open internal and primary elections. It served as a warning of



what was to come in November, as the ruling party blatantly manipulated results to project strong popular support. Additionally, the military was used to attempt to block voters from reaching the polls.

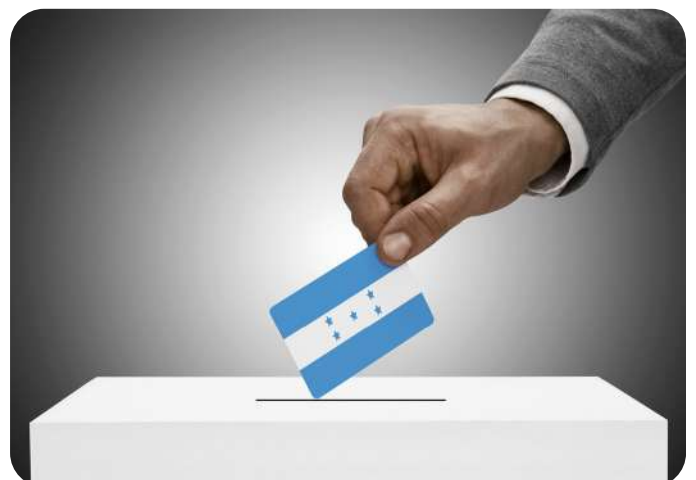
Concerns also surround potential manipulation in the transmission of election results, particularly after the suspicious hiring of the Venezuelan firm Smartmatic, which has a history of fraud and controversy in the region. Moreover, the ruling party has intimidated members of the National Electoral Council (CNE), which includes two women from opposition parties—even going so far as to attempt to fabricate criminal charges against them to instill fear.

The leftist regime is using all resources at its disposal to hold onto power

*"The leftist regime is using all resources at its disposal to hold onto power illegitimately."*

illegitimately. It has pursued criminal charges against prominent opposition leaders, such as retired General Romeo Vásquez, who was forced into hiding after fabricated accusations by the Public Prosecutor's Office. Opposition media and NGOs that expose corruption and abuse of power are also being threatened, while most mainstream media outlets are being controlled through government advertising.

For the São Paulo Forum, Honduras represents a key geopolitical stronghold for the regional left. The coming months will be critical for the opposition to unite and fight to ensure free and transparent elections on November 30. That is all it will take to save the country from the clutches of the left.





## Guido Chiriboga

*Former national assemblyman of Ecuador for the province of Guayas. He has served as Dean of the Faculty of Administration and Political Sciences at Universidad Casa Grande. Holds an MBA from Cornell University and a BSc in Industrial Engineering from Lehigh University.*



### Noboa: Indecipherable to the Old Guard of Politics

*After completing the presidential term that Guillermo Lasso left vacant a year and a half before its conclusion, Daniel Noboa had the opportunity to run again in last February's election. He won in a second-round runoff.*

*With new majorities and a level of legitimacy he hadn't enjoyed during his brief prior term, he now faces the challenge of pushing forward key structural reforms in Ecuador. The author analyzes Noboa's unique leadership style and outlines the main actions we should expect in this new presidential term.*

“Indecipherable to the old guard of politics”—that’s how President Noboa defined himself during the inauguration speech marking the start of his new presidential term. It is a time of political change in Ecuador, in the region, and around the world. And yes, it’s clearly a generational shift. We now have a re-elected president who is 37 years old and a vice president who is 39, both sworn in by the new president of the National Assembly—also 37 years old. But it’s not just about age—which already brings a fresh, different perspective and energy to the electorate—it’s also about a broader political shift toward today’s global norm of pragmatic strongman politics, detached from rigid ideological labels.

Amid growing global polarization, with extremes suffocating the political center, Ecuador has returned to a form of bipartisanship. In the first round of voting, 88% of the votes for president—and similarly for legislative seats—were split between two political groups: Daniel Noboa Azín’s Acción Democrática Nacional (just

one year old) and Rafael Correa’s Revolución Ciudadana, aligned with 21st-century socialism. The traditional dichotomy between liberal and conservative parties—with clear statutes and political grooming grounds—is gone. So is the atomization into fifteen or twenty small yet viable parties that once made politics feel like a game of bingo.

So, what lies ahead for Ecuador during the 2025–2029 term?

Re-elected President Noboa took office with a fiery twenty-minute speech—long by his standards. He repeatedly invoked the word freedom, quoted Marcus Aurelius and Goethe (in flawless German),





reaffirmed his cabinet, and ignored the opposition entirely. His administration took full control of the legislature and thirteen of the fifteen committees, leaving Correa's party—which secured 44% of the vote—without political representation in Congress. He started without pause or compromise. We can expect a very active government, ready to wield power from day one. There will be no honeymoon, no 100-day grace period, no time to warm up. And that shouldn't surprise us—not from the president who didn't hesitate to send the military into an embassy to arrest a fugitive criminal or to declare an internal armed conflict against organized crime groups.

Noboa's administration will need to focus on three main pillars: security, economic recovery, and job creation. Politically, during his campaign, he promised to change the Constitution, which was tailored to suit 21st-century socialism. However, he also needs to address operational issues, such as ensuring an adequate energy supply and access to medicines. Those are

*"Noboa's administration will need to focus on three main pillars: security, economic recovery, and job creation.."*

the pressing tasks facing President Noboa, his cabinet, and the (unicameral) National Assembly.

Wasting no time and leveraging his legislative majority, he already submitted an Urgent Economic Law (subject to expedited procedures) aimed at controlling the physical and financial resources of organized crime groups. This organic law must pass through committees and the full assembly and is expected to be ready for signing this June. It would grant extraordinary powers in the fight against criminal cartels—including the ability to carry out raids without a judge's order, subject to immediate judicial oversight, and to seize and use confiscated assets to continue the fight against narco-crime. On security, the public expects action and results—this law is a step in that direction.

Ecuador will not see a fake narco-peace. War has been declared, and the legal tools to fight it are essential.

Following his re-election, Noboa went on a lengthy tour to attract investment. Ecuador's economy grew by 2.3% last year—insufficient to



bring real prosperity. Foreign investment is key to growth, but it's easier said than done. In 2024, Ecuador received only \$232 million in foreign direct investment—just 0.2% of GDP—compared to around 4% in Colombia. There is ample room for growth in the mining and energy sectors, which are in need of capital and international expertise. But major obstacles remain: legal uncertainty, an 80-year-old labor code, a Constitution that defines key sectors as “strategic” (meaning state exclusivity), and a ban on international arbitration in state contracts. Development is an uphill battle—but it is achievable with the right execution.

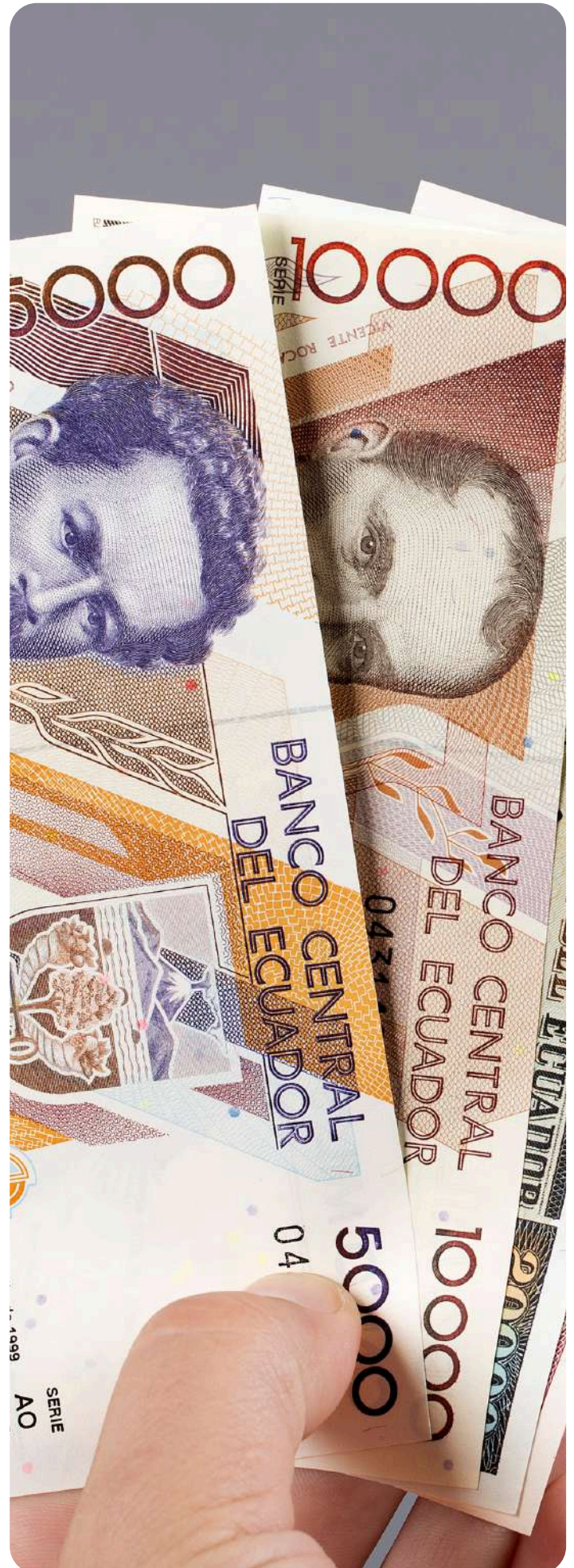
Attracting foreign investment is also critical for job creation. In his speech, Noboa promised public investment in infrastructure and housing—important, but not enough on their own. New jobs must also come from the private sector, which in turn requires a reliable legal and regulatory framework.

To achieve these reforms, Noboa



campaigned on convening a Constituent Assembly to draft a new Constitution. Now, with a legislative majority, he may pursue these changes through the existing Congress instead, avoiding the fate of Chile's failed constitutional rewrite. However, through this legislative path, can he enact the necessary legal reforms to provide security for both investors and citizens? Will he be able to sustain the majority needed for a deep and modern labor reform? Does he have the political capital to shrink the bloated state, which currently acts as a banker, media owner, telecom operator, and fuel supplier?

The state now consumes more than one-third of the economy—and keeps growing. Let's hope Noboa is the one to bring it back to its proper, necessary role: regulator. Let's hope he can restore internal peace and attract the capital needed to grow and create jobs. If he manages to do all that, we will all applaud—indecipherably.





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### Elections in Bolivia: A Scene of Uncertainty

In August of this year, Bolivia will hold general elections, and the electoral landscape is very unclear. The ruling party is divided between President Arce and former President Evo Morales (both left-wing). On the other hand, the opposition has failed to unify behind a single candidate who can offer an alternative to populism.

What is at stake? What regional impact could it have? How did the country get to this point of political, economic, and social deterioration?

The author of this article answers all this and much more.





**B**olivia will hold one of its most uncertain electoral processes in August 2025, with doubts about the course and outcome of the competition for the popular vote, following twenty years of governments and at least four national elections, all of which were won and dominated by the Movement for Socialism (MAS).

This party had Evo Morales as its most emblematic figure. Not only did Morales interact with the legendary Cuban leader Fidel Castro and the late Hugo Chávez Frías, but he was, without a doubt, one of the main references of the Latin American left and a spokesperson for 21st-century socialism—a political current that swept across America like a storm, gaining supporters and repeatedly winning elections from Argentina, through Brazil, Uruguay, Bolivia, Venezuela, and even Central America.

Paradoxically, Morales—three times president of Bolivia (2006–2019) and the political leader who chose the current president, Luis Arce Catacora,

as his candidate—today lacks a political organization that allows him to compete in the upcoming election. This is due to several judicial processes blocking his path back to power.

The unprecedented feature of the current electoral scenario is an internal crisis within MAS, the ruling party, manifested in at least four factions competing for political representation and the presidency. On the other hand, there is an equally fragmented opposition comprising six political organizations and leaderships that believe, given MAS's crisis and Morales's absence, it is time to retake the government and try to overcome Bolivia's complex economic, social, and political situation with new public policies.



The country suffers from a lack of income for the state treasury, a consequence of depleted gas reserves and the loss of revenue from exports to Brazil and Argentina that those reserves once provided. For decades, gas wealth supported the Bolivian economy. Those revenues subsidized gasoline prices, transportation, and mining and agro-industrial production. This has led to the emergence of a parallel dollar market, fuel shortages, reduced investment and production, and rising costs of food and medicine. The result: an alarming increase in poverty and an economic slowdown.

Another aspect of this complex electoral scenario is the high number of presidential candidates, reflecting the social division into two large

*"The country suffers from a lack of income for the state treasury, a consequence of depleted gas reserves and the loss of revenue from exports..."*

opposing forces. On one side, the popular left bloc; on the other, the liberal center-right which seeks to regain control of a state broken by the policies of 21st-century socialism.

For Bolivia, another novelty at this political moment is the possibility of a second electoral round scheduled for October. This mechanism, though established in 2009, has not been applied before since MAS—whether with Morales or Arce—previously won elections with a vote share well above the absolute majority.

The Legislative Assembly, composed of the Senate and Chamber of Deputies, will be formed based on the first-round results. Given the variety of competing parties, there is a possibility of vote fragmentation leading to a divided and confrontational legislature, as well as a president weakened by a blocked, divided Assembly.

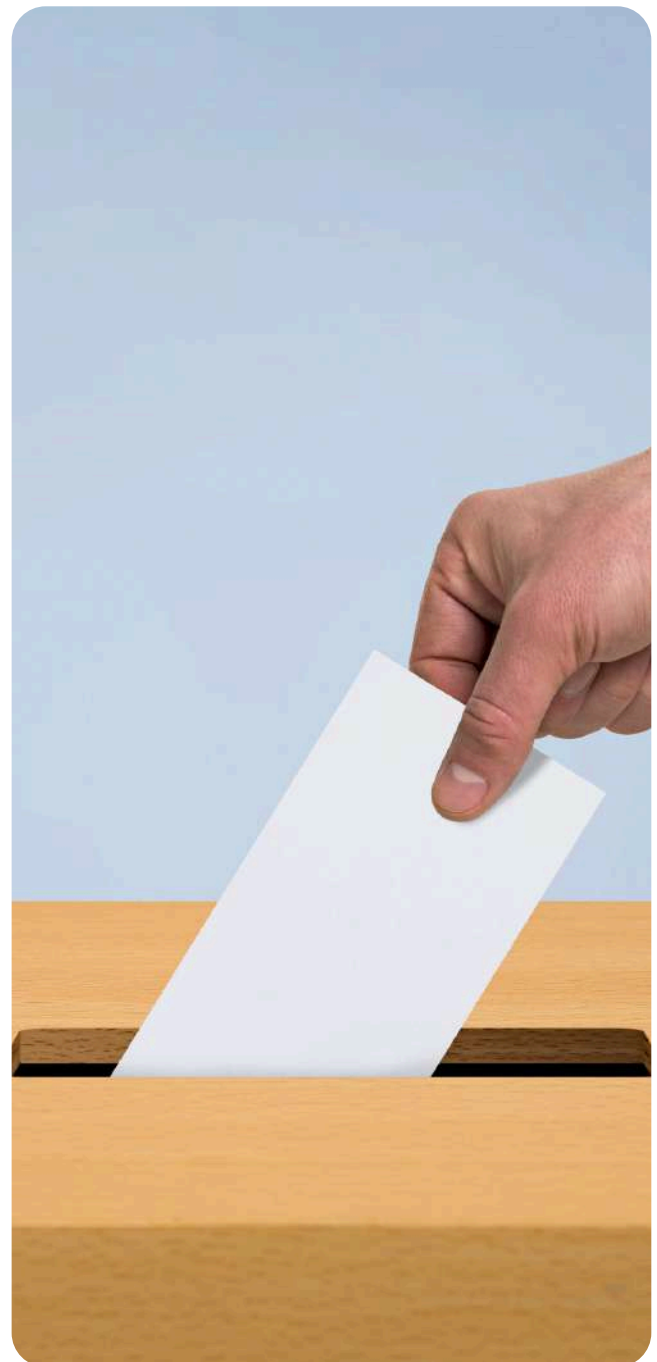
Despite this complex political-electoral scenario, there is a collective will to hold the elections and for them

to serve as the starting point for building the solutions that Bolivia needs. Bolivian democracy, restored in the early 1980s and sustained for more than four decades, has overcome several political crises without breaking down or giving rise to authoritarian or unelected governments. In short, democracy and elections have prevailed over attempts to return to the ominous eras of military governments that dominated the political scene in the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s.

Over these four decades of popularly elected governments, Bolivian democracy has overcome crises and coup attempts, as well as the resignation of elected presidents that triggered early elections. It has also undertaken constitutional and electoral reforms aimed at improving democracy by expanding participation and representation of the country's ethnic base and facilitating voting for Bolivians living abroad.

While this year's elections will take

place amid economic problems, notable absences, and a profound internal crisis in the party that has dominated politics for decades, they have also become a hope—an aspiration—for a change in ideological direction, government, president, legislature, public policies, conduct, and behavior.



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